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Academic Renewal: Evolving Stellenbosch University towards Vision 2040 through its teaching and learning endeavour

1. Introduction

This document has been prepared by the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching. Its purpose is to provide the Stellenbosch University (SU) community with a synthetic conceptualisation of the Game Changer of Academic Renewal; its place in the SU Vision 2040; the areas of the academic project that constitute the focus of Academic Renewal; and the constitutive components of our initiative with a view to further engagement. This document does not include, given its very nature, an implementation plan, and is also not meant to be prescriptive in terms of environment action plans to address Academic Renewal. It offers a summary view of the goals and objectives we are aiming for each of the component elements. As the reader will see, many of the initiatives are not new, but are being integrated in a tighter way. It is our hope that academics, administrative, and professional staff as well as students will find in this document the rationale and strategy underpinning of Academic Renewal at SU and will engage with it with a sense of common purpose and direction.

2. Defining Academic Renewal

Vision 2040 sets out four aspirations for SU: i) an impeccable reputation; ii) a transformed and integrated academic community; iii) (positive) impact on the local, national, and global wellbeing; and iv) sustainability. All of this is to be achieved in the context of SU's vision to become Africa's leading research university, and one which is in the service of society. To translate this into a set of principles and practices within the teaching and learning core function, including student affairs, we use the notion of Academic Renewal.

'Renewal', denotes refreshing, rejuvenating, renovating, restoring, and reaffirming. In the context of our T&L strategy, we also use it to denote the impetus to change. That is, on the one hand we are aiming to reaffirm our commitment to teaching and learning as an activity which defines what it is to be a university, and, on the other, we are committing to continually revising and changing our practices in this area to respond more appropriately to the evolving needs of our students and our society, while at the same time continually improving.

The need to change teaching and learning practices originates in a number of factors, both systemic and institutional. Contextually in the South African higher education system, SU

has been comparatively slow in responding to the national imperatives of access and redress and to the overall drive for transformation. Now that the composition of its student body is changing, like other universities, SU needs to continue adapting its pedagogic practices, academic administration, student support systems and culture, more generally, to the needs of a diverse and multilingual community of students. This also implies a critical reflection on our approach to the professionalisation of academic teaching.

Similarly, as a consequence of student protests, since 2015 most South African universities, with varied outcomes, have taken a critical view to their curricula and pedagogies (including assessment) and the manner in which they include different knowledge perspectives; confront the relationship between disciplinary knowledge and power; engage the positionality of staff and students both in the classroom and in society; focus on the realities of South Africa and the African continent; and prepare students to deal with the problems of our time, such as climate change, growing inequality, high unemployment, fast technological change, the changing world of work, jobs of the future, political and economic uncertainty, etc. There are important examples at SU's faculties of efforts to address the decolonisation of the curriculum and the education of professionals and graduates with a social justice orientation. However, these are, generally, individual efforts that are not supported by a principled institutional position. Lately, the SU Transformation Policy, still under discussion, puts squarely on the institutional table the need to think the decolonisation of the curriculum as part of the SU's transformation drive.

Looking inside SU itself from the point of view of the performance of our students, and notwithstanding important individual efforts and successes at module and programme level, it becomes clear that, as at other similar SA universities, there is an achievement gap between white students and black students that belies SU's high student success rate averages at undergraduate level. This needs to be addressed as part of SU's commitment to be in the service of society and as part of its restitution statement. Research on extended programmes and on the broader academic development movement in South Africa has clearly shown that creating special alternatives for struggling students is not an optimal solution. In this regard, SU has the opportunity to put into practice at institutional level its own research on student success while benefitting from the extensive local and international research on teaching and learning and success to tackle this problem.

Different forms of bigotry surface on campus periodically in the behaviour of our students and also in some of the academic outputs emanating from SU. While this is not the norm, the fact that they occur requires institutional-level introspection about the reasons why this happens, and how the formal curriculum and the co-curriculum can influence students' ethical behaviour and critical ability, and to what extent SU's graduate attributes make clear this disposition.

Taking all of this into account, the transformative student experience to which SU commits itself in its strategy needs to be unpacked collectively and be given specific expression in the different fields of knowledge and professions for which we educate. This implies taking a close and critical look at the University's programme offerings in relation to its chosen graduate attributes. At the same time, it is necessary to create a clearer and more collaborative relationship between the student's formal experience in the classroom and students' experiences in the broader university environment. As a residential university spread out in a town, the SU student experience, much more than at other universities, includes a series of contiguous spaces that go from the lecture hall, to the residence, to the town and its surrounding areas.

Academic Renewal is the process by which we identify and describe the components of the student transformative experience in the formal curricular space and its interface with the co- and extra-curricular spaces; we identify the existing conceptual frameworks and support systems currently available to deliver on it and we change, amplify or improve on what we do as required to deliver on our commitment to transformation.

In thinking of Academic Renewal we also look at the sustainability of the academic project as a challenge that needs a careful response. It is imperative that we face the reality of dwindling government funding, greater demand for student financial aid, and the high cost of the different components of cutting-edge undergraduate education in the 21st century. In this context, SU needs to find strategic and pedagogically sound ways to mobilise its teaching and learning capabilities and reputation to expand its academic offerings across the contact/remote divide to cater for a broader spectrum of academic offerings, as well as attract students that would not normally have the opportunity to study physically on our campuses, through a hybrid modality. This will not only enhance the generation of additional

income to the institution that can be reinvested into the core functions; but also our reputation and range of academic offerings that will contribute to the realisation of the national imperative in terms of life-long learning.

The next sections of this document (i) look at the components of Academic Renewal providing the local and global trends in each area and the rationale for our approach; (ii) identify the necessary conditions that have to be in place to realise Academic Renewal; and (iii) analysis the component elements of Academic Renewal from an operationalisation perspective.

3. Areas of Academic Renewal

a) Programme review/renewal

There are four main impetuses that drive academic programmes change in SA and globally: i) change of the knowledge base, accelerated technological development, and the transformation of jobs and the global economy; ii) the transformation of teaching and learning itself by technology during the pandemic; iii) internationally spread student protests about the teaching of exclusively Eurocentric curricula insufficiently focused on local and continental problems of the post-colonial countries, and; iv) a growing demand that universities develop curricula that engage critically the self and society to build a better world.

