Team to probe ‘rape culture’

STELLENBOSCH University is establishing a task team on sexual offences, which will “urgently” look into claims about a “rape culture” at the institution.

A university statement said there had been “complaints of a general culture of disrespect and harassment of women students – and this is regarded as normal”.

At a meeting this week, the rector’s management team decided to appoint the task team.

The statement read: “Existing counter-measures at Stellenbosch University include ongoing activities on our various campuses to create awareness about gender issues and sexual harassment.

“Consciousness-raising sessions and sensitivity training for staff members and students take place both in and outside residences. But more systematic interventions might be required to challenge entrenched practices. Coming up with recommendations in this regard will fall within the ambit of the task team’s scope of work.”

A student was recently raped outside the university’s Harmonie Residence.

The incident is being investigated by the police’s sexual offences unit.

Vice-chancellor Professor Wim de Villiers said: “Sexual abuse of any nature are despicable acts and we urge the police to make sure the incident is thoroughly investigated so justice is served. I urge our campus community to respect the privacy of those involved. Such incidents are very traumatic and any form of speculation on social media worsens the situation.”

● Anyone with information on the rape case is asked to contact the investigating officer Sergeant LD February at 021 809 9168/5 or 082 469 1479. – Ilse Fredericks