



**Executive Summary**

**INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT REPORT**

**ON**

**STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY**

**August 2023**

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## List of Acronyms and abbreviations

AgriSciences	Faculty of AgriSciences
APC	Academic Planning Committee
APQ	Centre for Academic Planning and Quality Assurance
ARTLA	Augmented Remote Teaching, Learning and Assessment
ATP	Accelerating the Transformation of the professoriate
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CLT	Centre for Learning Technology
CSCD	Centre for Student Counselling and Development
CTL	Centre for Teaching & Learning
DeLTA	Designing Learning, Teaching and Assessment (framework)
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoD	Department of Defence
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
DVC (L&T)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Learning and Teaching
Education	Faculty of Education
ERTLA	Emergency Remote Teaching, Learning and Assessment
FASS	Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
FEMS	Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences
FENG	Faculty of Engineering
FMHS	Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences
FPC	Faculty Programme Committee
FSIP	Faculty Strategy Implementation Plan
HEI	Higher Education Institution

HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualification sub-Framework
HoD	Head of Department
HR	Human Resource
IF	Institutional Forum
IQA	Integrated Quality Assurance
KPA	Key performance area
KPI	Key performance Indicator
Law	Faculty of Law
LC	Language Centre
LIS	Library and Information Services
LTE	Division for Learning and Teaching Enhancement
Military Science	Faculty of Military Science
NDP	National Development Plan
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
OEP	Open Educational Practices
PAC	Programme Advisory Committee
PASS	Professional academic and administrative support service
PL	Programme Leader
PoE	Portfolio of Evidence
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
PREDAC	Professional Education Development of Academics in their Teaching Role (short course)
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
QA	Quality assurance

QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
QC	Quality Committee
QMS	Quality Management System
RC	Responsibility Centre
RCSIP	Responsibility Centre Strategy Implementation Plan
SAICA	South African Institute of Chartered Accountants
Science	Faculty of Science
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SER	Self-evaluation report
SI	Social Impact
SIP	Strategy Implementation Plan
SMI	Strategic Management Indicator
SMART(ER)	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timebound (Explainable and Relative)
SoEL	Scholarship of Education Leadership Short Course
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
SRC	Student Representative Council
SU	Stellenbosch University
SU Strategic Plan	Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019 – 2024
Theology	Faculty of Theology
ToR	Terms of Reference
UCDG	University Capacity Development Grant
UCDP	University Capacity Development Plan
UN	United Nations
WIL	Work-integrated learning

## Executive Summary

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) was established through the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997, as amended) primarily to assure quality in the South African higher education sector and to advise the Minister on aspects of higher education. The National Qualifications Framework Act (No. 67 of 2008, as amended) conferred additional responsibilities on the CHE as the Quality Council for higher education, with overall responsibility for the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework (HEQSF). The CHE executes its quality assurance responsibilities through its permanent committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC). The CHE, through the HEQC, exercises its quality assurance function using a variety of mechanisms, one of which is institutional audits that are mandated by the Higher Education Act.

The *Framework for Institutional Audits (2021)*<sup>1</sup> and its attendant *Manual for Institutional Audits (2021)*<sup>2</sup> are key instruments to regulate the implementation of institutional audits. These documents are also aligned in important aspects to the new Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)<sup>3</sup> that was approved by the HEQC and Council in September 2020 and is being implemented in the medium term by the CHE. Institutional audits are strongly influenced by both the specific context within which each HEI works and by the national transformational agenda within which higher education functions. The HEQC has identified a need to do full audits of all HEIs in South Africa. A full audit of an institution determines whether or not, and to what extent, an institution's IQA systems, policies and procedures ensure the effective provisioning of good quality higher education that enhances the likelihood of student success, through quality learning and teaching, research opportunities and integrated community engagement. The emphasis is less on ensuring that required standards are met at a particular threshold than on the deliberate, continuous, systematic and measurable improvement of the student experience, as well as on building reflexive praxis to develop quality cultures in institutions.

The following principles guided the institutional audit of Stellenbosch University:

1. The primary responsibility for internal quality assurance rests with individual HEIs. Each institution is responsible for the establishment, implementation, maintenance, improvement and enhancement of its own quality management and assurance systems.
2. The uniqueness of each institution's size, shape, location, context and mission is recognised.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/framework-institutional-audits-2021>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/manual-institutional-audits-2021>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.che.ac.za/publications/frameworks/quality-assurance-framework-qaf-higher-education-south-africa>

3. The value of institutional audits rests on the compilation of credible, contextually relevant and reliable information that is required for internal quality-related planning and self-evaluation, peer review and public reporting (for example, by publishing executive summaries).
4. Student experience, student engagement and participation and the student voice are central to an evaluation of an institution's quality management system.
5. The institutional audit is a peer-driven and evidence-based process to ensure that the HEQC and its audit panel reports are transparent, informed and consistent.
6. Institutional audits are developmental and intent on supporting continuous quality improvement and enhancement.
7. Institutional audits are required to balance their developmental character with the regulatory requirement that the CHE and the HEQC act on poor provisioning where institutions have no clear commitments, processes, practices or plans to improve.
8. Institutional audits are a key component of the HEQC's broad-based quality assurance mandate.

