



Stellenbosch

UNIVERSITY
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UNIVERSITEIT

SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Diploma in Sustainable
Development



Social Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Futures

Even before the Covid-19 pandemic, it was commonly accepted that we lived in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world [1]. It is now proposed that brittle, anxious, non-linear, and incomprehensible (BANI) is a more accurate description of the world that awaits our graduates [2].

Youth unemployment in South Africa is a growing concern. Statistics South Africa reported that 32.6% of graduates aged 15 - 24 were unemployed in the first quarter of 2022 [3]. Clearly, in a post-pandemic South Africa, qualifications do not guarantee employment or financial stability.

Even graduates who secure employment will need to constantly grapple with accelerated change, disruptive innovations, and radical thinking as we move through the Fourth Industrial Revolution and beyond [4].

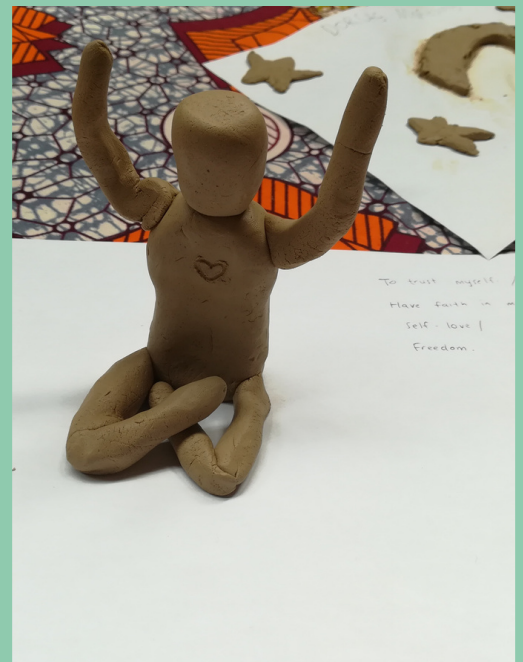
The Diploma in Sustainable Development prepares graduates for these unpredictable futures by developing their entrepreneurial mindsets, resilience, and values through Social Entrepreneurship (SE). We equip students to create employment opportunities while graduating with employable skills (e.g., sustainability reporting).

We use SE as a **thought-leadership practice** for transformational change. SE ethics and principles are used to develop students' understanding of their own passion and purpose toward change agency.

SE is also used as a **solution-orientated process** to develop skills like self-efficacy and the creative competencies that form the basis for ideation. SE modules are a safe-to-fail space where students experiment with responses to and solutions for local challenges. To this end, we focus on developing entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial competencies.

The first cohort, Team One, enrolled in 2018 and graduated in 2020. Team Six enrolled in 2023!

"[Social Entrepreneurship] is the desire to create value in the world by cultivating relationships with others while improving their lives and yours financially in a sustainable way, for the betterment of society. This style of entrepreneurship is far more meaningful than helping only yourself in your pursuits." Antoinette Mralasi, Team Four (2022).



"Entrepreneurs are independent thinkers who use their knowledge and skills to create employment opportunities for themselves and others. Intrapreneurs are innovative, action-orientated, self-motivated people who drive positive change in organisations and companies."

Team One, Student Prospectus (2022)

[1] Bennis & Nanus (1985). *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*.

[2] Grabmeier (2020). BANI versus VUCA: a new acronym to describe the world.

[3] Statistics South Africa (2022). *Quarterly Labour Force Survey*.

[4] McKinsey (2021). *The future of work after COVID-19*.



Figure 1. Structure of the Diploma in Sustainable Development. Every year, students enroll in a Social Entrepreneurship module, a Strategic Communication module, and a Regenerative Leadership module. All modules are compulsory.

An Ecosystem for Entrepreneurship Education

The Diploma promotes an embedded view of sustainability that acknowledges the interconnectedness between social, ecological, and economic systems. This perspective highlights the importance of a social entrepreneurship (SE) approach: environmental issues are social issues and social issues invariably have detrimental environmental effects. We must redesign our economic systems to actively contribute to social justice and ecological restoration.

This requires active decolonisation of our entrepreneurship curricula. To prepare effective change agents, we must acknowledge our African contexts and draw from indigenous knowledge systems.

