



**STUDENTERAAD**  

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**STUDENTS'  
REPRESENTATIVE  
COUNCIL**

**Report for the First Quarter**

**Societies Council**

**Vera Leven**

**March 2014**

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# **I. General**

## **A. Quarter Reflection**

The official first term as SRc started in November 2013, however I was elected as Societies Council Chair in August 2013. This gave me a few months to prepare for the year ahead and to make sure I have a strong support structure in my Societies Council Executive Committee. At the very first planning meeting we discussed the responsibilities of each Societies Council Executive Committee portfolio and allocated the three general portfolios to the general Societies Council Executive Committee members. Further, we discussed the main projects lying ahead (as specified below) and broadly what each portfolio's role is in these main projects.

After the holidays one of my Executive Committee members informed me that she would not be returning to Stellenbosh University and therefore we elected a new Executive Committee member, who has contributed greatly to the success of the Societies Council.

Planning ahead for the year, and at least the next term is extremely useful in terms of time management, however it is important to remember that planning does not create reality and unexpected things do occur. Therefore, whilst planning is important, one needs to be flexible in solving problems that arise. This portfolio is very much a problem solving portfolio, as many societies experience problems, whether big or small, throughout the year, and as Societies Council Chair it is my responsibility to react to these problems and find viable solutions as quickly as possible.

One of the very important lesson I have learnt this term is time management. I have found the experience so far extremely enriching and have met a lot of amazing people on the SRc, on my Committee and in societies, who have provided support and encouragement.

## **II. Other Information:**

### **A. *Guardian House***

My guardian houses are the senior houses:

- Huis MacDonald
- Huis de Villiers
- Concordia

I contacted the responsible persons for these houses at the beginning of my term to introduce myself and offer my support where it is needed. The responses I received indicated that these senior houses operate independently from all other campus activities, do not elect a HK and will not be requiring my assistance. I did however reassure them that I am available should they ever require my assistance in any matter.

### **III. Societies Council Chair**

#### **A. Description/Aim of Portfolio**

The Societies Council Chair is primarily responsible for the administration of societies and for ensuring that societies have a platform upon which they can successfully operate. This includes the overseeing of registration of societies; re-registration of societies; memberships for societies; general awareness of societies through welcoming fairs, general societies fairs, open day stalls, social media, marketing, etc.; and any other problems and circumstances arising in the day-to-day operating of societies.

Further, the Societies Council Chair serves as the chairperson at meetings, of both the Societies Council and the Societies Council Executive Committee.

As Societies Chair I have gained a better general overview of societies, making it possible for me to identify patterns, trends and general problems, which are not always apparent to individual societies. This has enabled me to find solutions to these problems and to help societies function more effectively now, and in the future.

#### **B. Articles of the Student Constitution Relevant to the Portfolio**

Article 24 applies as far as it stipulates the portfolios and positions an ex officio member may hold apart from the ex officio position.

Chapter 8 concerns the Societies Council specifically and is therefore relevant in its entirety. This chapter covers:

- Composition of the Societies Council
- Duties and powers of the Societies Council:
  - Represent interests of all recognised student societies and that of the members of such societies, at the SRC and University Management.
  - The Societies Council has the powers necessary for the performance of its duties.
- Constitutional Mandate:
  - To actively promote the rights of students, and specifically the right to freedom of religion, belief and opinion and right to freedom of association.
- Constitutions, Rules and Regulations

#### **C. Term Planning**

##### **Portfolio Planning**

The Societies Council term planning entailed the assignment of the general portfolios of the general executive committee members and ensuring that each member of the Societies Council Executive Committee clearly understands his/her responsibilities.

##### **Project Planning**

The Societies Council Executive Committee further discussed the upcoming projects (see details in points E. and F. below) and the relevant portfolio responsibilities.

## **D. Daily Responsibilities and Tasks**

### **Email correspondence**

A bulk of the day-to-day work of the Societies Council Executive Committee is responding to email queries. This includes members enquiring about specific societies, societies making enquiries regarding sign-ups and procedures and general hurdles that arise for individual societies that they require assistance with.

Further, I aim to keep societies informed about events and activities being hosted or organised by other societies, by sending out a weekly newsletter, in order for societies to support each other and lean on each others resources where their projects potentially overlap.