In relation to the curriculum (organisation of knowledge content, pedagogy and assessment), Academic Renewal focuses on:

- The **responsiveness** of academic programmes to students and societal needs, and emerging fields of knowledge.
- The way in which curricula encourage **student engagement** with knowledge and create opportunities to develop skills, competencies, and dispositions needed in the 21st century.
- The way in which T&L at a research-intensive university develops **research skills at undergraduate level and revises curricula influenced by disciplinary-based research.**
- The practice of pedagogies able to educate students who can contribute to the **development of a democratic institutional culture and a just society as graduates.**

- **Assessment as a tool for learning** in the context of rapid technological development (AI, etc.).
- **Teaching and learning development for academics** to support Academic Renewal.
- **The interface between the core and the co-curricular** for the development of students' innovation and entrepreneurial skills (including social innovation and social entrepreneurship).

b) Appropriate honing the use of digital technologies

This has two main manifestations. First, in relation to the existing academic offerings we need to continue translating the learnings of teaching under COVID-19 into pedagogic practices that combine presential work in the classroom, and group and individual work outside the classroom. These imply the harnessing of digital technologies in and outside the classroom, on and off campus. Second, SU needs to look into the affordances of learning technologies to deliver a range of programmes and courses in a continuum that goes from block release to fully online offerings focused on professional needs of university graduates, and national skills needs at postschool level.

c) Student support systems

The concern with student success and student support systems became a main focus of national policy in South Africa over a decade ago. The main preoccupation in this regard has been to ensure that increased student access to higher education is accompanied by increased numbers of graduates. It is internationally accepted that student success depends not only on good teaching and learning. All students are social beings whose familial, emotional and socio-economic context play a crucial part in their academic success. In the case of students who come from underprivileged households and less resourced schools, material insecurity, lack of access to physical and emotional care, as well as cultural distance from the university, conspire against the realisation of equity. Student success also depends on a variety of support mechanisms focused especially, but not exclusively, on first-in-family students. At SU there is a considerable gap between the success rate of white and black students, as well as a racially skewed distribution of average graduation points, both of which need to be addressed.

In relation to student support systems, Academic Renewal focuses on:

- Building an integrated system for student success based on the bringing together the academic and the student affairs environments work across the formal, co-curricular, and extra-curricular experience.
- Simplify, and coordinate the range of offerings in the co-curricular space.
- Monitor, evaluate and intervene in the role of student communities and residences on students' academic performance.
- Address the achievement gap between white and black students across faculties and programmes (including the de-racialisation of student performance).

d) Conditions for Success

The nature of the changes that need to take place at SU in order to achieve our goals operate simultaneously in four areas: cultural, conceptual, organisational, and governance/policy. For each of these to operate satisfactorily, trust and accountability are necessary in all the divisions and centres of this Responsibility Centre (RC) in collaboration with faculties.

In the cultural area, despite its national and international projections and its networks, SU is comparatively isolated from what the South African higher education (HE) system is doing or thinking in relation to teaching and learning and should strengthen its participation in multilateral initiatives and programmes, especially those focused on student success and curriculum change. It is important to point to two consequences of this comparative isolation: SU could benefit more from stronger collaborations with other South African universities; and SU runs the risk of becoming insular and over-confident in its self-assessment. Opening SU to a more collaborative and critical analysis of its performance in the broad area of teaching and learning is a pre-condition for the success of Academic Renewal.

Conceptually, there are a number of debates about the transformation/decolonisation of the curricula, equity, lecturer development, student engagement, gender in higher education, student success, quality enhancement, etc. across the HE system that, despite individual academics efforts, have not been given sufficient space in SU academic governance structures or that passed by the university as such (i.e. the conversations might have happened among individual academics or at departmental level only), in their intensity

and importance. In order to be able to identify institutional blind spots and take a position in relation to these topics, SU needs to intentionally further engage fully with the current local and international debates on teaching and learning and more broadly higher education studies. *SU has to harness its academics' individual research and experience in these areas to strengthen the current spaces for critical dialogue about teaching and learning that also includes students.* Important in this regard is to review the mechanisms and frameworks for the recognition of the importance of teaching and learning and the reward of those academics who do an outstanding job. In relation to the former, a review of promotion criteria for academics, needs to ensure that consistently in all faculties teaching and learning carries the same weight as research in the promotion criteria. In relation to the latter, innovative mechanisms have to be put in place to facilitate and celebrate good undergraduate teaching.

From an organisational perspective, SU has extraordinary resources, from data to reporting systems, to the management of a complex enterprise. However, when this ability combines with the institution's actual functioning in the areas discussed above, it runs the risk of overstressing control over the academic enterprise itself, confusing the measurement with the object measured. This results in proposals for change that fail to bring about change because they are not interrogated about their meaning and implications. *For Academic Renewal to succeed, SU needs to soften managerial/bureaucratic control and increase intellectual engagement in the conceptualisation of its core functions.* This might require a revision of the organisational design of the T&L RC as well as the policies and overall regulatory framework that support this RC.

Also from an organisational perspective SU has a highly decentralised system in relation to the faculties but also in relation to departments within divisions in the PASS environment. While this system has its own efficiencies it also tends to create silos that undermine the achievement of institutional goals.

For Academic Renewal to succeed it is necessary to further identify the spaces of integration of the work done in faculties and the academic/student support environment.

From a governance and policy perspective, it is necessary that policies and governance structures that are expected to produce and guide change are clear about their purpose and role. *Policies aimed at guiding change must be unequivocally designed for that purpose, and their effectiveness is evaluated in terms of the change they have brought about.* Similarly governance structures whether at faculty or institutional level need to be assessed by their capacity to guide and galvanise change at the appropriate level. This implies that some policies and committee mandates might need to be reviewed in order to ensure they are fit for purpose.

Universities are by definition spaces for deliberation. Deliberation and consensus development are foundational elements of academic democracy. Staff, academics and PASS staff, as well as students, need to be part of the debate that informs decision making. This needs to be accompanied by clear mechanisms of accountability that indicate the responsibilities that each individual has in bringing about institutional goals. *The success of Academic Renewal as a game changer at SU depends on both transparent dialogue and strong accountability from the faculties to the centre and vice-versa.*

e) Key components

This section provides a high-level overview of the components of Academic Renewal. Greater detail, if needed, is provided in the addenda.