Aligned to international practice, the HEQC uses a review methodology consisting of an institutional self-evaluation report (SER), and an external peer review which verifies, triangulates and validates the institution's self-evaluation. The external peer review consists of a document analysis of the SER and institutional portfolio of evidence, as well as a site visit at which interviews are conducted with constituencies and physical infrastructure is visited. This audit report forms the outcome of the institutional audit of Stellenbosch University.

### **A brief overview of the Institution**

Stellenbosch University (SU) is one of 12 traditional universities in South Africa and characterises itself as a leading, residential and research-intensive institution. SU received public university status in 1918 and is one of the oldest universities in South Africa. In 2021, the enrolment was 32 255 students of which approximately 65% were undergraduate, 33% postgraduate and 2% occasional students, with more than 3 000 international students from over 100 countries. Students from South Africa comprise 95.5% of all undergraduates and 84% of postgraduates.

The University's<sup>4</sup> vision is to be

*Africa's leading, research-intensive university, globally recognised as excellent, inclusive and innovative, where we advance knowledge in service of society.*

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<sup>4</sup> University with a capital U is used throughout the report to denote Stellenbosch University.

And the mission is

*Stellenbosch University is a research-intensive university where we attract outstanding students, employ talented staff and provide a world-class environment; a place connected to the world, while enriching and transforming local, continental and global communities.*

The University is regarded as one of the leading tertiary institutions in South Africa based on its research outputs, the number of National Research Foundation-rated researchers, high student success rates, and international reputation.

The University has all the expected governance and management structures in place, supported by policies, procedures, and other guiding documents. The University undertakes its work through six Responsibility Centres as follows:

- Research, Innovation and Postgraduate Studies,
- Learning and Teaching,
- Social Impact Transformation and Personnel,
- Strategy, Global and Corporate Affairs,
- Operations and Finance, and
- Registrar's Division.

The first four Responsibility Centres are each led by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The Responsibility Centres include several Divisions, Centres and Units through which they execute their responsibility. The University has a full suite of Professional Academic and Administrative Support Services in place which provide an impressive array of support for staff and students.

In 2022, the University operates from four campuses (Stellenbosch main campus with satellite campuses in Tygerberg, Bellville Park and Saldanha) and offers a Bachelor of Agriculture at Elsenburg Agricultural Training Institute. Work-integrated Learning sites are located mostly in the Western Cape. Eighty percent of students are based at the Stellenbosch main campus which is home to eight of the ten faculties (AgriSciences, Arts and Social Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, Education, Engineering, Law, Science and Theology). The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences is located at the Tygerberg campus with 13% of students, the Faculty of Military Science with 1.6% of students is located at the Saldanha Bay campus and the School for Public Leadership and the Stellenbosch Business School, both in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences with 4.5% of students, are at the Bellville Park campus.

The 10 faculties differ substantially in size, shape and complexity with differing numbers and proportions of undergraduate and postgraduate students, full-time and part-time students, gender and demography, number of departments and institutes and centres, number and range of qualifications offered, and number and demography of academic staff. In terms of size and



shape, 44% of students are in the management sciences, 29% in the humanities, and 27% in the natural and applied sciences. The faculties are:

- The Faculty of AgriSciences with 11 departments and five institutes and centres,
- The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences with 18 departments and 15 institutes and centres,
- The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences with eight departments and 12 institutes and centres,
- The Faculty of Education with three departments and two institutes and centres,
- The Faculty of Engineering with five departments and two institutes and centres,
- The Faculty of Law with three departments and the Law Clinic,
- The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences with 14 departments and 19 institutes and centres,
- The Faculty of Military Science with five schools, 19 departments, and two institutes and centres,
- The Faculty of Science with eight departments, seven institutes and centres, and two associated institutes, and
- The Faculty of Theology with three discipline groups, and five institutes and centres.

Staff-to-student ratios in 2020 varied from a low of 1: 20.6 in science to a high of 1: 38.4 in education.

SU offers a Programme and Qualification Mix with approximately 961 accredited programmes including Higher and Advanced Certificates, Diplomas, Advanced Diplomas and Postgraduate Diplomas, Bachelor's degrees, Honours degrees, Master's and Doctoral degrees.

The demography of the newcomer students (the term used at SU for first-time entering undergraduates) did not change significantly between 2018 and 2021 and remains at about 60% White, 18% Coloured, 17% Black<sup>5</sup> African, 4% Indian and Asian and 1% withheld. At a postgraduate level, in June 2021, 47.1% of students were White, 15.2% Coloured, 32.6% Black African and 3.9% Indian and Asian. Enrolments of Black African postgraduate students have changed little between 2018 (3 383 students) and 2021 (3 450 students).