### **Maintaining the society database**

The society contact database has to be kept up to date to ensure that societies receive all correspondence and that society committee members can be contacted where need be.

This list is not available to the general public and any person requiring a society's contact details will be given only that society's details. This is to avoid societies being spammed with unwanted correspondence.

### **Meeting chairs who are experiencing problems**

Where chairs are experiencing difficulties with their committees, members or general society activities or have a query regarding policy or procedure, I meet with them to help and support them to the best of my abilities.

### **Meeting students who are wanting to start a society**

Where a student would like to start his/her own society I meet with them from the initial stages to make sure they meet all the requirements as set out in the Societies Council Constitution and to help them along with the process. I maintain email correspondence with them and then meet them again in the final stages of their registration.

### **Minutes and Agendas**

The agendas and minutes for meetings need to be compiled and sent out to the relevant parties as mandated by the Societies Council Constitution.

## **E. Projects Completed**

### **1. Fourth Term 2013**

#### **a) Re-registration, Registration and Honoraria**

Note: This project was mostly dealt with by the previous Societies Council Chair, due to the change in term of SRC positions.

#### **Aimed outcome of the project and was it achieved?**

Re-registration is aimed at the continuity of a society. Re-registration further makes the chairperson of the society eligible for an honoraria. These outcomes were achieved with the majority of societies.

Registration is aimed at creating new societies.

**Planning and Budgeting:**

No funds were used/required for this project.

**Would you recommend this project continues**

Yes I would, it is constitutionally mandated. It ensures the continuity of societies and existence of Societies Council.

**What would you do better (Assuming it should continue)**

I suggest that the registration form used for registration and re-registration be amended, as it is outdated and it can be set up better. I plan to create the new registration form along with the updated chair handbook (see point F. below).

Chairpersons of societies, particularly new chairpersons, need to be made aware of the fact that membership fee amounts indicated on the form are final and cannot be changed until the next re-registration. The form is completed by the old chairpersons, but the new chairpersons needs to sign the form and also be made aware of its importance.

Further, I think it would be more efficient for societies to fill out an excel sheet containing all the information relevant for the society database, as this would make the process of capturing everyone's information faster and avoid any errors in contact details (i.e. societies control which details are used to contact them and only amendments need to be made by the Societies Council Executive Committee).

Another very important issue is the transferral of the portfolio from previous Societies Council Chair to new Societies Council Chair. It is important to hand over a clear document/database of registered societies and also societies currently undergoing registration, indicating where in the process they currently are.

**b) Finances**

**Aimed outcome of the project and was it achieved?**

To ensure the smooth running of society cost points and payment of membership fees. This project is particularly important for online sign ups, the majority of which happen in the first term of the academic year.

**Planning and Budgeting:**

No funds were used/required for this project.

This specific project ran very differently this year to previous years. Previously most sign-ups were acquired by societies on physical sign-up sheets/forms, which were then transferred (by society committee members) to excel sheets. These excel sheets were proofed by the Societies Council Executive Committee and then sent to the Finance Department for batch uploading. This process was very cumbersome and time consuming and left a large margin for error, as information was occasionally captured incorrectly or students gave incorrect information on the physical sheets.

Further, many societies did not meet the deadlines for sending in these sheets, causing further problems for the Finance Department. Another complication with this system was that the payment of membership fees into society cost points was very delayed, causing financial problems for societies.

From this year, the Finance Department, with input from the previous Societies Council Treasurer, has implemented a different system. Sign-ups which are received at the First Years Welcoming Fair (before the start of the first academic term) are taken as per the old system (physical sheet, excel sheet, batch upload). These need to be sent to the Finance Department before the first day of class in the first academic term. From that date onwards, all students who wish to have their membership fee charged to their student account need to sign up via the student web portal by signing in using their student number and password. This ensures that all students only sign up for themselves (i.e. they need a password to sign up, therefore no one can sign up on their behalf). It also created less admin for society committees and the Societies Council Executive Committee. It further eliminates the possible errors which can be made at transferring of student numbers from physical sign up sheets to the excel sheets. Funds are immediately charged to the student's student account and transferred to the society's cost point. Both the society and the student receive an email with contact details to inform them of having signed up.

