**DRAFT INSTITUTIONAL ANTI-GBV STRATEGY**

**INTRODUCTION**

Since 2016, protests around the country, mainly around sexual violence on campus, highlighted the issue of gender-based violence (GBV) at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)[[1]](#footnote-1).

Gender-based violence, notably sexual violence on campuses in South Africa, has been a long-standing issue since the 1980s[[2]](#footnote-2).

However, the extent of GBV within HEIs is unclear due to the lack of nationally representative research providing a clearer understanding of GBV in HEIs, often linked to underreporting1.

GBV has also been linked to drug and alcohol abuse, abuse against marginalised individuals (people with disabilities and gender diverse people) and impacting the safety of students and staff on campuses and in student residences[[3]](#footnote-3). The pervasive and profound effect of GBV and its impact on the university community has resulted in a resounding call from students and activists for intentional action that incorporates responsive and preventive strategies to create safe spaces and promote gender transformation in HEIs3.

Stellenbosch University (SU) needs to have a clear institutional strategy on GBV. Students raised many issues in the past few years and requested that SU have integrated systems and transparent processes for GBV.

The University has bound itself to "zero-tolerance" for GBV and therefore, a proactive institutional strategy focusing on prevention and education needs to be rolled out.

The cases of GBV in the last few years within the University, at other universities and within the broader society beyond the University, have proven that more needs to be done. This means that,

* Institutional ownership of an anti-GBV strategy is crucial;
* Rectorate needs to speak in one voice, decisively and clearly, expressing its commitment to provide leadership in driving the anti-GBV strategy;
* Proactive measures should be implemented, working in an inclusive manner with the whole university community.
* Lessons from the GBV cases emphasised the importance of communication and regular updates and feedback. As a university community, we have an opportunity to eradicate gender-based violence on SU campuses through education, awareness, advocacy, and a clear code of conduct signed by all members of the community, pledging to remove barriers to gender equality, condemning sexism and all other forms of discrimination and not to be associated with practices that have a potential to lead to gender-based violence.

**PURPOSE**

Being intentional and bold about the Institutional Anti-GBV Strategy embodies the values of SU. The Anti-GBV strategic plan contributes to the national call to action, integrating the National Framework on Anti-GBV into the work done while following up on the recommendations made in the Anti-GBV Joint Working Groups Report presented to Rectorate on 7 August 2020.

**SU VALUES**

1. *Compassion:* It is dedicated to creating an environment that allows reflection of biases and responses, which may further instances of inequality and abuse by using resources, engagement, disciplinary actions, and mediation as tools to build an institution that is compassionate and adequately responsive to GBV.
2. *Equity*: Acknowledging historical behaviour has marginalised groups through harmful ideologies perpetuated and affirmed damaging stereotypes, norms, and discrimination. Equity will allow restitution which commits itself to progress through redress, which will allow the experiences of marginalised groups to be heard and prioritised.
3. *Respect:* To be cognizant of the emotional, physical, and mental impact of GBV and respect the process in which victims of GBV choose to heal and address their trauma.

**PRINCIPLES**

Principles that will guide the implementation of the plan are:

1. Communication and procedures that do not invalidate the victim's experience nor resort to victim-blaming. Thereby using transformative and gender-responsive approaches to account for inequality and gender-driven differences that perpetuate GBV.
2. A stance of zero-tolerance towards GBV and intentional consequences for the perpetrator.
3. Education and nurturance in developing gender-sensitive leadership.
4. Aimed toward gender equality which embodies inclusivity, diversity, and intersectionality. Recognising the experiences of an individual must be seen through a multidimensional lens as each community is subject to its context and complexities in the disadvantages experienced.
5. Respect the victim's agency regarding their experience, privacy, and process in addressing their trauma.
6. Encouraging public expression allows for engagement, which may be to express anger or honesty, but in a manner that is within the ambit of the law and in keeping with dignity for all.
7. Transparency in that way grievances are handled, in communicating decisions effectively to persons concerned, and not excuse inappropriate behaviour through whitewashing.
8. Responsive and reflective in the feedback provided and not just reactive.
9. This document gives direction on how the Institutional Anti-GBV Strategy infrastructure will be set up and operationalised and the reporting process from Equality Unit right through to Rectorate for decision making and Council for noting.