The majority of students in 2021 self-identified as being English home language speakers (49%) with 35% as Afrikaans, 5% isiXhosa, 7% other South African languages and 4% other

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<sup>5</sup> Capital letters are used throughout the report to denote demographic groupings such as Black.

international languages. Since 2018, there has been a significant increase in the number of students self-identifying as isiXhosa and other African home language speakers from 2 912 students (9% of all students) in 2018, to 3 825 (12%) in 2021.

Like many higher education institutions, the majority (55.4%) of students are female and this varies significantly between and within faculties with more male students in engineering (72.5%) and military science (64.1%), and more female students in education (78.7%), arts and social sciences (71.8%), medicine and health sciences (69.6%) and law (65.6%).

SU draws most of its first-time entering undergraduate students from quintile 5 schools (60% in 2021), 27% from private schools and new schools that have not yet been classified, and 7.3% from quintiles 1 to 3. The number of NSFAS-funded students at SU increased from 2 395 in 2018 to 3 926 in 2020, suggesting that there may have been an increase in the proportion of students coming from lower quintile schools.

Twenty-four percent of all students are accommodated in university housing and 76% in private accommodation. All students not staying in university accommodation are classified as staying in private accommodation, which includes students staying at home, in accommodation they have secured, or in private accommodation that has been accredited by SU. The placement of first-time entering first-year students in university accommodation is prioritised with 35% of all undergraduate students being placed in University accommodation. In the allocation of students to university accommodation, consideration is given to race, socio-economic status, first-generation student status, and NSFAS funding. In 2022, 2 544 first-time entering first-year students were placed in university residences (45.4% White, 28.5% Black African, 17.6% Coloured, 2.8% Indian, 3.6% International, 2.1% withheld).

To provide greater support for students staying off campus, the University has developed a Residential Education Cluster system in which all students are allocated to a cluster that provides them with a dedicated physical space on campus to meet and socialise.

The University is well provided with land (576ha) and infrastructure (490 buildings with 820,810m<sup>2</sup> of usable space). The nature of the space, age and condition of the buildings varies between campuses, with the Stellenbosch campus being open and embedded within the town and including old and newer buildings, and the Tygerberg campus being fenced. The grounds and day-to-day operations of the Saldanha Bay campus are managed by SU, although the property is owned by the Department of Defence. The University does not receive subsidies for the students and the budget for improvement lies with DoD. The University has an ongoing Campus Renewal Project with a particular focus on designing new – and retrofitting existing – buildings to create flexible and adaptable spaces, and to support new ideas in teaching and learning, including blended- and hybrid learning.

In 2020, SU employed 4 542 staff (including staff on fixed-term contracts and 230 international staff) of which 11% were Black African, 37% Coloured, 2% Indian and 50% White. Sixty percent of all staff were female and 40% male. In 2021, the University employed 1,377 academic staff (30.3% of all staff). The employment equity profile of the academic staff and those in senior positions clearly illustrates the extent of the challenges that SU faces in transformation. For example, 71% of all academic staff were White and, of 348 directors and full professors, 49 were

foreign, 11 were Black African and the majority (288) White. In terms of gender, 65.6% of all directors and full professors were male. However, progress has been made in recent years and since 2018, there has been an increase in the proportion of Black African academic staff from 4.7% in 2018 to 8.0% in 2021 and an increase in the proportion of female academic staff from 48.6% in 2018 to 51.3% in 2021.

Student success rates in undergraduate degrees and diplomas across the University was 87.2% and in 2019, was the highest of all universities in South Africa. However, the success rate of its African students (78.1%) was the fourth lowest of all universities in South Africa, and the University acknowledges that ensuring equity of success is an area for improvement. When success is viewed in terms of throughput rate, the average throughput rate for undergraduate bachelor programmes for White students is 68.2% in n+0 years (where n is the minimum time) and 88.9% in n+2 years, and for Black African students it is 39.8% in n+0 and 67.5% in n+2 years.

Research for impact is one of SU's six core strategic themes and progress against a set of strategic indicators is tracked annually. Individual staff are free to undertake research in any area of their choice, but the University has identified five strategic research areas which drive its research agenda. Research and researchers at SU are supported by Divisions for Research Development, Library and Information Services and the Postgraduate Office, and a range of cutting-edge research equipment and facilities. SU summarises its research strength in 2021 in terms of:

- 492 NRF rated researchers, of which 14 are A-rated, the highest number at any university in the country,
- 320 bilateral partner institutions,
- 348 postdoctoral fellows,
- 7 centres of excellence funded by the Department of Science and Innovation,
- 47 research Chairs,
- The highest number of patent applications of all universities, research councils and private companies in South Africa,
- 4774 Master's and 1607 registered PhD students, and
- 302 doctoral degrees awarded.