The list of all societies, their email addresses and membership amounts must be sent to the Finance Department, in order for them to load it onto the online system (student portal), by the end of the third academic term.

This is a very new system, and as with most systems hick-ups can be expected.

Please see Addendum A for detailed procedure document.

### **Would you recommend this project continues**

Yes I would, it is constitutionally mandated. It ensures the continuity of societies and existence of Societies Council.

### **What would you do better (Assuming it should continue)**

The list that is sent to the Finance Department must be double and triple checked for errors, before being sent to them for capturing, to avoid having to change details in the future. This is particularly important with regard to the email address where notifications are received, the membership amount and the society name to appear on the student portal.

All new societies that wish to make use of online sign-ups (i.e. wish to allow their members to charge membership fees to their student accounts) must be registered as an official society before the end of the third term in order for them to appear online – this is important to keep in mind when registering new societies and advising them.

It is important to check with the Finance Department that the system is set up in such a way that societies and students receive a notification email upon successful signing up.

Further, I would check with IT that the web portal is in working order as it does have a tendency to be faulty. This has a great impact on societies and needs to be addressed by IT.

Some societies have expressed displeasure with the new system. However, with time and after all hickups have been ironed out, this new system will be very advantageous to societies.

## **2. First term 2014**

### **a) First Years Fair**

#### **Aimed outcome of the project and was it achieved?**

The aim of this is to expose the new first years to societies and show them what the different societies have to offer. This is an opportunity for societies to showcase what they do in order to attract as many members as possible for the year. This aim was achieved.

#### **Planning and Budgeting:**

Funding was used for printing posters and maps for the fair. We did not need to pay any venue hire as we hosted the fair in the Neelsie.

Together with the Societies Council Executive Committee I set up a map of the venue indicating the different societies that would be partaking. This was an extremely useful tool, both for first year orientation and marketing, and I suggest that it is used again next year.

The Events Coordinator of the Societies Council Executive Committee booked the venue and handled the booking of tables, chairs and boards. Societies were required to carry and set up their own tables on the day.

All societies that took part put in a lot of effort and were very motivated making at an extremely successful fair. It was exceedingly better than last year and all societies received a good amount of sign-ups. The societies who put in effort definitely reaped the highest rewards.

The fair took place during the University's welcoming week, in the same time slot as Bondelsport and the Pool Party. Together with the PK Vice-Chairperson and the Sports Portfolio a schedule was set up in order for all first years to be able to attend the Welcoming Programme events. This schedule was highly effective and the fair had a constant flow of students. I definitely suggest that this is done again next year!

#### **Would you recommend this project continues**

Yes I would recommend it continue as it is a great opportunity for first years to learn about societies and for societies to obtain members.

#### **What would you do better (Assuming it should continue)**

The Neelsie has a very limited number of boards and most societies want to make use of these boards. An alternative needs to be found to the boards, as there are not nearly enough for everyone.

Societies need to be reminded to bring their own sign up forms for the first years fair, this being the only fair where physical sign up forms can be used.

Societies need to be reminded that they must bring extension chords for the plug points, should they wish to use electricity.

Societies need to be reminded to pack away their tables and chairs after the fair.

We learned that it is by far easiest if every society receives one large table instead of having an election as to how many tables they would like. There is not enough space for everyone to have more than one table. Through experience, we have found that one large table is enough for

societies to be able to host a succesful stall. Where a society has special requirements needing more space, arrangements can surely be made.

## **b) Societies Fair**

### **Aimed outcome of the project and was it achieved?**

This fair is aimed at providing societies with a further opportunity to market themselves and obtain members for the year. This aim was achieved.

### **Planning and Budgeting:**

Funding was used for printing posters, forms and maps for the fair. We did not need to pay any venue hire as we hosted the fair in the Neelsie.

This fair took place over three days from 9:00 till 16:00, in order to expose societies to as many students as possible.

We made use of the same map as at the First Years Fair, making a few adjustments, as some societies indicated that they would like to move to different spots. Some societies requested to be placed outside as their activities required mroe space needed to be outside. All other arrangements were the same as for the First Years Fair.

