



SRC 2020/2021 Term I Report

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Constitutional Responsibilities

The current Student Representative Council as it stands does not make mention of specific responsibilities of the Women and Queer Empowerment council member. However, submitting planning and budget documents has allowed for responsibilities to be set out for the WAQE Council Member. These include but are not limited to:





- empower the women and queer bodies of Stellenbosch university (Empowerment must be all encompassing and as such should occur on a policy, educational, engagement, and social level and take place on both a staff and student level within the institution).
- Empowering the leaders of the institution to create a safe and inclusive space for these individuals.
- Wellness needs to be an integral part of the empowerment of women and queer bodies and wellness includes a physically safe and inclusive environment, that allows for the physical and mental health of these bodies to be catered for.
- Intersectionality must be considered throughout all processes. Certain groups within the women and queer communities alike are more vulnerable and should therefore be specifically and purposefully empowered.

Portfolio Overview.

This portfolio has only existed as WAQE for one term previously and is thus in its infancy: given the groundwork that was started last year part of the vision of this portfolio is to continue to lay this foundation for the leaders and students to come. It must also be recognised that women and queer bodies have been largely neglected by staff and student leadership alike since the establishment of this institution.

Women and queer bodies have been the subject of many types of discriminations throughout the world and Stellenbosch University is no exception. This discrimination often leads to students being excluded, has a negative impact on their mental health and ultimately leads to a fractured student community. The purpose of this portfolio is to actively combat this discrimination where it exists on a managerial, policy, staff, and student level and to create a university community that truly reflects our values of Stellenbosch University.

Values:

- Inclusivity
- Compassion
- Accountability
- Respect
- Excellence
- Equity

Committees / Task Teams

This year there was no opening of a committee, as due to COVID19 many of the events were cancelled. However, one of the objectives within the year plan of WAQE was to open a Task Team to tackle the issues that Transgendered students face.

Task Team

The purpose of this task team is to investigate the level of exclusion that transgender students and staff experience and Stellenbosch university. To investigate what the most progressive and inclusive practices are worldwide. To provide recommendations to the rectorate on how to create a more inclusive and safer environment for transgender staff and students in this institution.





Objectives

1. Determine Stellenbosch University's current policies and practises regarding Transgendered individuals.
2. Determine how inclusive the Stellenbosch University environment is for Transgendered individuals.
3. Determine what the most inclusive practises are that tertiary institutions should adopt for the safest and most inclusive environments for these individuals.
4. To compile a report of the above findings.

To propose recommendations to rectorate on how to adjust current policies and possibly instate new policies to adhere to the most inclusive practices.

Term Overview

Planning:

The term began, as most leadership terms do, with handover meetings during which a full rundown of the previous year of activities by the previous portfolio manager of WAQE. I was fortunate enough to have been given a very thorough handover from Grace Mngadi, who took the time to walk me through the intricacies, difficulties, and tricks of the trade so to speak.

Following this, official year planning began, and much time was spent organising meetings with various bodies and individuals to finalise plausibility of these plans.

Task Team

The task team will officially open applications when the mass email from the SRC is sent out, as the application has been released through this platform. Constitutionally Task Teams formed by the SRC must adhere to the following:

The SRC can appoint task teams from among its own members to address ad hoc or continuous issues. (2) In addition to SRC members, any student can be appointed to a task team. (3) Unless the urgency of the issue demands otherwise, any student with the necessary skills must have the opportunity to apply to serve on a task team. (4) The SRC can delegate the authority to finalise an issue to a task team.

As such the application must be sent through communication reaching the whole student body to comply with the constitution.

Safe Spaces

This will be a collaborative initiative between Transformation, WAQE, Spectrum and QueerUS.

There is a need for marginalised bodies at Stellenbosch University to have safe spaces to connect with persons experiencing similar issues in our country and institution. The setting up of safe spaces will be the beginning of promoting better mental health within these communities, for which being discriminated against is often a contributing factor for deteriorated mental health. Safe spaces are aimed at providing a respite from judgment, unsolicited opinions, and having to explain yourself. It also allows people to feel supported and respected and allows access to a community.

Thus far contact has been met with the societies QueerUS and Spectrum as collaborators and a plan has been drafted to iron out logistical matters of the space. These spaces will begin within the coming weeks.





Leadership Training Development

The purpose of this training will be to equip campus leaders with the skills and knowledge that is necessary to deal with emergencies that may arise with regards to cases of GBV or hate crimes.

SRC

The purpose of this training is to address the following:

Provide leaders with comprehensive knowledge and skills with regards to the following:

- a. **GBV:**
 - i. Crisis management, university GBV policies, and reporting mechanisms.
 - ii. Forms of GBV
 - iii. Rape culture and victim blaming
 - iv. GBV in context of South Africa
 - v. Sensitive and supportive communication
 - vi. Intersectionality
- b. **LGBT+**
 - i. Gender and sexual orientation basics
 - ii. Inclusion: harmful stereotypes and unconscious biases
 - iii. How to be an ally
 - iv. Harassment:
 - v. management and approach
 - vi. University policies
 - vii. Reporting mechanism

This training has been agreed upon by the SRC to take place during the registration period, and arrangements are currently being finalised for this training.

House Committees

The purpose of this initiative will be to provide support for Residences and PSOs HC members with regards to how they can continue to promote inclusivity and combat GBV in their communities. This is vital for the safety of the women and queer bodies within these spaces.

House Committees of all Residence and PSO spaces have been reached out to and have been invited to join a centralised platform for all HC members in charge of portfolios involved in either women or queer empowerment. This is a platform where resources, events, and ideas can be shared easily to other communities.

These members of House Committees have also been reached out to, to engage on the difficulties being faced by each community in terms of Women and Queer Empowerment, as well as to engage on the progress that has been made within the communities since the signing of the Anti-GBV memorandums and ascertain where assistance can be given to communities in terms of creating





more inclusive and safe spaces. These meetings have started taking place and will continue throughout the next few weeks.

Plans for next term

Task Team

During the upcoming term, the following is part of the plan for the Task Team mentioned above:

1. Select Task Team Members
2. Work towards achieving the objectives of the task team:
 - a. Determine Stellenbosch University's current policies and practises regarding Transgendered individuals.
 - b. Determine how inclusive the Stellenbosch University environment is for Transgendered individuals.
 - c. Determine what the most inclusive practises are that tertiary institutions should adopt for the safest and most inclusive environments for these individuals.
 - d. To compile a report of the above findings.
 - e. To propose recommendations to rectorate on how to adjust current policies and possibly instate new policies to adhere to the most inclusive practices.

Safe Spaces

In the upcoming term the Safe Spaces will begin to take place.

Leadership Development Programme

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Following the SRC training session, I would like to compile feedback from the attendees on how valuable the session was and thereafter ascertain the sustainability of this project.

House Committees

Continue with initiative detailed above

Critical Engagement

The purpose of this Critical Engagement will be to provide a space for critical discussion to take place around the topic of intersectionality, that can be the initiation and spark of further engagement around the topic outside of the space.

The objectives of this space will be to:

- Provide a space for mutual exchange of information around the topic of intersectionality.
- Provide stimulating engagement on the topic that is relevant to the community.
- Provide an engagement that will be self-sustaining after the event to equip people to further grapple with the content covered.

Recommendations to improve portfolio

Due to the unrelenting nature of COVID19, there is a need to properly review the plans that were made in the beginning of the term that involve in person gatherings that can, for obvious reasons, no longer take place. These plans need to be adapted and perhaps replaced with completely new projects that do not pose risk in terms of the pandemic.