The throughput rate in 1-year Master's degrees is 10 - 12% in n+0 (where n is the minimum time), and 63 - 65% in n+2 (3 years), and in 2-year doctoral programmes is 7 - 11% in n+0 (2 years) and 67 - 70% in n+4 (6 years). The performance of Black African students is substantially poorer than that of their White counterparts.

SU has aligned its Social Impact (SI) activities (engagement, or community engagement at other universities) with the Sustainable Development Goals, the National Development Plan (2030) and the Western Cape Provincial Strategic Plan 2019 - 2024.

In the SER, the University acknowledges the racist incidents and alleged rape that occurred in May 2022 and discusses the actions that the University took at the time, including setting up an independent, external commission of enquiry. Since then, the independent commission of enquiry has completed its work and released its report (*Commission of Enquiry into Allegations of Racism at Stellenbosch University. Final Report. Emeritus Justice Sisi Khampepe, 25 October 2022*).

**A brief overview of the audit process: a short reflection on the SER, the site visit dates and structure, and the work of the panel.**

The Audit Panel is satisfied with the audit process. The SER is detailed and comprehensive in its coverage, well-illustrated with both figures and tables, and the Panel found it easy to read and work with. Supporting material is readily accessible through the links in the SER to the portfolio of evidence, and where requests were made for additional information, this was quickly provided. Further information was sourced from the Stellenbosch University Website.

The site visit included both virtual and physical components with all the interviews taking place remotely from Monday 31 October to Thursday 3 November 2022. The physical site visit took place on Friday 4 November 2022, and culminated in a brief report back to the Rector, members of the Rectorate and members of the team that managed the audit process.

The interviews ran as planned and were not disrupted by load-shedding. The expected staff and students from Stellenbosch University were present and all interviews started on time. The interviews took place in a positive spirit, and staff and students engaged actively with the questions and lines of enquiry.

Four members of the Panel visited the Tygerberg and Stellenbosch main campuses and agreed that what they saw reflected what had been heard in the interviews and what they had read in the SER.

At the Tygerberg Campus, the visit included an initial introduction to the campus and its facilities and plans. Members of the Panel visited learning and teaching facilities including newly built or renovated, general-purpose lecture venues designed to create extended and small learning spaces. A mock hospital ward, individual patient examination rooms, student centres, and a library were also visited. In the latter, it was pleasing to note the large number of physical collaborative spaces, enhanced with digital technology, created for student learning.

An impressive addition to SU is the new Biomedical Research Institute, which is bench-marked against advanced biomedical research facilities globally. This facility allows for the expansion of current research activities, as well as underpinning research and teaching in the field of bioinformatics and cognate fields. In this Institute, members of the Panel were pleased to see the room set aside for nursing mothers and the overall design affordances contributing to usability in the institute, including the rest rooms. It was noted that room signage was in a single

language, English, while elsewhere, on the Stellenbosch main campus, multilingual signage was observed.

At the Stellenbosch main campus, the Jan Mouton Learning Centre is a multifunctional teaching and learning facility with impressive upgraded technological infrastructure for teaching. The Jan Mouton building houses learning and teaching facilities, including extended learning spaces, that have audio-visual equipment and systems that lecturers use to stream classes, communicate with students not physically present and allow them an interactive learning experience comparable to that of the in-class students.

The *Makerspace*, which is located in the Stellenbosch library is an innovative and stimulating purpose-designed space for students' experimental and experiential learning, collaborative prototyping and inventing for researchers. The space has equipment and tools including 3D scanners and printers, computers and programming software.

The Panel visited a number of learning teaching, and research facilities, some of which have been renovated including the Faculty of Engineering Computer User Area; laboratories for Mechatronics, Microbiology and Physiology including the Physitutor undergraduate labs; Polymer Science postgraduate labs; and laboratories for experimental viticulture, sensory and chemical studies. All laboratories were well supported with a range of advanced special purpose equipment, microcomputer systems and robotic devices.

Existing buildings are being repurposed to support the Institution's learning-centred approach by creating spaces that give students access to the University's electronic network and allow them to learn through group work. For example, the Student Learning Commons in the Stellenbosch Library are vibrant hubs with bright colours that allow a variety of seating arrangements in which staff and students have flexible access to technology and access to the library's collection, databases, internet and utility software. The Panel members noted the small number of Black, Coloured and Indian students in these facilities, and a staff member explained that the library staff were worried about this absence. Despite efforts to make the facilities attractive to all students, they seemed to be unsuccessful.

The Panel members visited the Centre for Learning Technologies which provides SUNLearn support, and discussed the Hybrid Learning Centre, which uses its studio for the Telematic Schools Project that SU offers in collaboration with the Western Cape Education Department to teach and explain difficult concepts in fifteen subjects to learners from disadvantaged communities.