Due to the new Finance policy and sign-up system, no physical sheets were used. Societies were encouraged to bring their own laptops/computers to allow students to sign up at the stalls. Fr convenience, I suggested that societies have a mailing list for students to sign up to, where the sign-up link could later be sent. Most societies did make use of this suggestion, which worked well.

We handed out a list of all societies to students at the fair, in order for them to make notes on which societies they would like to join. This list could then be used by them to sign up online later. This list also provided all other relevant information on contacting the Societies Council and on social media details.

Over the lunch break, societies were given the opportunity to make use of the stage for demonstrations. Not many societies made use of this opportunity.

Throughout the fair we held 2 competitions, one for societies and one for students. The one for societies was awarded to the society with the best stall (see Addendum B for criteria). This prize was sponsored by the Stomme Jonge and was awarded to the Maties Dance Society. The second competition was a twitter hashtag competition for students. The student with the most creative tweet with the hashtag #SocietiesFair2014 could win a prize, also sponsored by the Stomme Jonge. No one took part in this competition, despite being made aware of it.

Overall this fair was very successful and societies who took the opporntnity did gain members and create awareness on campus.

### **Would you recommend this project continues**

This project should continue.

### **What would you do better (Assuming it should continue)**

The stage available at the Neelsie may only be ised over lunch time (13:00 – 14:00). Most societies chose not to make use of it. The main reason for this was that the stage is too small.

Where societies want to put up potentially dangerous apparatus (e.g. gladiator rings), they need to create an indemnity form, to be approved by the Neelsie Management at least a week in advance. Further, they need to have a medic on site.

I would suggest that either FHARGA or another computer venue or laptops be made available for the societies fair in order for societies to get more sign ups. This was attempted this year, however the manager at FHARGA and the IT personnel were unable to help us.

The competition for students via social media or other means should be reevaluated.

### **c) Office Allocations**

#### **Aimed outcome of the project and was it achieved?**

To provide societies with a space to hold meetings and store their equipment, in order for them to operate effectively and efficiently.

#### **Planning and Budgeting:**

Cleaning of the society offices was done by an outside company, which was paid for with proceeds from hiring out the society rooms.

Offices were allocated as meeting and storage spaces (i.e. societies do not receive their own office, as there are not enough spaces available). Applications were received in the previous year, by the previous chairperson. It came to my attention that many of the new chairpersons were unaware of these applications and therefore the applications were reopened, in order to accommodate all societies.

Office space we allocated in accordance with need, i.e. looking at whether a society requires meeting space, storage space or both. Societies were grouped together in groups of 2 or 3, depending on the office size, and taking into consideration whom they would like to share with.

The offices were cleaned and repainted (at the cost of Neelsie Management). The offices are currently in good condition and all societies who have received an office have been made aware of the term and conditions of use of the offices. Societies are expected to return the offices in the same state as they were received.

#### **Would you recommend this project continues**

Yes I do recommend it continues and that the project is grown over the years, by acquiring more offices and storage spaces.

#### **What would you do better (Assuming it should continue)**

In future, I think it would be a good idea if office applications formed part of the reregistration and were included on the reregistration form. This will be included when in the new registration form.

## ***F. Projects in process/incomplete***

### **a) Society socials**

#### **Aimed outcome of the project?**

To promote unity and support among societies and their committees. To create the opportunity for societies to find common projects and to share resources where possible.

### **Planning and Budgeting**

No funds are required for this project.

This is an ongoing project. After every Societies Council meeting I encourage society chairs and their committees to join for a brief social. I feel that this will create a better culture within the Societies Council and encourage chairs to get to know each other on a personal level, in order for them to work together on projects in the future.

This is a trial project and will be reassessed after the first semester.

### **b) MFM announcement slot**

#### **Aimed outcome of the project?**

The aim is to give societies an opportunity to promote their activities and events to campus and the Stellenbosch community.

### **Planning and Budgeting**

No funds are required for this project.

This is an ongoing project. Societies are required to send their events and activities for the week to the Societies Council Chair on a Tuesday before 17:00, in order for it to be announced on MFM on a Thursday at 11:45 by the Societies Council Marketing Portfolio.

This Project has been going well, and we aim for it to continue.