Academic Renewal requires a sharpened focus on four interrelated key components:

1. Programme review and renewal;
2. Re-imagining assessment;
3. Hybrid Learning including a continuum of academic offerings in terms of flexibility (place, mode and scale); and
4. Comprehensive student success system.

As the graphic below shows, Academic Renewal can be visualized as a driver within the broader ecosystem of the curriculum, the co-curriculum and extra-curriculum, with learning embodied during the whole lifespan of individuals (i.e., lifelong learning), representing a range of different types of learning opportunities (i.e., life-wide learning) and different levels of learning (i.e., life-deep learning).

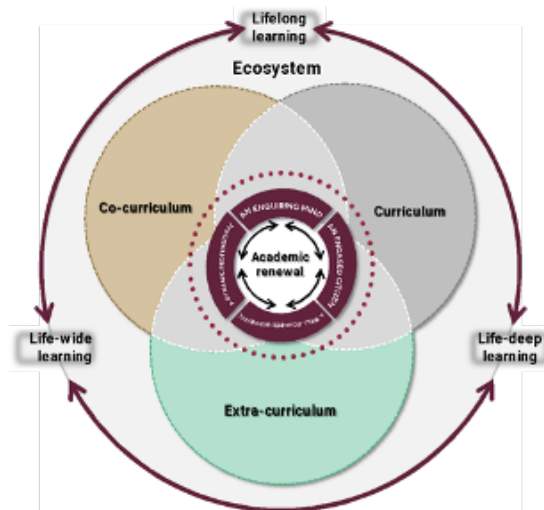


Figure 1: Academic Renewal as a driver within the broader ecosystem

A) Programme review and renewal (Addendum A)

This component looks at economic, socio-cultural, disciplinary and learning responsiveness. The goals of programme renewal as a whole are as follows.

- Investigate the state of the standardisation of credits.
- Investigate the duplication of subject content, potential credit overload and the development of interdisciplinarity.
- Review of programmes and modules from a decolonial perspective.
- Embed critical citizenship in the formal curriculum at undergraduate level in ways that are appropriate to the different academic programmes.
- Embed graduate attributes in all undergraduate programmes.

B) Assessment (Addendum B)

SU had the opportunity to successfully experiment with different forms of assessment in response to COVID-19. It has developed a new assessment policy that harnesses those gains. In relation to assessment as a component of Academic Renewal the focus is on:

- Facilitate a shift in the University's **assessment culture and practice(s)** to support a transformative student experience and networked and collaborative teaching and learning.
- Support the ethical use of **AI as a tool for learning and assessment** taking into account different the specific needs of each profession and disciplinary field offered at the SU.

C) Integrated student success system (Addendum C)

An integrated student success system is an essential part of the teaching, learning and assessment ecosystem to pursue equity of academic and personal outcomes and facilitating a transformative learning experience for all students. An integrated student success system contains the following elements:

- Large scale **academic advising** at the point of registration and throughout the years of study in faculties as well as the co-curricular space.
- Appropriate use of **data analytics** at scale and the development of an early warning system.
- Strong **psycho-social support**.
- Focus on **curriculum paths and appropriate pedagogies**.
- Strong **financial support** .
- **Professional learning** of lecturers.
- **Curriculum renewal** of modules and programmes.

The strategic project (2024-2026) will focus on building an integrated student success system in two phases one focused on first-time entering students, the second one focused on the senior years. The project has three core components:

- The support and development of the **capacity for academic advising** across all faculties.
- Reviving elements of the **First-Year Academy to augment the early warning** system and assist the academic advisors in faculties and other stakeholders.
- Map the **student journey including pathways and transitions** to provide appropriate support in each stage and increase all actors' accountability.

D) Hybrid Learning (Addendum D)

The Hybrid Learning (HL) offering gives expression to SU responsiveness to a growing need for HE to meet the educational needs of non-traditional students. This includes students whose context (personal or professional) does not allow them to study on-campus, full time. Hybrid Learning, as a mode of provision, is therefore applicable to a broadening span of academic offerings at SU.

Many lessons were learned the past three years through the implementation of the HL business plan and it is now important to focus on the following overarching goals:

- The successful **completion and closing-out of the HL strategic project** focused on the acceleration of HL as an emerging mode of provision at SU (June 2020-2023)
- Reconsidering the **financial model** including how the HL modules / programmes are considered in the **institutional budget**.
- The strengthening of **organisational capacity** and the **internal support infrastructure** for HL as a crucial, and growing mode of provision at SU.
- The strengthening and expansion of the **partnership with edX**.

Addendum A: Programme Review and Renewal

Learning-centered teaching-learning-assessment as aligned to a well-considered, well planned, epistemically diverse curriculum towards decoloniality and the preparation of graduates for a sustainable future, is valued (Padayachee, Matimolane & Ganas, 2018). According to Morreia, Lockett, Kumalo & Ramgotra, (2020:2), “[t]hese practices affect both what knowledge is produced via research and then selected for a curriculum (what content is taught), and the ways in which [TLA] occur (how curriculum knowledge is taught, including the social power relations at work in teaching and learning)”. Within such an epistemically diverse curriculum, conceptual knowledge is addressed alongside contextual knowledge (Padayachee, Matimolane & Ganas, 2018).

Drawing on these theoretical perspectives and the feedback from the faculties and the lessons learned with the institutional programme renewal project since 2017, we use the four levels of Moll’s Curriculum responsiveness framework (see figure x below) as a programme renewal framework. As depicted in **Figure 2** below, Moll's (2004) stratified model helps to consider various factors related to curriculum responsiveness in HE institutions. This model focuses on the following layers of curriculum responsiveness, namely:

- **Economic and policy responsiveness** of the curriculum denotes the ability of the curriculum to develop skilled professional practitioners in the different sectors of the economy. Therefore, economic responsiveness of the curriculum should aim to satisfy the present needs and demands of the labour market and respond to the economic challenges of the time through job creation, inventions, and innovative approaches to improve economic growth and prosperity (Formunyam & Teferra, 2017:198). Furthermore, the economic challenges that local communities face should not be ignored.
- **Socio-cultural responsiveness** of the curriculum promotes different ways of accommodating diversity in terms of the socio-cultural realities of the student body by developing ways to widen access and facilitate different learning pathways for students. It should also tap into the diverse social and cultural richness of the student body within a programme to enhance students’ authentic learning experiences.
- **Disciplinary responsiveness** of the curriculum entails a curriculum that is responsive to “the nature of its underlying knowledge discipline by ensuring a close coupling between

the way in which knowledge is produced and the way students are educated and trained in the discipline area” (Moll, 2004:7).

