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## STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY VISUAL REDRESS POLICY (DRAFT)

The English version is the official version of this document.

Reference number of this document	
HEMIS classification	
Purpose	Guiding visual redress as well as the processes linked to the (re-)naming of buildings, venues, etc. at Stellenbosch University
Type of document	Policy
Accessibility	General (external and internal)
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Previous revisions	None (new policy)
Owner of this policy	Vice-Rector: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel
Institutional functionary (curator) responsible for this policy	Registrar Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation
Date of approval	
Approved by	
Keywords	visual redress, visual representation, policy, transformation, decolonisation, stakeholders

### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024 articulate the positioning of Stellenbosch University (SU) as a leading research-intensive South African university, situated in Africa but with a global reach.<sup>2</sup> The aim of the Visual Redress Policy is to give particular expression to SU Vision 2040, with the focus on positioning SU as a university that expresses its visual embeddedness as part of an ongoing process of redress in relation to its local and global context.

Since 2015, student protests under the banners of #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall, among others, have foregrounded the need for change specifically at South African institutions of higher education and training. The nature of this change is multifaceted, and while the student

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<sup>1</sup> This section is based on the work and research of Profs Lize van Robbroeck and Elmarie Costandius, both from the Department of Visual Arts in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Stellenbosch University.

<sup>2</sup> SU Vision and Strategic Framework 2019–2024. <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/about/Pages/Strategic-Documents.aspx?TermStoreId=d4aca01e-c7ae-4dc1-b7b2-54492a41081c&TermSetId=e2594d35-01e6-475a-9355-14d13be20b5d&TermId=5b45c78b-1f53-4676-b8de-457df7a28c29>

movements were the catalyst that have increased the urgency, change in higher education has been on the agenda since the advent of democracy in 1994 – even earlier, in the form of antiapartheid protests.<sup>3</sup>

As far as university policy is concerned in South Africa, the need for change has centred around keywords such as ‘transformation’ and ‘redress’, while the student protests foregrounded terms such as ‘decolonisation’ as well. The protests and the accompanying discourse about decolonisation have drawn attention to the need for curricular change (epistemological decolonisation) as well as staff and student diversity at South African universities (transformation through physical representation). However, the particular focus of this policy is *visual redress* at SU; i.e. concerned primarily with what is visually apparent in the spatial layout, visual iconography and visible symbolism within the SU landscape. On its web page titled “Statues and symbols: creating a welcoming culture”, the University declares, “Stellenbosch University (SU) acknowledges that visual symbols evoke different emotions and experiences amongst people, especially in a diversified and historically divided country like South Africa.”<sup>4</sup>

The Visual Redress Policy will guide visual changes on SU campuses specifically through new art installations, the removal or contextualisation of historically sensitive art and other symbols, campus signage, the naming and renaming of buildings, venues and other facilities and premises, improving accessibility to facilities, and so forth. This will assist SU in its drive for transformation in and through visual redress.

However, promoting transformation requires moving beyond policy to practical projects within higher education contexts. At SU, such projects include visual redress projects in campus spaces.<sup>5</sup> The undertaking is guided by the SU Transformation Plan, which focusses on three pillars: places, people and programmes. Therefore, the implementation of this policy is envisaged to have a direct impact on the renewal of the SU institutional culture as outlined in the Transformation Plan.

The vision of the Visual Redress Policy and the implementation of the various projects resulting from it are intended to inform teaching and learning at SU. The policy provides impetus for disciplinary and interdisciplinary conversations about visual redress activities on campus as regards the University’s curricular as well as its co-curricular offerings. Dialogue in teaching and learning environments about the policy and its implementation is meant to elicit critical awareness about visual redress projects being undertaken on campus. The Visual Redress Policy also is intended to stimulate research possibilities and outputs at SU in collaboration with other universities, local and global.