Stellenbosch student residences are within the town and the security that is deployed increases the safety of the students who walk to and from the university. Although some of these residences are old, they are well maintained, and new residences are also being constructed. Other old buildings are being renovated to re-purpose them to provide additional study centres and to accommodate commuter students, when necessary.

At both sites, the staff members who accompanied the Panel members were well-informed and interacted positively with the Panel.

The following is a summary of the audit panel's commendations and recommendations for Stellenbosch University.

## **Focus area 1: Governance, strategic planning, management and leadership support the core academic functions**

The four standards in Focus Area 1 concentrate on the role that an institution's *governance, strategic planning* (as contained in its *vision, mission and strategic goals*), *management and academic leadership* play in its quality management in order to enhance the likelihood of student success and to improve the quality of learning, teaching and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive, integrated community engagement.

**Standard 1:** *The institution has a clearly stated vision, mission, and strategic goals which have been approved by appropriate governance structures, subject to comprehensive stakeholder engagement.*

The vision and mission are clearly stated, and institutional goals have been developed and are presented in the SU Strategic Plan. Development of the SU Strategic Plan included wide consultation and the plan was approved by Council. However, given the low success rate of its African students, SU has considerable work to do if it is to meet its goal of providing opportunities for all students to succeed. Although SI is central in the vision and mission statements, it remains less developed than research, and teaching and learning.

### **Recommendations**

1. It is recommended that the University continue to refine the institutional goals and indicators in each of the core strategic themes to explicitly direct attention to the key transformational challenges faced.

**Standard 2:** *The stated vision, mission and strategic goals align with national priorities and context (e.g. transformation, creating a skilled labour force, developing scarce skills areas and a critical citizenry, and contributing to the fulfilment of national goals as informed by the NDP and related national planning), as well as sectoral, regional, continental and global imperatives (e.g. Africa Vision 2063 or the Sustainable Development Goals).*

The Panel concludes that the vision, mission and core strategic themes of SU are aligned with national priorities and context, and address issues of transformation, creation of a skilled labour force, development of scarce skills areas and a critical citizenry, and contribute to the fulfilment of national goals as informed by the NDP and related national planning, as well as sectoral-, regional-, continental- and global imperatives. As a rider, the Panel notes that it will only be with the full implementation of the SU Strategic Plan, and the structures, policies and processes, some of which are still in development, that the University will fully achieve its goals.

## Commendations

- a. The University is commended for the recent establishment of the two type-3 Schools (School for Climate Studies and School for Data Science and Computational Thinking), which represent a shift of focus to transdisciplinary thinking and research and directly address national and international priorities.
- b. The University is commended for the inclusion of a transformation KPA in all staff work agreements.

## Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the University intensify its efforts on the path that it has started on to address transformation in its broadest sense and to ensure that centrally held ideas, policies, processes and practices become embedded throughout the University and that all stakeholders are aware of and implement the transformation agenda.
3. It is recommended that the Transformation Plan (updated 2019) be amended to include clear targets, outputs, timeframes, and measurable indicators and identify responsible individuals, for the University as a whole and for each faculty and Professional academic and administrative support service (PASS) division.
4. It is recommended that the University ensure that line managers are provided with the required support for the development of meaningful and SMART transformation KPAs and KPIs for staff work agreements.

**Standard 3:** *There is demonstrable strategic alignment between the institution's quality management system for core academic activities across all sites and modes of provision and its vision, mission and strategic goals, as well as its governance and management processes.*

The Panel concluded that there is alignment between the QMS and the SU Strategic Plan, and that there are the necessary policies, processes and committees in place. The success of a QMS rests to a certain extent on the quality of the Strategic Management Indicators (SMIs) and SU is encouraged to refine its SMIs to allow issues such as differential student success to be tracked. The success of the QMS also requires oversight committees to fulfil their responsibilities and ensure that, for example, SERs at least meet the minimum requirements. The University should continue to discuss faculty autonomy, particularly where there is a need to drive systemic change.

## Commendation

- c. The University is commended for the high quality of the online and in-person support provided by the CTL and APQ for the 6-year reviews of departments and PASS divisions, which form a key element of the QA system.

## Recommendations

5. It is recommended that the University ensure that all departmental SERs explicitly address key issues of concern, including undergraduate and postgraduate success rates particularly those of the Black African students, and transformation.
6. It is recommended that the University ensure that the core statistics provided to departments as they prepare their SER include disaggregated data on student success and include both the percentage of modules passed and throughput rates or cohort analyses.
7. It is recommended that the University ensure that departmental and divisional SERs are rigorously reviewed by staff who have this responsibility and that training is provided on the minimum requirements for an SER.
8. It is recommended that the University ensure that Faculty Strategy Implementation Plans (FSIPs) include indicators that are SMART, and which allow progress against the plan to be measured.
9. It is recommended that the University use disaggregated student data in the development of its SMIs.
10. It is recommended that the University establish a committee charged with the responsibility of reviewing the extent of the devolution of power and responsibility to faculties and PASS divisions and if and how this devolution of power is inhibiting transformation at SU.