- **Learning responsiveness** of the curriculum refers to how the needs of students are accommodated. Responding to student needs through the curriculum entails “approaches to the design of curricula, instructional strategies, methods of assessment, and approaches to student support that take the characteristics and context of target student groups seriously” (Ogude, Nel & Oosthuizen 2005: 13).

These four dimensions of responsiveness are key to the context of decolonization in South African higher education. How responsive the curriculum is, is determined by the voices that are valued, which is in turn determined by the kind of curriculum encounters students and lecturers have within the context of higher education (Fomunyam, Kehdinga & Teferra, 2017).

These four layers also relate to three levels of engagement, macro, meso and micro that are typically needed in programme / academic renewal activities. Each of these levels of engagement will contain both structural and procedural enablers (e.g. committee systems and associated approval processes), developmental enablers (e.g. support and guidance from professional academic support services, funding, etc.) and achievement enablers (e.g. good practices that emerge from lessons learnt).

In 2017, during the workshop facilitated by Prof Gilly Salmon, a group of academics defined a list of key considerations applicable to programme renewal at SU (Salmon, van der Merwe & Schoonwinkel, 2020:134) and faculties also report back annually on these dimensions as part of the UCDG report. These key considerations (see **Appendix 1** for a more detailed description of each SU consideration) align closely with the four layers of Moll’s stratified model of curriculum responsiveness, as depicted in **Figure 2** below.

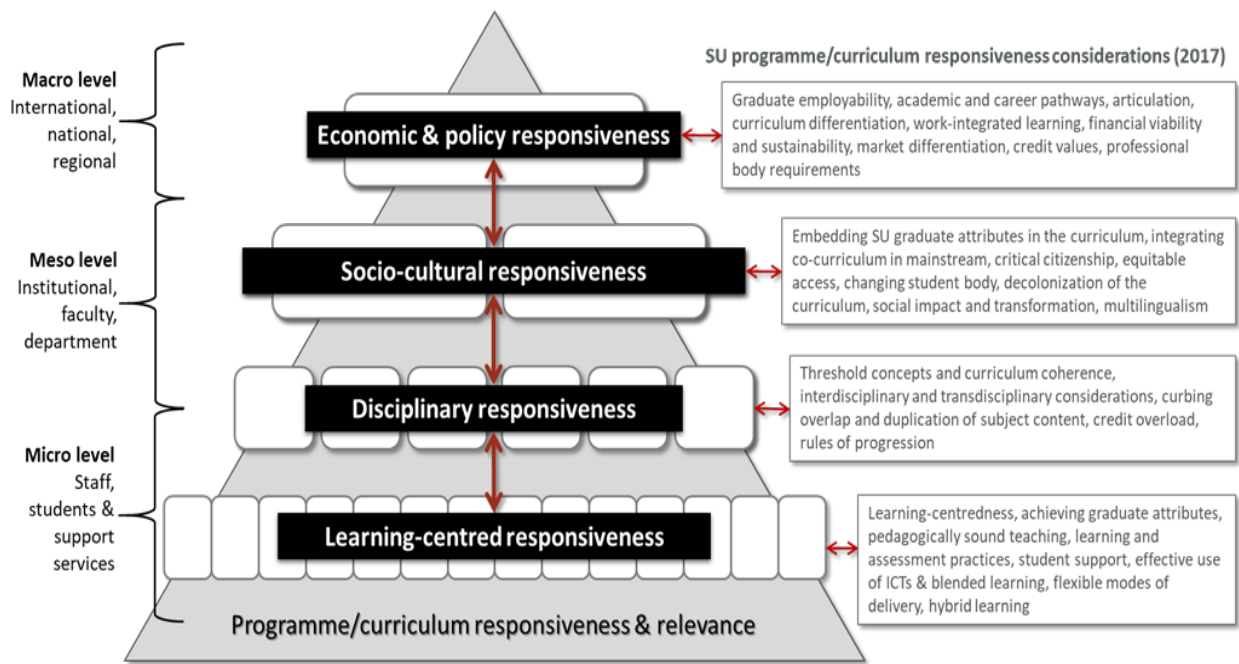


Figure 2: Curriculum responsiveness (Adapted from Moll, 2004:17)

The specific goals and objectives on each of these levels include:

1. Economic & policy responsiveness

1.1. Investigate the **standardisation of credits** (on first year and subsequent levels) to enable (it should be noted that standardization might not be appropriate for all programmes / levels):

- 1.1.1. More flexibility for students to take modules in other faculties / programmes
- 1.1.2. Sharing of modules between faculties
- 1.1.3. Inter- and transdisciplinary integration
- 1.1.4. Unbundling of modules into short learning programmes with a link to hybrid learning project
- 1.1.5. Developing an SU transcript supplement to facilitate the portability of credits and/or recognition of qualifications locally and/or internationally.
- 1.1.6. A simplified [exam] timetable
- 1.1.7. A fair and equitable workload model within departments

2. Disciplinary responsiveness

2.1. Develop resources and collaborate with academics to enable them to

- 2.1.1. Curb overlap and **duplication of subject content**

- 2.1.2. Consider **credit overload** (also see proposed standardization of credits under 1 above) and the number of notional hours per module
- 2.1.3. Consider **inter- and transdisciplinary integration**
- 2.1.4. Include elements of **internationalisation**

3. Socio-cultural responsiveness

- 3.1. A sharper focus on **decoloniality of modules and programmes**. Decoloniality applies to pedagogy and curricula as an inherently plural set of practices that aim to interrupt the dominant power/knowledge matrix in educational practices in higher education.” (Morreia, Lockett, Kumalo & Ramgotra, 2020:2) The focus is therefore on both *what knowledge is produced* via research and then selected for a curriculum (what content is taught), and *the ways in which teaching-learning-assessment occur* (how curriculum knowledge is taught, including the social power relations at work in teaching-learning-assessment). (Morreia, Lockett, Kumalo & Ramgotra, 2020:2)
- 3.2. Consider how *critical citizenship / shared humanity / being and becoming a doctor, scientist, engineer / shared humanity / ethical thinking and behaviour / what we owe one another* can be integrated into programmes through (potentially) a combination of:
 - 3.2.1. An institutional core first-year academic module integrated but contextualized within faculty context. Ideally there should also be some interdisciplinary component where students from different faculties / programmes have the opportunity to interact.
 - 3.2.2. The integration of these graduate attributes throughout academic programmes from first to final year, e.g. the MBCHB model.
 - 3.2.3. The integration of co-curriculum activities as part of the programme, e.g. the Shared Humanities co-curriculum short course.
- 3.3. Define the **attributes needed by the graduates** of the futures on institutional and programme level
 - 3.3.1. Define graduates of the futures at workshop (20 April 2022).
 - 3.3.2. Revise Learning and Teaching Policy and Strategy to include the revised graduate attributes.