### **c) Weekly newsletter to societies**

#### **Aimed outcome of the project?**

To inform societies of each other's activities and events in order to encourage collaboration and support.

### **Planning and Budgeting**

No funding is needed for this project.

This is an ongoing project. The same information that is sent for the MFM announcement is also sent to societies in a newsletter. Any further events or activities that a society would like to share with other societies should also be sent to the Societies Council Chairperson by a Tuesday 17:00 to be sent out to other societies.

### **d) Update the Chair handbook and supporting documents**

#### **Aimed outcome of the project?**

To provide chairperson with the most up to date and relevant information in order for them to manage their societies efficiently and effectively. Further, to minimize queries and empower chairs to solve minor issues themselves.

### **Planning and Budgeting**

No funding is required for this project.

This is an ongoing project. I intend to update this handbook to bring it in line with current operations, specifically with regards to the financial protocol changes. I suggest that this handbook is continuously updated. Further, I intend on updating the supporting documents, specifically the registration form.

**e) Update the documents relating to starting a new society**

**Aimed outcome of the project?**

To provide students with the most up to date and relevant information in order for them to start their own societies efficiently and effectively. Further, to minimize queries and empower students to solve minor issues themselves.

**Planning and Budgeting**

No funding is required for this project.

This is an ongoing project. These documents will be updated along with the chair handbook, specifically the registration form.

**f) Website**

**Aimed outcome of the project?**

To provide students and the general public with accurate information on societies and allow them to contact societies, as well as sign up to societies via the web portal. To bring the societies website in line with the image of the university and enable future Societies Council Executive Committee to amend information as needed.

**Planning and Budgeting**

No funding is required for this project.

This is an ongoing project. The basic structure of the SharePoint website has been set up Two members (including the chairperson) of the Societies Council Executive Committee have gone for SharePoint training in order to populate the website with society information. There are many benefits to this new website, including that it is in line with the image of the University, that there is better searchability and that the information can be updated as needed.

## **IV. Plans for the next two terms**

### **A. The Third Term**

#### **a) University Open Day**

##### **Aimed outcome of the project?**

The aim is to inform potential students and their parents of societies and the function they fulfill on campus and in student life.

##### **Planning and Budgeting**

The open day itself is arranged by the University. The Societies Council Executive Committee will be at the table for the open day to provide information on societies.

#### **b) Society open days**

##### **Aimed outcome of the project?**

The aim of this project is to provide societies with a further opportunity to market themselves on campus, where they don't usually get a chance to do so.

##### **Planning and Budgeting**

I think this would be particularly effective at the beginning of the second semester when the international exchange students arrive. This should be planned in this coming term, in order to be prepared for the term thereafter.

Funding will be required for marketing material.

#### **c) Subsidy application for societies**

##### **Aimed outcome of the project?**

The aim is to provide societies with lack of funding the opportunity to apply for funding for a specific project.

##### **Planning and Budgeting**

The Societies Council has been allocated funds for this project from the SRc budget.

Societies need to apply in accordance with the subsidy criteria set out (see Addendum C) by the date which will be communicated to them. Subsidies will be allocated, taking the criteria and financial need of societies into account.

#### **d) Re-registration, registration and Honoraria**

##### **Aimed outcome of the project?**

Re-registration is aimed at the continuity of a society. Re-registration further makes the chairperson of the society eligible for an honoraria. These outcomes were achieved with the majority of societies.

Registration is aimed at creating new societies.

## **Planning and Budgeting**

No funds are required for this project.

This project entails the re-registering of societies, taking all notes stated above in part E into account.

## **B. The Fourth Term**

### **a) Chair Handover Function**

#### **Aimed outcome of the project?**

This is aimed at recognizing the service which has been delivered by the outgoing chair and to congratulate the new chair on his/her appointment.

#### **Planning and Budgeting**

Planning and budgeting for this project will commence in the third term.

## **V. Conclusion**

### **A. Closing Remarks**

My term as Societies Council Chair has been both challenging and rewarding so far. I look forward to the terms ahead, to meeting new people and rising to new challenges.

## **VI. List of Addenda**

- Addendum A. Finance Policy.
- Addendum B. Competition Criteria.
- Addendum C. Subsidy Application Criteria.