**Standard 4:** *There is a clear understanding of and demonstrable adherence to the different roles and responsibilities of the governance structures, management and academic leadership.*

The Panel is satisfied that the necessary governance and management structures are in place and that, in most cases, documented and approved ToRs are in place and being implemented. The Panel believes that given the clear ToRs and Mandates, all committees, other structures, and academic leaders should understand their roles and responsibilities. However, given the slow and unequal pace of transformation across SU, the panel is unsure that, particularly at middle management levels and below, these roles and responsibilities are adhered to.



## Commendation

- d. The University is commended for offering the Scholarship of Educational Leadership Short Course as a contribution to the development of a new generation of academic and educational leaders.

## Recommendations

11. It is recommended that the University ensure that all faculties have a full set of committees, including for quality assurance and transformation with approved ToRs in place.
12. It is recommended that the University ensure that all faculty-based learning and teaching committees include both undergraduate and postgraduate student representation.
13. It is recommended that the University ensure that, at the middle management level and below, KPAs and KPIs are developed, particularly for transformation in its broadest sense, and included in the annual work agreements for all staff.

## Focus area 2: The design and implementation of the institutional quality management system supports the core academic functions

The four standards in Focus Area 2 concentrate on how the *design and implementation of an integrated quality management system* in the institution enhances the likelihood of student success and improves the quality of learning, teaching and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive, integrated community engagement within the context of the institution's mission.

**Standard 5:** *A quality assurance system is in place, comprising at a minimum, of:*

- (i) *governance arrangements*
  - (ii) *policies*
  - (iii) *processes, procedures and plans*
  - (iv) *instructional products*
  - (v) *measurement of impact*
  - (vi) *data management and utilisation*
- as these give effect to the delivery of the HEI's core functions.*

The Panel concludes that SU has an established QA system in place that includes appropriate governance arrangements, policies, processes, procedures, and plans, some currently under review and revision, and instructional products.

## Commendation

- e. The University is commended for the excellent websites of the Division for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (LTE) and its Centres, and the Research Development and Postgraduate Office, which provide staff and students with a wide array of high-quality

online guidance and support which together promote excellence in learning and teaching, and research.

## Recommendations

14. It is recommended that the University prioritise the development of a policy for Social Impact including a clear, integrated strategy with targets, outputs, timeframes, measurable indicators, and identified responsible persons, to drive an institution-wide understanding and implementation of SI.
15. It is recommended that the University develop and implement methods to monitor the impact of divisional interventions and activities including workshops, to facilitate quality enhancement.
16. It is recommended that the University continue to prioritise the review of policies in accordance with the cycle of policy review.

**Standard 6:** *Human, infrastructural, knowledge management and financial resources support the delivery of the institution's core academic functions across all sites of provision, in alignment with the concomitant quality management system, in accordance with the institution's mission.*

SU's human-, infrastructural-, knowledge-management and financial resources that support the core academic functions are generally more than adequate, except in the APQ. In particular, SU provides excellent digital research support, teaching and learning resources, and advanced laboratory facilities. The results of staff wellbeing surveys indicate that bullying, gender-based violence and discrimination against women remain a problem and that not all staff experience the SU culture as welcoming, and this was confirmed in interviews. WIL is properly managed in The Bachelor of Social Work.

## Commendation

- f. The University is commended for the quality of the infrastructure that supports learning teaching and research and specifically for the creation of extended learning spaces that will support innovative teaching.

## Recommendations

17. It is recommended that the University prioritise meeting the staffing needs of the APQ.
18. It is recommended that the University develop and implement an integrated, system-wide plan to address bullying and other unacceptable behaviours, facilitate transparent and fair promotion opportunities for, in particular, women and continue to strive for a more inclusive culture.
19. It is recommended that the University explore the use of a range of survey techniques, including focus group discussions for the wellness and culture surveys, to improve the response rate and the quality of the information gathered.

**Standard 7:** *Credible and reliable data (for example, on throughput and completion rates) are systematically captured, employed and analysed as an integral part of the institutional quality management system so as to inform consistent and sustainable decision-making.*

The Panel concludes that SU has a very well-developed capacity to collect, collate and analyse data and to provide it in a user-friendly manner. Credible and reliable data (for example, on throughput and completion rates) are systematically captured and made available to staff. The extent to which these are employed and analysed as an integral part of the institutional quality management system to inform consistent and sustainable decision-making is less clear and, based on the faculty examples, the use of learning analytics varies across the faculties.

### **Commendations**

- g. The University is commended for the quality and ease of use of the information that is made available to staff to inform QA processes, through the BI dashboards and Excel spreadsheets.
- h. The University is commended for the development of the integrated tracking system for student success (SUNSuccess).