- 3.3.3. Organise workshops for programme leaders to contextualise graduate attributes within the respective programmes.
 - 3.3.4. Develop resources to support academics to integrate graduate attributes within programmes.
 - 3.3.5. Encourage collaboration between professional academic support staff and academics to integrate graduate attributes within programmes.
- 3.4. Consider how **innovation and the entrepreneurial mindset** can be integrated in the curriculum and co-curriculum (see innovation and entrepreneurship game changer project) through:
- 3.4.1. Identification of programmes at SU (e.g. AgriScience) and internationally (e.g. Babson's Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Curriculum for the Entrepreneurship, see Innovation and Entrepreneurship game changer project charter) where it is already integrated and foster the sharing of good practices
 - 3.4.2. Faculty / programme specific workshops to discuss the integration of innovation and the entrepreneurial mindset (also social entrepreneurship) in programmes (i.e. curriculum and co-curriculum)
 - 3.4.3. Development of resources to assist programme leaders to integrate innovation and the entrepreneurial mindset.
 - 3.4.4. Identification of co-curriculum activities that can be integrated.

4. Learning-centred responsiveness

- 4.1. See Assessment project for specific goals and objectives
- 4.2. See Hybrid Learning project for specific goals and objectives

APPENDIX 1: SU STRATEGIC THEMES AND DIMENSIONS FOR PROGRAMME RENEWAL

- (a) Systematically consider whether academic programmes cover the important threshold concepts of the study field, and that the modules have clear outcomes to achieve the former.
- (b) Ensure that SU's desired graduate attributes are achieved by how the modules are designed and assessed.
- (c) Curricula adapted to the changing nature of the student body. Both in terms of how post-millennials prefer to learn, and the greater diversity of students that SU receives.
- (d) Match academic content, programme level outcomes and graduate attributes to the needs of the relevant job markets, to maximise employability of SU graduates.
- (e) Decolonisation of the curriculum, i.e. to ensure that a wide range of (South) African literature and case studies are included in the curriculum, to supplement learning material from Europe, the United Kingdom and the USA.
- (f) Incorporate social impact and transformation dimensions, by means of the learning material studied and work integrated learning.
- (g) The systematic rollout of ICTs, including designing a programme with a blend of on-campus and online activities.
- (h) Eliminating unnecessary duplication of content amongst modules.
- (i) Consider whether module credits are appropriate (not overloaded or lightly loaded). One credit should indeed require 10 notional hours of work for a student.
- (j) Resolve contesting demands (academic departments and professional bodies) that result in too many credits per annum and per programme.
- (k) More flexible use of contact time (lectures and tutorials) to be learning centred and consider internships and e-learning.
- (l) Systematically rethink assessment - the purpose, volume and methods in particular, to reduce the workload on staff due to rising student numbers.
- (m) Pre-requisites - need cross-faculty case studies and then an institutional solution to be sought, to avoid unnecessary hurdle modules.
- (n) Purposeful integration of curricular and co-curricular elements.
- (o) Calculate programme/module financial balances (income minus costs to offer). Work towards positive financial balances per programme/module ("profit or at least break even"), and where negative, decide explicitly on level and source for cross-subsidisation.

- (p) Imagining a creative curriculum for market differentiation, with niche areas unavailable in similar programmes from other universities.
- (q) Mode 1 programmes that can be extended for Mode 2 delivery (Mode 1 = offered face-to-face to full-time residential students; Mode 2 = a hybrid delivery of short face-to-face block contact sessions combined with mostly online out-of-class teaching using ICT).
- (r) How your faculty's programme renewal process is being/will be utilised to ensure that every student in every programme is well informed "on anti-racism, democracy and critical citizenship". [refer to Memorandum dated 30 August 2019 from Vice-rector (Learning and Teaching)]

Addendum B: Assessment

The SU Assessment policy (2021) recognises that assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching. Figure 1 below provides a graphic presentation of the SU assessment policy with the 9 principles on the left as well as the 5 possible purposes of assessment on the right of the infographic.



Figure 3: Graphic presentation of the SU Assessment policy

The policy makes provision for different assessment purposes, namely diagnostic, summative, formative, sustainable and evaluative, to emphasise a balanced approach to assessment practices aimed at developing students' enquiring minds as lifelong learners who can judge their own performance and that of others. One way of serving this end-goal is to enable and nurture students who can self- and peer-assess their own work and that of others, in line with the principles of sound and fair assessment (SU Assessment Policy, 2021). Such

an approach will also ensure that student learning is promoted by supporting students to self-monitor and check their own learning, and to reflect on learning experiences, rather than emphasising a one-sided focus on marks. In line with movements in higher education towards learning-centred teaching (Barr & Tagg, 1995) through formative assessment and its potential to transform assessment practices (Torrance, 2012), there has been an increase in critiques of the continued emphasis on summative assessment practices (Boud 2000; Knight, 2002; Schuwirth & van der Vleuten, 2011; Harrison et al., 2017). Summative assessments are part of the culture of assessment of higher education institutions and reflect deeply engrained beliefs about what is valued in assessment. Once stuck in this summative assessment paradigm (Harrison et al., 2017), it is difficult to change the culture, even when evidence of the contrary is presented.

