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BCOM LAW (4TH YEAR)

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First Term Report of the Accountability Committee Deputy Chairperson

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# Introduction

This is the term report of the Accountability Committee Deputy Chairperson of Student Parliament. It is written in accordance with Student Constitution and the Student Parliament Constitution of the University of Stellenbosch. The undertakings of the Student Parliament Committee and the Accountability Committee in the fourth term of 2020 and the first term of 2021 will be discussed. The report will set out challenges faced during these terms and goals for the future.

# Fourth Term

I was elected on the 27th of October 2020, after a panel interview. The Student Parliament Committee’s term of office began on the 1st of November 2020, in accordance with section 6 of the Student Parliament Constitution. At the end of the fourth academic term, the Student Parliament Committee held a meeting to discuss our year planning. A meeting was also held with representatives from Student Governance, which provided us with an opportunity to engage with that structure.

# First Term

At the beginning of 2021, we worked to establish foundational elements of Student Parliament, such as our vision and mission. Before the start of the academic year, the Student Parliament Committee undertook the task of reviewing and commenting on the Student Parliament Constitution of 2013, which is currently in force. Student Governance hosted cooperative governance sessions, with members of the Tygerberg Student Parliament and Student Court in attendance. This served as a developmental training opportunity and allowed Student Parliament to interact with other student leadership bodies. Throughout the term, the committee held biweekly meetings, as constitutionally mandated.

## Accountability Forum

As per the Student Parliament Constitution, I am mandated to assist the Accountability Committee Chairperson in fulfilling their duties, as delegated to me. We are tasked with creating the Accountability Forum. There were two challenges in this process. Firstly, there is some ambiguity in the 2013 Student Parliament Constitution regarding this forum, which needed to be clarified. Secondly, once we opened applications to serve on the forum to the student body, there seemed to be a lack of interest. However, we were ultimately able to appoint a competent senior law student to fill the position.

## First Sitting

The First Sitting of Student Parliament was held on the 8th of April at 18h00. Due to COVID-19 safety precautions, the sitting took place on Microsoft Teams. Overall, the sitting was successful. Engagement from the house centred primarily around the feedback from the Constitutional Review Committee. There was a lack of submissions from the student body for the agenda of the sitting, which was slightly disappointing.

# Challenges

* 1. Institutional legitimacy

A significant challenge has been the use of the 2013 Student Parliament Constitution. The constitution is outdated, has contradictory and missing provisions, and can be convoluted at times. It is difficult to navigate as we are bound by this constitution, although its relevance might be questionable. This constitution should have been updated previously, but it is unclear whether this updated version exists. This relates to the concern of lack of institutional legitimacy.

## Engagement from the student body

At times, it appears that there is limited interest from the student body in engaging with the Student Parliament structure. For example, the lack of applications to serve on a committee or the lack of submission of agenda points. This is a problem it could hinder our ability to perform our function. However, the lack of engagement might be attributable to diminished presence of Student Parliament in past years. I believe that we are working to rebuild our position in the student leadership structure and campus environment.

# Goals

In term 2, I hope to work with the Accountability Committee Chairperson to improve the visibility of the Accountability Committee on campus. The relevance of the structure and the function it performs should be emphasised. The Accountability Forum has been constituted, so it will be able to effectively undertake tasks.

# Conclusion

In conclusion, the Student Parliament Committee is working diligently to uphold our constitutional mandate and maintain legitimacy in the eyes of the student body. I will strive to advance my portfolio and the goals of our committee, including the increased utilisation of the Accountability Committee by the student body.