### **Recommendation**

- 20. It is recommended that the University develop and offer a comprehensive staff development programme that will empower staff to make full use of the information provided to inform quality assurance and enhancement processes. The programme should include both technical content on how to best use the Power BI dashboards and Excel spreadsheets, and educational content that focuses on the questions that should be asked and how the data can be used to address them.

**Standard 8:** *Systems and processes monitor the institution's capacity for quality management, based on the evidence gathered.*

The Panel concludes that decision-makers at all institutional levels have ready, appropriate and protected access to sufficient, reliable and current electronic evidence (data, information and institutional knowledge). However, the faculty examples indicate that the capacity and ability to use this information to support the making of informed decisions on the quality management of the core academic functions of the institution is variable. Indeed, some faculty responses suggest that some faculties are unaware of the range of information available in the institution (see recommendation 20). It is also clear to the Panel that structures exist to allow substantive and documented engagements among staff, and among staff and students, on all aspects of quality management (implementation, support, enhancement and monitoring). The text in the SER for this Standard includes insufficient information on how internal QA processes – beyond

those described in the Policy for Quality Assurance and Enhancement at SU – were adapted and monitored during the pandemic: this is touched on later in the SER and in the Audit Report.

### **Recommendations**

21. It is recommended that the University ensure that as and when policies and management documents are reviewed, the review includes accommodation of periods of disruption.

### **Focus area 3: The coherence and integration of the institutional quality management system support the core academic functions**

The four standards in Focus Area 3 concentrate on the coherence and integration of the various components comprising the institutional quality management system and on how these work in concert to support the likelihood of student success and improve the quality of learning, teaching and research engagement, as well as accommodating the results of constructive integrated community engagement in accordance with the institution's mission.

**Standard 9:** *An evidence-based coherent, reasonable, functional and meaningfully structured relationship exists between all components of the institutional quality management system.*

The Panel concludes that an evidence-based coherent, reasonable, functional and meaningfully structured relationship exists between all components of the institutional quality management system, and there is sufficient evidence that QA processes are embedded in the management structure at different levels. However, the University has noted in the SER that the formal evaluative processes are a challenge in some faculties, regarding time and knowledge of what these processes mean, that is, the intellectual sense-making that forms part of the evaluative activity. This is reinforced by the view that time spent could be better used in the core functions of teaching, research, and SI.

### **Recommendations**

22. It is recommended that the University include evaluative and QA processes in the normal workload calculations of all staff so that they are not treated as an add-on.
23. It is recommended that the University ensure that ongoing training regarding quality, quality management and quality assurance and enhancement is provided for staff so that all staff, including academic leaders, have a similar level of understanding.
24. It is recommended that the University develop comprehensive QA Manuals for learning and teaching, research, and social impact.

**Standard 10:** *Evidence-based regular and dedicated governance and management oversight of the quality assurance system exists.*

The Panel concludes that there are clear lines of authority and accountability about those staff who are assigned the responsibility of quality-related matters. While best practices are shared among all faculties and within the wider university community, the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is not equally well known or understood among all staff.

### **Commendation**

- i. The University is commended on the Teaching Enhancement seminars, the Auxin discussion groups and the annual SoTL conference and these resources are available digitally, in support of the ongoing professional development of staff as educators.

### **Recommendation**

25. It is recommended that the University develop strategies to improve the understanding of SoTL amongst all academic staff.

**Standard 11:** *Planning and processes exist for the reasonable and functional allocation of resources to all components of the institutional quality management system.*

The Panel concludes that planning and processes exist for the reasonable and functional allocation of resources to all components of the institutional quality management system. However, it appears that the SI aspect of SU's core function is not given the same attention as that given to learning and teaching, and research.

### **Recommendation**

26. It is recommended that the University consider developing a general framework for work allocation that includes minimum and maximum percent time allocated to learning and teaching, research and SI, and which explicitly recognises time spent on QA matters.

**Standard 12:** *The quality assurance system achieves its purpose efficiently and effectively.*

Due to the insufficient information and evidence provided by SU on this standard, the audit panel is unable to determine whether the quality assurance system achieves its purpose efficiently and effectively. Nevertheless, the Audit Panel believes that it can infer that resources allocated to the QMS are used for that purpose and that the performance management system has the capacity to hold staff to account.

### **Commendation**

- j. The University is commended, and FEMS specifically, for the Accelerating the Transformation of the Professoriate (ATP) project and the University is encouraged to adopt the project as a tool for driving transformation.

## Recommendation

27. It is recommended that the University develop and implement tools to evaluate the efficiency and efficacy of the QMS.

## Focus area 4: Curriculum development, learning and teaching support the likelihood of student success

The four standards in Focus Area 4 concentrate on how effectively the institutional quality management system enhances the likelihood of student success, improves learning and teaching and supports the scholarship of learning and teaching. These standards drill down in greater detail in Focus Area 2.

