

Student Parliament

*Accountability, Transparency and Consultative Governance*

UNIVERSITEIT iYUNIVESITHI STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

**SECOND TERM REPORT 201**

**DEPUTY SPEAKER EXTERNAL**

**(SECRETARY GENERAL)**

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# OVERVIEW BY SECRETARY GENERAL:

This report is submitted in accordance with my constitutional mandate as an executive member of the Student Parliament Committee. This report will cover all facets of my involvement regarding my responsibilities throughout the second term of the 2019 academic year. I will make brief reference to the duties that I carried out during this period and reflect on my experiences in office by providing recommendations as a starting point for the improvement of my duties for the succeeding terms.

At all times I have worked fruitfully and constructively under the leadership of the Speaker of Student Parliament, Mr. K. Lebesa, and alongside the Accountability Chair, Mr. N. Mkhize, as well as the executive treasurer, Mr. P. Shongwe. The later appointment of the Communications Officer, Mr. S. Islam and the Deputy Accountability Chair, Ms. T. Ntwagae further eased a few of the Student Parliament duties to be carried out during the term which ultimately enabled the Committee to function more smoothly. The efforts of Parliament were however not without challenges which I will briefly allude to in the reflection that is to follow.

As Secretary General, my duties are mostly administrative, so I make every effort to ensure that all information is made available as accurately as possible and upon request via email or by visiting the Student Parliament website. Therefore, should you wish for a more comprehensive understanding of the duties that the committee has carried out, please refer to either of the above platforms through which all formal minutes of meetings and sittings, as well as any reports released by the committee are available.

*Yours in Accountability, Transparency and Consultative Governance,*

Ms. TN Selahle (20857446)

# REFLECTION:

## Second Ordinary Sitting:

According to S of the Student Parliament Constitution, Student Parliament is required to host at least one ordinary siting per academic term, so the Second Ordinary Sitting of Parliament was held on the 7th of May. There was a fair turnout as the committee managed to notify students well in advance.

The execution of the sitting itself was challenging, as many of the guest speakers and presenters that the committee had invited to share information at the sitting pulled out after the agenda had been sent to the public. As a result, the agenda was altered to accommodate those new changes and a substantial amount of time was lost arguing procedure during the sitting. Many other disputes arose during the event and concerns were raised by members of parliament concerning the impartiality of the Speaker and Accountability Chair due to a topic at hand which members of parliament felt gave rise to reasonable suspicion of bias on the part of both executive members. It was then encumbered upon me to resume the sitting. The sitting moved along thereafter, but the committee was unable to cover all points on the agenda due to time constraints.

I was also responsible for producing the minutes of that sitting.

**Recommendations:**

1. I find it necessary to find better solutions to bind persons who agree to present as guest speakers at sittings (which I wish to distinguish from persons who are summoned by Parliament with the purpose of holding them accountable as described in Addendum E of the Student Parliament Constitution). I think co-operative governance ought to be a principle which all structures of student leadership should take more seriously. The purpose of platforms such as Student Parliament is to provide information to students in an interactive fashion and if there are student leaders who are in the privileged position to provide valuable and credible insight (without relying on Addendum E and thus relieving the stigma which is attached thereto), then in my opinion, this is practice which is to be encouraged and supported more strongly.
2. Committee members should also work to ensure the fruitfulness of debates held in Parliament by finding better solutions to maintaining order and respect for fellow members of parliament. Much of the loss of time which was experienced is due to consistent interruptions and disruptions in the room.
3. The communication matter that student leaders are facing (by not having access to the mass email system throughout the term) should find quicker methods to update students should sudden changes arise i.e. a change in the agenda due to measures beyond the power of Student Parliament.

## Policy Unit and Policy Officer:

According to S8(3)(1) of the Student Parliament Constitution, I am the Policy officer for Student Parliament and I also the Chair of the Policy Unit which is a forum designed to keep the different student leader efficient by constantly updating and reviewing their policy.

As the Policy Officer of Student Parliament, my main priority at this stage is to amend the current Student Parliament Constitution to be in line with the newly implemented Student Constitution which confers new powers upon Student Parliament which the current Student Parliament Constitution does not cater for. The committee is currently in talks about the amendment of the Student Parliament Constitution so that it complies with the amendment procedure contained therein.

The committee plans to have the first proposed draft completed and sent to Student Court for ratification by the final week of August.

The Policy Unit is a forum which I have found challenging thus far. The Committee is designed to keep other student leadership structure policy updated to ensure the efficiency of their duties. A group was created involving the various policy officers of the different leadership structures, but it appeared that there were a few committees which did not have constitutionally mandated delegates as policy officers. The policy officers who consulted me directly were also unaware of their specific duties as policy officers, as there is no reference currently available for at Stellenbosch University to guide us. I then prepared a framework as to how the meetings would proceed and made it available to all on the group as well as on the Student Parliament website and asked the policy officers to provide feedback on improving the proposed framework.