This policy brings together and formalises two ongoing processes at SU: (1) the naming and renaming of buildings, venues and other facilities and premises, as governed by the Committee for the Naming of Buildings, Venues and other Facilities and Premises (hereafter the Naming Committee) and (2) the activities of the ad hoc Visual Redress Committee. Moreover, the policy imbeds the naming processes at SU within the framework of visual

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of art projects linked to visual redress at a number of South African universities, see Schahmann, B. 2013. *Picturing Change: Curating visual culture at post-apartheid universities*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.e

<sup>4</sup> See <https://www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=3643>.

<sup>5</sup> Prof Elmarie Costandius has made formal proposals on how to supplement art on SU campuses, which are already being implemented.

redress, thus supplementing and enhancing the possibilities and impact of naming and renaming of buildings, venues and other facilities and premises on all SU campuses. It is foreseen that both committees will remain operative, but with a deliberate and direct form of interaction between them, which may include shared membership.

## **2. Implementation of the policy**

- 2.1 This policy, including regulations and rules that will flow from it, is by default applicable to all members of staff (permanent and temporary) who work in the management corps of the University, in academic entities and in the support services as well as to all students and to the members of the statutory bodies of the University and the members of the companies under the control of the University who are involved in the governance of policy and management documents.
- 2.2 Other policies and management documents that are developed after the date of approval of this policy must comply with it.
- 2.3 Existing policy and management documents will be adapted to comply with this policy during a general and planned revision process over the first three years after approval of this policy.

## **3. Core Concepts**

For the purposes of this policy, the following core concepts are defined as follows:

### **Redress**

To set things right (to remedy), to make up for something (to compensate), to remove the cause of grievance or complaint and to exact reparation for something (to avenge) – *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*.

### **Visual redress at Stellenbosch University**

An attempt to right the wrongs of former and current powers by removing hurtful symbols (e.g. of apartheid), social injustice and misrecognition; and by remedying the harm that has been caused by these visual symbols by compensation through new visual symbols that should have African centrality as an outcome and that should allow for the inclusion of a variety of expressions, stories, identities and histories – Prof Elmarie Costandius, Department of Visual Arts, SU (2017) and Dr Leslie van Rooi, Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation, SU (2019).

## **Transformation at Stellenbosch University**

An intentional and structured process of profound change of the University's places, people and programmes by means of intentional processes, practices, plans and policies – SU Transformation Plan (2016).

## **Systemic transformation at Stellenbosch University**

This implies that all dimensions of University life are involved in the transformation and renewal process, and that all those dimensions contribute to the transformation of society. Therefore, such transformation includes transformation *of* the University and transformation *through* the University – SU Transformation Plan (2016).

## **Diversity**

As it relates to visual redress, diversity refers to forms of art, symbols, architecture and other expressions that deliberately share something of the rich historic and cultural heritage of Stellenbosch, the Western Cape, South Africa and Africa – Visual Redress Task Team (2018).

## **Decolonisation at Stellenbosch University**

The decolonisation of society and the University necessitates the recentring of the human from the perspective of 'colonial difference', and recentring knowledge to accord Africa a central position of relevance for African knowledge production. This includes socioeconomic injustices that have resulted directly from sustained coloniality being acknowledged and addressed. Decoloniality thus seeks to challenge Eurocentric hegemony of power, being and knowledge – recommendations by the Task Team for the Decolonisation of the Stellenbosch University Curriculum (31 July 2017).

## **Decolonisation of space**

A corrective measure that uses alternative approaches to foster an environment of inclusion "where people meet, talk, share ideas, and where identities and lifestyles are formed" (Bianchini, 1999:49) to enable diverse cultures to develop and flourish. The space to be decolonised includes cyberspaces, symbols, offices, buildings, architecture, artefacts, photographs and statues; this is realised through shared processes of dialogue and production – Prof Elmarie Costandius, Department of Visual Arts, Stellenbosch University.