The move to Emergency Remote Teaching, Learning and Assessment (ERTLA) in 2020 was a catalyst for change for some lecturers, allowing assessment practices that focussed more on ‘assessment for learning’. Unfortunately, this is not true for everyone and there has been a major call at SU for the return of invigilated sit-down assessments, with concerns around academic integrity as the primary driver. This potentially highlights the dominant summative assessment culture at SU. In addition to this, ERTLA also highlighted the following challenges that will be investigated and/or addressed through this project:

Examples of assessment challenges / issues	Link to criteria in <i>Assessment Policy (2021)</i>
Need for sit-down invigilated assessments	Strong focus on summative assessment, not incorporating other purposes of assessment.
How to incorporate collaboration / group work in assessments and grade them, knowing every student did their part	Validity & reliability of the results, Fairness
Students have difficulties operating own home technologies & software, students with special learning needs	Fairness and achievability
Integrity of online assessments	Academic integrity
Assessment requiring practical environments	Authenticity

Although we therefore continuously interrogate whether our assessment practices are aligned to the *Assessment Policy* (2021) principles and provisions, the assessment experiences during Covid-19 provide an additional impetus to facilitate a shift in the University’s assessment culture and practice(s) to support a transformative student experience and networked and collaborative teaching and learning. Furthermore, SU urgently needs to safeguard potential future scenarios regarding assessment that will draw increasingly on digitally supportive technologies used extensively during ERTLA.

The meteoric rise of Generative AI (ChatGPT) is also leading to a sharpened focus on the ethical and responsible use of AI tools in assessment practices and providing lecturers and students with learning opportunities, resources and guidelines to responsibly use AI tools. See figure 4 below for SU’s response.

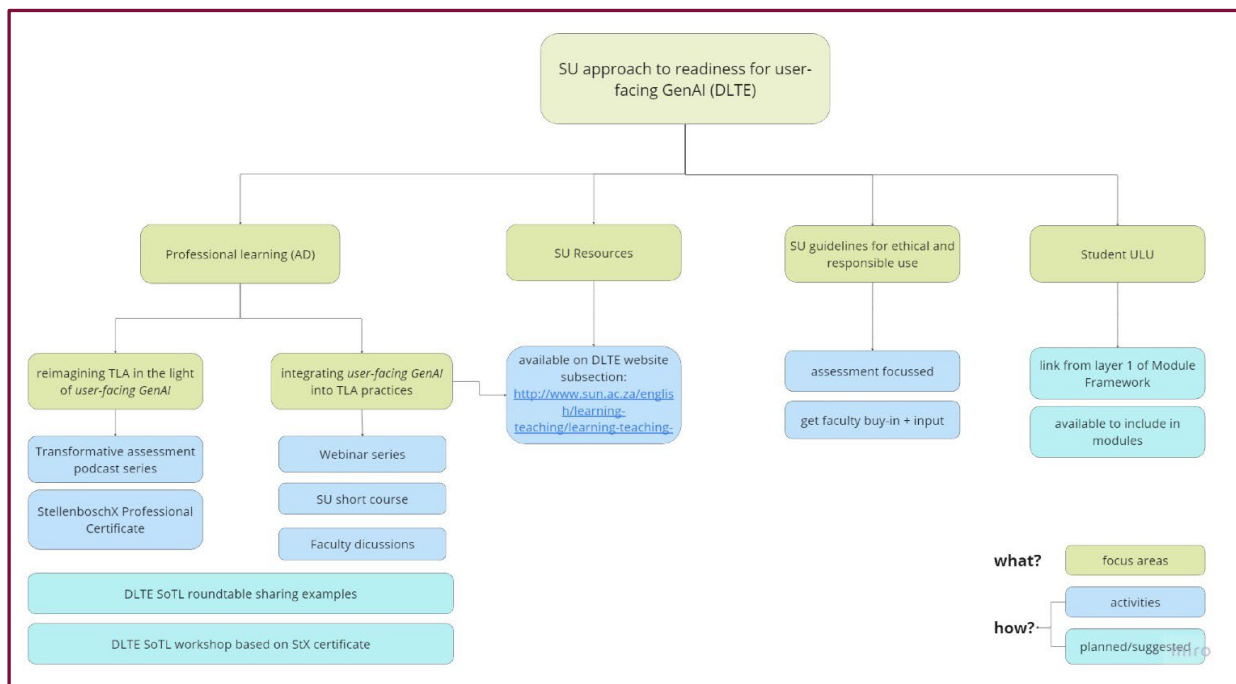


Figure 4: SU’s approach to readiness for user-facing GenAI

The three-year **Re-imagining Assessment strategic project** (2022-2024) consists of **three main components** and the components are driven, informed and aligned to the spirit and principles of the Assessment policy.

1. The **first component** focuses on **sense-making through research** and is intended to **critically engage with existing assessment practices**. This includes two separate but related efforts.

- A **university wide lecturer and student survey** (with follow-up focus group interviews) to determine what the dominant perspectives on assessment practices are; to understand how lecturers and students make meaning of the purposes of assessment; to determine what the barriers are to changing towards ‘assessment for learning’ practices, and to identify lecturers who integrate and manage to execute assessments meaningfully in their courses. Part of the sense-making will also be a **literature survey** to understand how academic development and professional learning can transform assessment practices at SU in response to scholarship and research findings.
 - A **research initiative** to provide lecturers the opportunity, in collaboration with academic developers, to describe and explain transformed assessment practices instituted during ERTLA. These **case studies** will provide crucial evidence to the institution about alternative appropriate and high-quality assessments practices (e.g., assessments that promote learning). Lecturers will apply to a designated committee for funding according to specified criteria.
2. The **second component** focuses on **change-making**, on facilitating a **shift in assessment culture and practices** utilising the results of the sense-making component. Here the focus is on:
- Expanding **professional learning opportunities** for academic staff,
 - Developing **high impact resources** to support the professional learning of academic staff,
 - Development of **quality enhancement self-evaluation criteria**, good practices and evaluative tools for measuring the implementation of assessment strategies in and across modules and programmes.
 - The promotion of multilingualism through the alignment of **online assessment tools for Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa**, and utilizing student data from writing consultations as a basis to re-imagine faculty-specific academic literacies assessments.
3. In parallel with the first two components, the **third component** of the project **investigates modes of assessment in different spaces** (i.e., designing assessment for on-campus/extended learning spaces, remote learning contexts/virtual spaces, and for the satellite campus/examination centre context) and the responsible use of AI tools. This involves:

- A critical evaluation of how **digital technologies** are currently being applied to ensure valid and reliable online assessment at SU using existing platforms such as SUNLearn. This internal context analysis of technology-mediated assessment tools and practices will be supplemented with the targeted testing and piloting of emerging ICTs that can potentially better facilitate e-assessment for SU students in future.
- The **adoption of new ICTs** (and leveraging of existing technological infrastructures) as well as **relevant training interventions and onboarding resources** to enable various stakeholders (including e-tutors) to optimally use the online assessment systems, whilst adhering to the principles of the *Assessment Policy* (2021).
- The development of learning opportunities, resources and guidelines for lecturers and students to **responsibly use AI tools**. This includes a recently launched **StellenboschX: AI in Higher Education course series**, available on edX. It consists of 4 courses:
 - Reimagining higher education teaching in the age of AI
 - Higher education learning in the age of AI
 - Higher education assessing in the age of AI
 - Higher Education teaching in the age of AI

Addendum C: Integrated student success system

At SU, student success is viewed holistically as part of a journey (from our first contact with prospective students until they graduate and embrace the role of alumni) where students are guided and supported on a transformative student experience (CHE 2014:ii). Learning from the examples of the University of the Free State and Georgia State University (GSU), an integrated student success system is an essential part of the teaching, learning and assessment ecosystem to pursue equity of academic and personal outcomes and facilitating a transformative learning experience for all students. The **integrated student success system** should ideally contain the following **elements**:

1. Large scale **academic advising** at the point of registration and throughout the years of study in faculties as well as the co-curricular space. This should be conducted in a three-tiered system by (central) professional advisors (e.g. educational psychologists), (decentralised) academics as advisors (within departments that know the academic programmes well) and peers in the curricular and co-curricular space.
2. Appropriate use of **data analytics** at scale and the development of an early warning system.
3. Strong **psycho-social support**. In line with the personalised digital wellbeing platform (a smartphone app called 'WellMaties') to support the wellbeing of all university students at SU.
4. Focus on **curriculum paths and appropriate pedagogies**.
5. Strong **financial support** (Georgia State University). This could include assisting students to find employment, funding etc.
6. **Professional learning** of lecturers
7. **Curriculum renewal** of modules and programmes

A wrap-around support system is a subset of this integrated system which focuses on a particular section of the student population. This needs to be a flexible model because not all students will need the same type(s) of support. Some of the **building blocks** of an integrated system for student success are **already in place or in process to be put in place** at SU. These include:

- Extended Curriculum programme (funded by the Foundation Grant)
- **SUNSuccess** as an early warning system based on student data analytics at scale.

- A strong **mentoring and peer-to-peer learning system** in the curricular and co-curricular space with a peer-to-peer facilitation institutional framework and online training programme for peer-to-peer facilitators as well as faculty-specific training.
- Strong **psycho-social support** through CSCD
- **Professional learning** for lecturers and other staff that might fulfil academic advising roles in the faculty or co-curricular space.
- **Curriculum renewal** of modules and programmes

The strategic project (2024-2026) will focus on building an **integrated student success system in two phases:**

- Phase one (year one)** will focus on the integration of the following aspects that are currently not fully in place and/or need to be developed further for **first-time entering students**.
- During **phase two (year two and three of this proposal)** the focus will be extended to the **senior years**.

This strategic project will include **three core components of an integrated student success system that are not well-developed yet:**

- Academic advising** (is internationally recognised as one of the most effective instruments in supporting student success. In South Africa the Kresge Foundation has supported the development of strong advising capabilities through the Siyaphumelela Network. (*Siyaphumelela, 2017*) for over a decade. At SU, a faculty survey (see *Progress Report on Academic Advising, 2023*) has found that academic advising is currently not uniformly available in all faculties. What needs to be actioned are:
 - Benchmarking* with GSU, UFS and KU Leuven and plan and cost accordingly. Colleagues from UKZN and UFS will be invited during the second semester of 2023.
 - Developing a shared understanding* of what academic advising entails (in line with national and international practice) in the faculty as well as the co-curricular space.
 - Determining the needs* within faculties re academic advising
 - Developing sufficient capacity within faculties to provide academic advising support. At least one person per faculty to hold the academic advising process.
 - Professional learning* of academic advisors to fulfil their respective roles.

- f) Developing sufficient capacity within PASS to provide academic advising support (e.g. psycho-social and reading support).
 - g) *Determining and developing data analytics* needed to assist academic advisors (academic and PASS)
 - h) *Annual evaluation* of students' and staff's perceptions and experiences of the academic advising support system (e.g. SASSE).
- 2) Reviving elements of the **First-Year Academy** to augment the **early warning system and assist the academic advisors in faculties and other stakeholders**, such as:
- a) The *early assessment system* within the first 6 weeks of every semester.
 - b) Provide a *dashboard of early assessment marks* with colour coding according to students' performance, or perhaps even indicating a more predictive code based on previous cohorts' achievements and how it is aligned with success in passing a module, year or programme.
 - c) Utilising the *Teaching and Learning Hubs* within faculties to discuss students' progress and identify at-risk students and linking them to appropriate support mechanisms utilising the tiered academic advising system to provide fit-for-purpose support.
 - d) Utilising the *Teaching and Learning Hubs* within faculties to identify potential "hurdle" gateway modules for curriculum review and renewal.
 - e) Investigating whether *letters with the early assessment results* can be sent to the individuals responsible for paying the students' fees as well as the students themselves.
 - f) Providing *appropriate analytics and dashboards*.
 - g) *Professional learning* of all academics to utilise the analytics and dashboards.
- 3) **Student journey** including pathways and transitions that could include:
- a) *Unpacking the full student journey* including the graduate attributes, the curricular and the co-curricular components and what support is available at each stage as well as the potential gaps and how to address the gaps.
 - b) Further clarifying the *SU conceptual understanding of student success*, roles and responsibilities as well as who is accountable and responsible (students, academics, support staff).

- c) Determining what is already in place in *faculties (curricular) as well as the co-curricular space* in terms of *peer-to-peer facilitation* as well as the potential gaps and how to address the gaps.
- d) *Identification of at-risk students* at registration through for example the assessment of academic literacies (see 2020 framework document on Academic Literacies available at https://languagecentre.sun.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Final_Conceptual-Framework-Document-for-Academic-Literacies-at-Stellenbosch-University.pdf) and using NBTs as diagnostic tools to put interventions in place as required.
- e) Provision of *onboarding and bridging* where required.
- f) Finalising the *graduate attributes and the Strategy for Teaching-Learning-Assessment*
- g) Organising *faculty / academic programme specific workshops on the graduate attributes* and the integration of curricular and co-curricular activities to attain the graduate attributes
- h) Doing a comprehensive module review on e.g. the *alignment of the credits and notional hours on module level*.