**OVERVIEW: INSTITUTIONAL APPROACH**

1. A bold statement by Rectorate as a declaration of commitment to addressing gender-based violence and weaving an integrated framework to ensure a sustainable institutional approach.
2. The University's marketing materials should carry the bold statement as a tagline, publicising commitment.
3. All environments to have Anti-GBV forum/steering committee, even if it is integrated to the existing transformation committees in each faculty, division and departments. Chairpersons of these Anti-GBV structures will be responsible for representing the environments at institutional meetings of Anti-GBV.
4. The Equality Unit will be the central coordination point, providing direction and driving the Institutional Anti-GBV Strategy, reporting directly to the DVC Learning and Teaching on these matters.
5. A clear focus is well-coordinated at an institutional level, giving direction to Anti-GBV steering committees, with direct monitoring by the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee.
6. The Rape Culture Monitoring Committee (RCMC) will broaden its scope to become the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee. The composition of this Committee will ensure a more balanced representation of students and staff and will follow (9):
	1. Transformation Office – Director (Chairperson)
	2. Equality Unit Manager (Deputy Chairperson)
	3. Gender Non-Violence Coordinator (Secretariat)
	4. HR Representative
	5. Student Affairs Representative
	6. Student Communities Representative
	7. Student Counselling Representative
	8. SRC Transformation
	9. TSR Gender Equality
	10. Prims Committee Chairs (Stellenbosch / Tygerberg)
	11. Experts (as needed)
7. The Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee will meet with the Chairpersons of Committees from all environments in the University every quarter for reporting, discussion of initiatives across the institution, sharing ideas/information, and providing support as a way of monitoring progress.
8. After a meeting with the Chairpersons, the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee will meet with the DVC Learning and Teaching and the DVC HR, Transformation and Social Impact to report progress and refine plans further.
9. At this point, the DVC Learning and Teaching will prepare an update to be shared with the Institutional Transformation Committee (ITC) and Institutional Forum (IF). The Equality Unit may be delegated to present these updates on the DVC Learning and Teaching whenever necessary.
10. The DVC Learning and Teaching will link Rectorate and Anti-GBV operational structures. The DVC will share updated reports with Rectorate for discussion and decision-making and share feedback with the Equality Unit for further implementation across the different environments.
11. Rectorate will decide on how regularly to share update reports on the Institutional Anti- GBV Strategy with Council for noting.

**IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY**

1. Availability of resources and capacity building
	1. Strengthening response to GBV in residence spaces
		1. Equipping residence heads with knowledge and training to adequately respond to GBV. This can be used to highlight redress around patriarchal, exclusionary practices perpetuated within residence spaces, address safety concerns around unlawful residence entry, and create training opportunities for residence leadership and information sessions for student residents.
		2. Review how the residence constitution, rules and regulations are applied, aiming to maximise inclusivity and limit power imbalances. Students should be seen as the primary recipients of these documents when drafted and equal contributors and custodians of what these documents aim to uphold.
		3. Relook at the spatial design within residences and how it can be improved to limit opportunities for GBV, e.g., enhanced privacy within communal showers.
2. Preventive initiatives
	1. Developing a "social contract and code of conduct" and building institutional support

25.2. Training of student leaders at all levels

* 1. Education, awareness, and advocacy

25.3.1 Ensure all staff, service providers, security personnel, and students involved or tasked to address GBV cases are skilled and equipped to do so. This includes familiarity with and adherence to relevant guidelines, protocols, and codes of ethics and exhibiting gender sensitivity and intersectional awareness.

* + 1. Interventions and other responses must not perpetuate ideologies and stereotypes which justify GBV or victim-blaming.
		2. Create opportunities for collaboration by creating a GBV events calendar that can promote linkages and limit repetition and siloed responses.
1. Incident reporting, case management, and tracking processes
	1. Work towards the availability of a first responder that can be telephonically contacted at all times for cases of GBV.
	2. Use a complainant-centred, trauma-informed approach throughout each process.
	3. To have faculties assign a co-pair (encourage representation) to address GBV-related complaints and be trained to do so.
	4. Ensure that the director for Sstudent Student Communitiescommunities has correctly informed or set up training, in which all residence heads are aware of necessary channels to follow when GBV-related complaints arise. To have all residence heads follow a uniform protocol (but allow room for change and adaption as no case is the same), but also for the director of Sstudent Ccommunities implement a system which can map out or identify problem areas based on the information drawn from complaints, aiding in identifying gaps and informing good practice.
2. Investigation
	1. Consideration given regarding the representation of the advisory panel to allow for inclusivity and that there is a balance of institutional persons and those from the student body.
	2. The advisory panel follows a prescribed procedure allowing for consistency and confidence in outcomes.
	3. Work towards having investigation results provided to the relevant parties as soon as possible.
	4. Institution of a 'no contact order' pending an investigation.
3. Mediation process
	1. Be a process that limits traumatisation and is committed to justice.
4. Disciplinary process and outcome
	1. Student Discipline and Labour Relations
		1. Division of Student Discipline proactively provides information to interest groups within the bounds of confidentiality.
		2. Disciplinary Code for Students of SU be amended to expressly state that a residence head, faculty Dean, and the Rector have the power to temporarily relieve a student who is an alleged perpetrator, from a leadership position, pending the finalisation of the disciplinary process.
5. Central Disciplinary Committee panel
	1. To have postgraduate student representatives included.
	2. Provide a specified timeframe to provide written reasons for its findings and sanctions, but have the time extended upon receiving a merited motivation.
	3. Provide detailed seating arrangements, assuring the complainant that they would not have to face the defendant before the hearing.
	4. Internal process: ensuring members' fair appointment and providing procedures on what to do when members are perceived not to be impartial.
6. Continuous feedback process and communication (relevant parties)
7. Managing the communication of outcomes
8. Re-integration process
	1. If the perpetrator underwent due process and is set to return to campus, to notify complainant/persons concerned and work with the centre of student communities on a re-integration strategy which limits secondary revictimisation and trauma.
9. Support system provided
	1. To share information on resources available for complainants, both internal and external support.
	2. Create engagement in addressing questions related to opening a case with SAPS, i.e., process and procedure such as evidence collection for sexual assault, continuity of care, and combatting stigma and limiting victim-blaming.
	3. Making use of a locum psychologists' model to aid students' mental health needs.
10. Case evaluation and wrap up
11. Case studies for improvement of the implementation cycle

**COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

1. A unified approach emphasising consistent, clear, factual messaging.
2. Prompt communication (speedy).
3. Project Owner to lead the process of determining content for communication.
4. Communications experts to explore strategic platforms to use for different audiences within the University, considering the focus at each point in the project cycle.
5. Communication teams to find synergy to achieve a common goal; Corporate Communications, DSAf Communications Coordinator, Equality Unit's Marketing and Communications Coordinator, the SRC's, TSR's and Prims Committee's Communications portfolios to be involved.
6. Rules, protocols, procedures, and policies need to be adequately and consistently communicated and easy to locate.
7. Making use of media alerts at the start of each quarter to the student community about GBV processes.
8. Strategic moments to keep in mind:
	1. Launching the Institutional Anti-GBV Strategy
	2. Declaration of Commitment and Social Contract
	3. Publicising the awareness and advocacy initiatives
	4. Sharing information on relevant education and training offerings available and how to access these
	5. Sharing the annual report of the Institutional Anti-GBV Strategy - the highlights, the challenges, and inspiring action against GBV.

**AWARENESS – ADVOCACY – EDUCATION**

1. All offerings relevant to GBV should be mapped to ensure a close working relationship among colleagues who offer these co-curricular courses.
2. The Gender Non-Violence Coordinator will provide leadership in this area, working closely with all Anti-GBV Steering Committees / Forums throughout the institution and the different centres where co-curriculum offerings are based.
3. To empower students to lead in the Anti-GBV awareness and advocacy programme, it will be necessary to have some of Anti-GBV Ambassadors. This will help reach more students.

**MONITORING STRATEGY**

1. Equality Unit
	1. Surveys and other feedback systems
2. RCMC (HR, Student Affairs, Equality Unit, and Transformation)
	1. Monthly meetings for the first year and then a shift to quarterly
3. Institutional Transformation Committee
	1. Updates to be provided and feedback noted for implementation, where necessary
4. Institutional Forum
	1. Updates to be provided to empower the IF to do its work, monitoring transformation within institution and advisory to Council
5. GBV monitoring committee
	1. Establish a monitoring tool

**REPORTING AND EVALUATION**

1. The Chairpersons of each environment within the University will have to report progress made on initiatives quarterly to the Equality Unit. The Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee will lead the discussion of these reports to understand and provide further support and advice.
2. The Equality Unit will compile a report for the DVC Learning and Teaching. This report will serve at the DVC Learning and Teaching meeting and the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee.
3. After this meeting, the Equality Unit will refine the report to serve at the Rectorate level and any other level necessary.
4. Once the DVC Learning and Teaching has shared the report with other Rectorate members and approved it, the Equality Unit will be responsible for communicating the decisions to the Chairpersons of the Anti-GBV steering committees/forums and the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee. Decisions made will inform work to be done going forward across the University.
5. Rectorate will determine how often to update Council on progress made with the Institutional Anti-GBV Strategy.
6. The DVC Learning and Teaching will conduct a follow-up session with the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee to evaluate work done through the years and plan for the following year. The annual plan should be well communicated and marketed (see point 4 on Communication Strategy).

**IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

1. Feedback received at each stage of processes will be discussed and integrated into the anti- GBV work and initiatives. At the end of each cycle, lessons should be drawn from the reporting and evaluation process to ensure improvements throughout the years.
2. The Equality Unit and the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee should be accessible to receive feedback and discuss case studies for the broader university community to feel included and listened to.
1. [Gender-Based Violence at Higher Education Institutions in South Africa – Understand – SaferSpaces](https://www.saferspaces.org.za/understand/entry/gender-based-violence-at-higher-education-institutions-in-south-africa1) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. De Klerk, V., Klazinga, L., & McNeill, A. (2007). The habitus of the dominant: addressing rape and sexual assault at Rhodes University. *Agenda*, *21*(74), 115-124. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Higher Health. (2019). Higher Health: A training resource manual (1st curriculum). Higher Health [↑](#footnote-ref-3)