**Standard 13:** *An effective institutional system for programme design, approval, delivery, management and review is in place.*

The Panel concludes that SU has clear procedures for programme design and development, as well as for programme approval and review and that the procedures for programme design and development, approval, delivery (including assessment) and programme review are implemented and monitored. Although the SER provides no evidence that the internal programme review process looks for coherence between the intentions articulated during accreditation and the implemented programmes, the Panel is aware that SU policy and processes require that any changes to an approved curriculum (in its broadest sense) are considered by the Faculty, PAC, APC and Senate. It is also clear that decisions taken during the COVID-19 pandemic were taken within the general precepts of the SU policies and informed by national and international best practices. SU's adoption of blended learning and the Hybrid Learning Project are not adequately captured in its strategic plans and policies for teaching, learning and assessment and this needs to be addressed.

## Commendation

- k. The University is commended for the adoption of creative approaches to both formative and summative assessment of learning outcomes, which focus on deep learning rather than rote learning, and minimise opportunities for misconduct and breaches of academic integrity, particularly during periods of disruption.

## Recommendations

28. It is recommended that the University include formative undergraduate degrees in the 6-year internal quality assurance cycle.
29. It is recommended that the University ensure that internal QA processes (6-year review cycle) for departments and programmes require departments to report on any changes that have occurred in the programme compared to what was accredited by the CHE.

30. It is recommended that the University revise policies for educational programme design, development and provision to capture its enhanced approaches to teaching and learning, including flexible learning and Open Educational Practices.

**Standard 14:** *There is evidence-based engagement at various institutional levels, among staff, and among staff and students, with:*

1. *curriculum transformation, curriculum reform and renewal;*
2. *learning and teaching innovation; and*
3. *the role of technology (1) in the curriculum, (2) in the world of work, and (3) in society in general.*

The Panel concludes that there is evidence-based engagement at various institutional levels, among staff, staff and students, with curriculum transformation, curriculum reform and renewal, and learning and teaching innovation. However, it is clear that not all staff and students experience the openness to engagement equally and that engagement varies both between and within faculties, campuses and PASS divisions. While the role of technology in the curriculum is fully discussed, the role of technology in the world of work, and society in general is not adequately addressed in this section of the SER. The understanding of SoTL and the use of research to inform L&T varies between faculties.

### **Commendation**

- I. The Faculty of Science is commended on its SoTL research and outputs and recommends that this be used as an example of good practice that other faculties should follow.

### **Recommendation**

31. It is recommended that the University require the Faculty of AgriSciences to reconsider its approach to the use of languages and actively seek ways to promote the use of isiXhosa.

**Standard 15:** *The students' exposure to learning and teaching at the institution, across all sites and modes of provision, is experienced as positive and enabling of their success.*

The University undertakes regular surveys of both students and graduates, but the switch to an online system has resulted in poor participation. The extent to which the results from these surveys result in meaningful change is not clear to the Panel. The learning-centred approach adopted by SU is novel and, once better understood across the institution and fully implemented, will bring about greater success. Students and staff do not experience SU equally, and the culture surveys repeatedly include reports of bullying, discrimination and harassment. Staff development activities promote the professionalisation of learning and teaching, however, it is

not clear if the performance appraisal, promotion, and reward systems foster the improvement of learning and teaching.

### **Commendations**

- m. The University is commended for the development of the Be-Well Mentor Tracking and the i-FlourishWell4Life systems as tools that will allow staff and students to make data-informed decisions and promote student success.
- n. The University is commended for adopting a *learning-centred* approach to the design of teaching, learning and assessment experiences for its students.

### **Recommendation**

- 32 It is recommended that the University revise the Policy about Student Feedback on Modules, Lecturers and Programmes so that new academic staff are evaluated in their first year rather than waiting for year 2.
- 33 It is recommended that the University ensure that Faculty-specific minimum requirements for performance appraisal, promotion and appointment are updated to include the decision that SoTL should be considered in the evaluation for promotion.
- 34 It is recommended that the University ensure that faculties develop and implement mechanisms to solicit information from their alumni and industry and that this information is made available during curriculum review.
- 35 It is recommended that the University facilitate the adoption, and careful embedding of the learning-centred approach into institutional policies, plans and processes.
- 36. It is recommended that the University include peer evaluation of teaching as an additional tool in the evaluation process.

**Standard 16:** *Institutions engage with and reflect on the employability of their graduates in a changing world.*

The SU response to this standard, including the faculty examples, indicates that there is room for significant improvement in the way and extent to which issues of employability are considered. How employability levels are calculated may create an impression that employability is higher than it is. As with many of the other Standards, there are examples of best practices in one or more of the faculties and the Audit Panel believes that other faculties should adopt these to suit their environment.

### **Recommendations**

- 37 It is recommended that the University strengthen its surveys of employability and make the data available for programme review purposes.
- 38 It is recommended that the University revisit how employability is calculated, and calculate the percentage employed using the total number of respondents and not a subset.