Addendum D: Hybrid Learning ((including a continuum of academic offerings in terms of flexibility (place, mode and scale)

The business plan for the Hybrid Learning project was approved by Senate in 2019 and the implementation started on 1 June 2020 with the appoint of the HL project manager. HL as a mode of provision can be defined as longer calendar “blocks” of fully online learning, supplemented with shorter “blocks” of contact learning. Figure 5 below shows the difference between full-contact, hybrid learning and fully online (distance) modes of provision as well as how blended learning as a pedagogical approach can be used in all three modes.

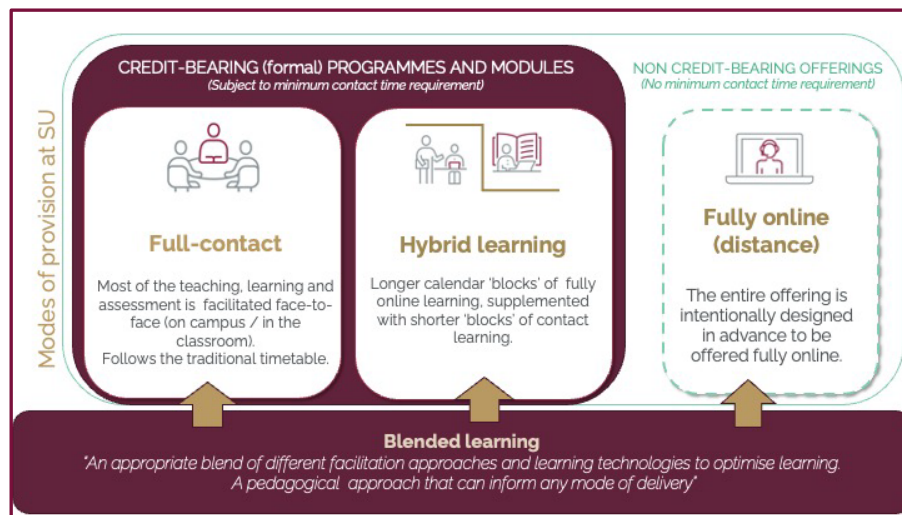


Figure 5: SU Modes of provision

The HL offering demonstrates SU responsiveness to a growing need for HE to meet the educational needs of non-traditional students. This includes students whose context (personal or professional) does not allow them to study on-campus, full time, for example:

- The so-called ‘learn and earn’ market (typically working adults interested in postgraduate offerings delivered in a flexible modality)
- Occasional students (interested in only completing a specific module, either under- or postgraduate, as opposed to a full degree, for upward career mobility or to bolster their academic specialisation),
- Students that want to complete their undergraduate degree while working or attending to personal commitments that does not allow them to regularly commute to, or reside on, SU’s campuses.

- Undergraduate students that would benefit from further opportunity modules¹, learning units² or other offerings that would provide additional pathways to academic success.

Hybrid Learning, as a mode of provision, is therefore applicable to a broadening span of academic offerings at SU. Figure 6 depicts a number of the key types of offerings that comprise SU’s articulation routes.

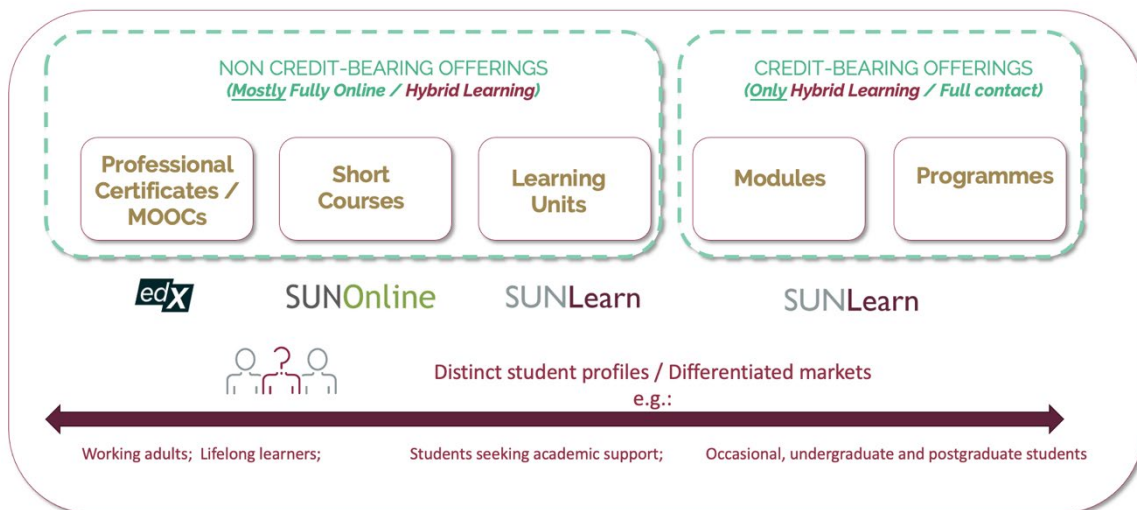


Figure 6: Categories of SU offerings

The different offerings outlined above can pose learning pathways for different student profiles. It can also serve as means to market parallel offerings. (An edX online course can, for example, function as a ‘taster’ of a full postgraduate programme on the same - or similar - topic).

Many lessons were learned the past three years through the implementation of the HL business plan and it is now important to focus on the following overarching goals:

- The successful completion and closing-out of the HL strategic project focused on the acceleration of HL as an emerging mode of provision at SU (June 2020-2023)

¹ At SU, a further opportunity module offers the same content as a gatekeeper or hurdle module. The key intended outcome of a separate HL ‘version’ of the module, offered within the same academic year, will allow students another flexible opportunity to complete their degree without registration for a next academic year.

² HL learning units can effectively share foundational knowledge or establish prior knowledge before commencing with the rest of the programme. This approach works well in an asynchronous mode. The learning units can be integrated into various modules or offered as supplementary material to students.

- Reconsidering the **financial model** including how the HL modules / programmes are considered in the **institutional budget**. This includes the overhead costs of the HL students as well as how the faculties / departments can be incentivised to expand their HL offering.
- The strengthening of **organisational capacity** and the **internal support infrastructure** for HL as a crucial, and growing mode of provision at SU.
- The strengthening and expansion of the **partnership with edX**.