A decision was made by the Student Parliament with reliance on S7(b)(vi) to postpone a formal Policy unit meeting and rather have a ‘virtual’ meeting where each policy officer was asked to prepare a report for their specific structure and present it to the group before a specified deadline. These reports would then form a foundation for the Policy Unit meetings because it is then more effective and fruitful to address the matters that policy officers have taken the time to analyse and critique. Many policy officers contacted me directly to enquire on the substance of the reports, but few actually submitted them and there are no procedures to enforce compliance. As a result, a new approach must be developed by the Student Parliament Committee.

**Recommendations:**

1. Parliament needs better structures to ensure participation of persons who they must hold accountable by implementing some sort of disciplinary measure because the power to Parliament given by Addendum E only pertains to the SRC and must be extended to include all members listed in S8(3)(2)(a). Furthermore, it is difficult to enforce this procedure because student participation is not very high so obtaining the necessary signatures takes time. Without proper authority binding student leaders, it is difficult to be fruitful. Student Parliament should therefore look into measures which increase student participation and enlighten student on their powers and rights pertaining to their authority regarding the offices held by student leaders. I think that if this system could be strengthened, the Student Parliament Committee would be more fruitful in holding leaders accountable.

## Transparency and communication:

According to many different sections of the Student Parliament Constitution, all Student Parliament related information must be made available to students to ensure that Parliament upholds its core value of transparency. Following a meeting held with university management, student leaders may no longer make use of the mass email system due to legal reasons. This hampers the fulfilment of several constitutional provisions which require information to be accessible to students, so an alternative plan was made to make use of the website as the main platform for communication.

The committee attended website training and I uploaded all the documentation to the site which was previously only available upon request. There are a number of problems we still face with the site and are working to correct regardless of these challenges, all material is complete, organized and easily accessible on the site.

**Recommendations:**

1. Notify students that the main official Student Parliament platform used for communication has changed to the website and is no longer via email.
2. Find more convenient methods of notifying students of Student Parliament events and meeting such as including notices in the Stellenbosch University newsletters or creating a stronger social media presence.

## Treasurer’s Forum:

The Treasurer’s Forum has been running smoothly this year under the leadership of Mr. P Shongwe. My involvement in the forum is mainly administrative as I am responsible for the planning that surrounds the meetings and record-keeping. I compile the minutes of the meetings which are available online. My role is also consultative as the Executive Committee work together to plan for the substantive elements of the Treasurer’s Forum meetings. The next meeting is scheduled for 4pm on the 29th of July.

## Accountability Committee:

According to S8(3)(n) of the Student Parliament Constitution, I am a member of all Student Parliament Committees and forms. The role I play is mostly consultative as the Accountability Committee work together to investigate all matters and formulate reports. The reports of the cases that the committee has been involved in this past term are available on the Student Parliament website.

## Administration of Student Parliament:

The administration of Student Parliament is mostly aimed at assisting members of Parliament to be more efficient. This entails attending trainings concerning the website, constitutional review processes, leadership trainings etc. My main priority is working with the Co-curricular office to get the application for Student Parliament off the ground. These duties do not directly affect students so minutes, and the details thereof are not made available.

# THIRD TERM PRIORITIES:

## Student Parliament Committee Meetings:

According to S of the Student Parliament Constitution, the committee must meet at least once every two weeks. The official dates have not yet been communicated and are subject to change depending on the availability of the members. As it stands, the first Committee Meeting for the second term is on Tuesday the 30th of July at 6pm, the details of which should be posted to the site soon, so as to encourage student involvement.

## Policy Unit Forum:

The Policy Unit forum will commence shortly after elections have taken place so that all new members in office in the different student leadership structures can elect a policy representative to participate in all Policy Unit Groups. The committee has yet to agree but a meeting is likely to take place in early September.

## Constitutional amendment:

As it stands, the committee has agreed to extend all committee meetings to discuss the amendment of the Student Parliament Constitutions of main campus and Tygerberg campus. The structure provided thus far aims to have final drafts submitted for ratification by Student Court by the last week of August 2019. Once that formality has been complied with, the committee will then focus its attention to including students during the first week of September.

# SUMMARY:

The current team has been in office for a term now and although we have successfully been able to progress in a lot of our duties, there is still a substantial amount of work to be done to catch up for the duties that were supposed to have been complied with in the fourth quarter of 2018 and in the first quarter of 2019. We are optimistic and encouraged to have all the necessary structures set up and running by the time the next team assume office.

The team thanks you in advance for your involvement and co-operation.