## **4. Purpose of the policy**

The Visual Redress Policy makes provision for the following:

- 4.1 a set of general guidelines that can serve as a broad framework for decision making regarding visual redress at SU;
- 4.2 stakeholder participation whereby symbols will be added or removed, buildings, venues and other facilities and premises will be named or renamed, areas around buildings and other spaces will be changed, and future architectural projects will be considered and/or commissioned;
- 4.3 obtaining expert input from internal and external stakeholders;
- 4.4 stimulating critical dialogue among staff and students about the ways in which visual redress promotes the values of inclusiveness, respect and dignity; and

- 4.5 directing the work of the Naming Committee as well as a permanent Visual Redress Committee that will advise the SU management structures (including the Rectorate).

## 5. Aims of the policy

- 5.1 Manage and guide all visual redress processes at SU, including processes prompted by SU Management and processes initiated by specific environments.
- 5.2 Imbed the naming and renaming of buildings and venues within the broader framework of visual redress, which will allow for a comprehensive, guided process of naming and renaming at SU.
- 5.3 Incorporate internal heritage guidelines and prescriptions.
- 5.4 Provide guidance to individuals and environments (departments, faculties, divisions, centres and all responsibility centres) who are responsible for (e.g.) initiating, developing, approving, handling and implementing visual redress processes.
- 5.5 Stimulate critical dialogue in the teaching and learning environments of the University.
- 5.6 Guide the procedures and operations of the to-be-established SU Visual Redress Committee.
- 5.7 Ensure that visual redress (as a policy and how it is implemented) is transparent and that it allows for engagement both on and off campus.<sup>6</sup>
- 5.8 Ensure that the policy is revised and updated by the target date set during the approval process of the policy and management documents.
- 5.9 Indicate the connection between the policy and other management documents and related documents, and establish a mechanism to identify and eliminate possible contradictory or unnecessary overlaps between policy and management documents.
- 5.10 Ensure better coordination and identification or delimitation of roles and responsibilities with regard to policy and management documents.

## 6. Policy principles

The principles of the Visual Redress Policy are as follows:

- 6.1 SU is part of a larger community. This should be reflected in its procedures and considerations, and in how it represents its history and future visually. Visual redress should be seen to impact on the larger community as well as on SU's relation with a variety of stakeholders.
- 6.2 This policy will implement imperatives set out in the SU Transformation Plan and is thus aligned with the plan. This places the policy within the ambit of systemic transformation at SU, which means that transformation initiatives are not to be restricted to the policy; instead, the policy should advance such initiatives.
- 6.3 This policy makes provision for SU to reconsider at any time the names of any University buildings, venues and other facilities and premises, symbols (including statues), campus signs and other institutional markers.
- 6.4 Visual redress includes processes linked to the naming of buildings, venues and other facilities and premises.
- 6.5 If a proposal is made to name a building after a specific person, that person's life, work and activities have to have been in harmony with the core values of SU.

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<sup>6</sup> 'Off campus' refers to public engagement external to the University. The word 'campus' thus does not refer to physical SU campuses, but is used as a generic term to refer to the broader SU environment.