Curriculum Design

One of the unique strengths of the Diploma is **the golden thread** that weaves between the interdisciplinary modules within and across academic years (Figure 1). Theory, skills, and competencies from all modules are integrated into students' understanding of SE. Similarly, entrepreneurial competencies are encouraged in all modules.

This reciprocal relationship between different modules and their outcomes is facilitated through:

- **The academic schedule.** Modules are presented in blocks to encourage deeper engagement with content. SE is presented as year modules to allow students to incorporate values and perspectives from other modules as they progress.
- **Modes of delivery.** We have incorporated the best practices of online learning in our current programme format. Students typically have 2 - 3 face-to-face teaching days per week (09:30 – 15:30). These days are interactive, immersive sessions that encourage active learning through discussions, group work, and practical skill development. Self-directed online learning gives students the chance to work through theory (e.g., readings, pre-recorded lectures, and activities) in their own time. Synchronous online sessions help students process the content and develop their ability to work collaboratively in virtual spaces.
- **Reflective practices.** Reflection is an important learning activity in all our modules. Every year, students compile a portfolio of evidence that links their learning from other modules in relation to SE. Students synthesize an introductory reflexive statement drawing from personal reflections and theoretical learning.



Active learning, co-creation and place-based learning



Students are encouraged to actively engage in the learning process by working collaboratively with lecturers and other students towards common goals. Active learning and co-creation take place through facilitated class debates, flipped classroom sessions, simulations, group work, peer-facilitated learning, and reflection sessions.



Active learning extends to the format of assessments. We utilize a variety of assessment formats that allow students to apply theory to real-world contexts through multimedia presentations, pitches, reflective journals, podcasts, social media campaigns, and reports. The annual **Idea Fest** and **Future Now Summit** are good examples of entrepreneurial competencies in practice.

Idea Fest



Social Entrepreneurship Year One:

Students explore problems they wish to address. They document their ideation and experimentation throughout the year and present their ideas for change at Idea Fest. Senior students provide feedback on the idea pitches. First-year students reflect on this peer feedback in their final assessment.

"Feedback is scary and making yourself and your ideas vulnerable to criticism is not an easy task. The 2022 Ideas Fest was a fun, interactive event that gave me a safe space to learn. I received feedback in the form of contacts, suggestions for improvement, and even pointers on presentation style and confidence. I am very grateful for the space to connect with my peers and their inspiring ideas."

Dominique Daruty de Grandpre
(Team Five)

Future Now Summit

Social Entrepreneurship Year Two:

Students organise and host the Future Now summit for the third-year cohort. The class works as a team to execute this project. They are responsible for the budget, event logistics, marketing, and hospitality. Students compile an evidence-based reflective report on their individual contributions and team dynamic.

Social Entrepreneurship Year Three:

Final-year students are the presenters at the Future Now summit. Whether they speak about a business idea, a campaign, or a concept, they must draw on their entire learning journey to explain how they will encourage others to join their cause. In 2022, the third years delivered their presentations in the form of panel discussions that were moderated by second-year students.

Life-long learning

The Diploma prepares students for life outside the safe boundaries of the university by exposing them to the "real world" during their studies. We invite active practitioners as guest lecturers to help students make sense of theory through relevant case studies. We encourage our students to grow their professional network by building relationships with their peers, module facilitators, and guest lecturers. We have an active LinkedIn group for current students and Diploma alumni where we share opportunities and celebrate their successes.

We prepare our students to act as global citizens by encouraging internationalization within the program. In partnership with SU's International Office, international students can enroll in our Worldviews module. This creates a rich exploration of worldviews for both local and international students. In the Social Change module, we facilitate an online collaboration with students from the University of North Carolina Charlotte. Students partner with American students using virtual platforms to co-create podcasts exploring various social movements. Although working across cultural boundaries and time zones is never easy, students often reflect that these experiences prepared them well for their internships.

In their third year, students complete 200 hours of work-integrated learning during the Internship module. Students must secure their own internships at organizations or companies that work towards Sustainable Development Goals. This gives students confidence in their skills and knowledge and allows them to graduate with work experience and professional CVs. We link their learning from internships to their development as entrepreneurs through an innovation strategy report. Students practice applying their entrepreneurial skills by finding solutions for problems they observed during their internships.

"Through the Diploma I realized that the world is big, there are many different people and there are loads of opportunities. I realized the power of the words 'Trust the process!'"