- 6.6 Naming buildings, venues and other facilities and premises after companies or commercial products should be handled circumspectly to avoid reputational risks.
- 6.7 Visual redress and naming processes must comply with applicable legislative frameworks on heritage resource management.
- 6.8 The policy will be implemented based on synergistic relationships with the University's research, social impact, and teaching and learning imperatives; visual redress should be aligned with SU's strategic processes and goals.
- 6.9 Any visual redress process (both as regards consultation and implementation) must be in accordance with SU's values. It should consider the specific history of SU, too.
- 6.10 It is foreseen that visual redress processes will influence the impact and use of various SU facilities (building facades, portals, public and communal spaces, etc.).
- 6.11 This policy requires that sustainability be considered with reference to architectural heritage, landscaping, artistic value and environmental sustainability.
- 6.12 This policy should consider the affordability and scalability of projects and initiatives with reference to visual redress affordability.
- 6.13 Visual redress processes should imbed SU in the context of the Western Cape, South Africa and Africa as a continent. This is the particular context of SU and should be expressed in art, symbols (including statues), architectural styles, the honouring of individuals, inclusivity of the broader University community, healing the wounds of the past, and so forth.
- 6.14 Visual redress should position SU firmly as a worldclass university; therefore, it must deliberately express SU's role and impact in our local environments as well as internationally.
- 6.15 The arts and culture departments and environments at SU should play a key role in the visual redress process on our campuses.
- 6.16 Visual redress at SU should serve the academic project and thus be embedded in curricular activities. Potential research on topics related to visual redress must also be explored to anchor research in visual redress.
- 6.17 Visual redress processes should give particular expression to SU's language policy and the language diversity of South Africa.
- 6.18 The Visual Redress Policy should consider the SU Universal Access Policy with a focus on renewing the institutional culture.
- 6.19 It is envisaged that this policy will have a twofold impact:
  - 6.19.1 to allow for the consideration of visual redress changes and related opportunities and requests; and
  - 6.19.2 to prompt visual redress changes and opportunities in all SU environments.
- 6.20 Complete procedures for both naming and visual redress must be developed, aligned and approved by the Rectorate for the purposes of applying the policy.
- 6.21 Every request or proposal for visual redress must be evaluated on merit, not only on the grounds of a donation (including a financial contribution) or meeting a specific predetermined need. Decisions should be guided by the principles of this policy, aligned with SU's values.
- 6.22 Visual redress can take place only if the procedure according to the policy is followed.
- 6.23 All visual redress prompts and processes must follow a complete consultation route, which must be outlined in procedures linked to this policy.
- 6.24 The power of disposal for visual redress and naming processes are delegated to the Rectorate.

## **7. Conflict settlement**

Conflicts within this policy are to be resolved along the normal line management channels within existing SU structures. In case of a conflict not being resolved satisfactorily, the procedures related to the Ombud must be followed.

## **8. Policy control**

### **8.1 Roles**

The owner of the policy is the Vice Rector: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel. The institutional functionary (curator) of the policy is the Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation and the Registrar.

The implementation of the policy is guided and reviewed by the to-be-established SU Visual Redress Committee, which will function in collaboration with the Naming Committee. The policy will support the roles and functions of three environments, namely Social Impact and Transformation, the Registrar's Division and Facilities Management.

### **8.2 Implementation and monitoring**

The owners and curators of this policy are responsible for establishing the requisite controls to monitor its implementation.

The policy is applicable to all University environments including faculties and Professional, Administrative and Support Services environments.

All other SU policies must be read together with this policy, the principles of which will come into operation immediately upon approval by Council.

## **9. Reporting**

The impact of the policy and, consequently, the visual redress process will be reported annually to the following bodies:

- the Rectorate
- the Institutional Transformation Committee
- the Student Representative Council as well as other student structures
- the Institutional Forum and
- the Executive Committee of Senate

## **10. Release**

This policy is a public document that is published on the SU website. The policy is approved by the University Council after concurrent consultation with Senate and the Institutional Forum.

## **11. Revision**

The policy must be reviewed and, if necessary, revised at least once every five years. Given the nature of the policy and its intended impact, a broad review and revision process must be followed when required.

## **12. Action in the case of noncompliance**

Noncompliance with this policy is handled as per applicable University policies, depending on the nature of the noncompliance. Normal line management practices apply.

## **13. Supporting documents**

Item no	Name of document	Status (e.g. identified, in process or approved)
	Recommendations of the Task Team for the Decolonisation of the Stellenbosch University Curriculum	Approved
	Policy on the naming of buildings, venues and other facilities/premises (to be replaced by the Visual Redress Policy)	Approved
	Transformation Plan	Approved
	Universal Access Policy	Approved
	SU Master Plan	
	Internal Heritage Guidelines	In process