Stephen Marlow, Team Three (2022)



"Amongst students, there is a lot of talk about careers – whether engaging in conversations about future careers or hustling for student jobs. One thing that most, if not all, employers are looking for is experience. This can seem like a paradox – to gain experience you need experience. However, the value of volunteering, interning, and community participation is often overlooked."

Daniëlle Gerber, Team Three (2022)
- [Interning in Stellenbosch](#)



Kühne Summer School in Sustainability presented great opportunities for Sheba Kashiri (Team Four).



Programme Success

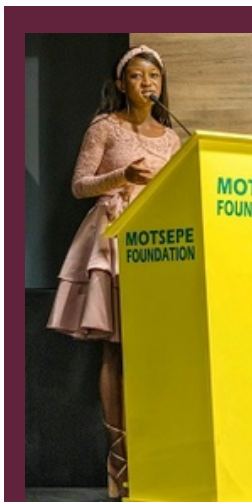
In 2022, the Diploma won a national Entrepreneurship Learning and Teaching Excellence Award and our teaching approach was featured at UNESCO's World Higher Education Conference.



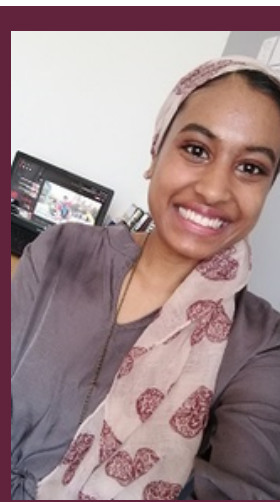
As a Zimbabwean student, Mitchel Nkhama (Team One) was not eligible for most bursaries. Although she required an additional year to complete the Diploma, she made such an impression as an intern at Oribi that they offered her a permanent position. She now manages entrepreneurship incubator programmes for social entrepreneurs.



Students have found internships and positions at places like **ICLEI Africa | Push Local Ventures | GreenSet | Film Afrika | WESSA | Netflix | Living Soils | Saint-Gobain Africa | CoCreate Hub | IRAS | Vision Hope International | Sustainability Institute | Cape Town Film Studios | Afrimat Hemp | VPUU | Vesta | Abalimi Bezekhaya | SANBI** in roles as project coordinators, sustainability consultants, sustainability set managers, communication and marketing managers, design and campaign managers, information officers, content creators, ESG report writers and research assistants.



Lindelwa Mahlalela (Team Two) wins R80k and business mentorship from the Motsepe Foundation for her social enterprise, LeeConnect.



Little Tiger Jewellery by Gafsa Adam (Team Three) is to be featured on an American online marketplace ShopConsciously.



"I have learnt to be adaptive and take every opportunity that comes my way (even if it scares me). I started my own tutoring company; I do social media marketing for small businesses, and I have run some composting workshops. Most importantly, the diploma gave me confidence to go out and start something for myself."

Hannah Hopper, Team One
currently completing a Postgraduate Diploma in Sustainable Development)

Institutional support and links

We connect our students to SU main campus by incorporating its services into our modules:

- Academic and psychological services - **Centre of Student Counselling and Development** (Regenerative Leadership modules).
- Peer-to-peer writing consultations and ReadTheory online reading proficiency programme - **SU Language Centre** (Strategic Communication modules).
- Referencing and research workshops – **SU library** (Strategic Communication modules).
- Design and 3D printing – **Makerspace** (Sustainable Design modules).
- CV writing and Interview Skills workshops, Maties Career Portal – **Graduand Career Services** (Internship module).
- Entrepreneurship development opportunities – **LaunchLab** (Social Entrepreneurship modules).

The Mental Health Epidemic in Stellenbosch -
- by Daniëlle Gerber (Team Three)



Our students actively participate in student societies (e.g., EcoMaties) and student leadership opportunities on SU main campus. Each cohort elects two class representatives annually and these student leaders liaise directly with the Faculty's Student Counsel.

"In 2021, I was voted 3rd in the Stellenbosch Network #ideasforchange Challenge. I also made it to the semi-finals in the USB's Lion's Den Stellenbosch competition. In 2022, I made it to the SU internal round of the EDHE Intervarsity Competition and the SDG Youth Citizen Entrepreneurship Competition First Voting Round."

Antoinette Mralasi (Team Four)



Antoinette Mralasi showcasing her Bespoke Crochet business at Idea Fest 2021.