Transformation Policy

Type of document	Policy
Purpose	To guide, enable, inform and ensure the implementation of embedded transformation linked to the core functions, vision and strategic framework of Stellenbosch University.
Approved by	SU Council
Date of approval	
Date of implementation	
Date of next revision	2027
Date of previous revision(s)	
Policy owner	Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel
Policy curator(s)	Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation, and Head: Transformation Office
Keywords	transformation, diversity, inclusion, equity
Validity	

1. Introduction and background

In 2018, Stellenbosch University (SU), as part of its Centenary, released a restitution statement, acknowledging its complicity in the injustices of apartheid. This statement ushered in a new phase on SU's transformation journey – a journey that was first formally expressed in the University's Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond (2000), which repositioned SU to confront its history of race-based exclusion and introduced a concerted focus on institutional redress and restitution. The 2000 framework was followed by the Institutional Intent and Strategy (2013), which established the first iteration of what would later become SU's Transformation Office.

This strategic focus led to the development and implementation of a number of transformative policies and practices. One of these is the SU Transformation Plan (2017) with its focus on people, places and programmes. The plan was the first approved policy document on transformation at the University, guiding the institution and its people into the following chapter of SU's transformation journey.

Following the implementation of the Transformation Plan over a five-year period, the Rectorate decided that SU should work towards the drafting of a Transformation Policy. The decision to develop a Transformation Policy, which should be accompanied by a Transformation Plan, elevates transformation to being a Council priority, confirming that stakeholders across the institution are increasingly taking ownership of transformation at SU. As such, this policy emanates from the Transformation Plan and institutional transformation processes. In addition, it introduces a further phase on SU's transformation path by reaffirming the University's commitment to accelerating and

deepening transformation based on the tenets of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. This is crucial, considering that the slow pace of transformation, racism, lack of access to higher education, the need for a decolonised curriculum, public financial constraints and social cohesion have been identified as key challenges for higher education (Soudien, 2008).

With SU's responsive and future-oriented focus as outlined in its latest strategic documents, Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024, the University is well positioned to maximise its impact and fulfil its commitment to create inclusive and diverse experiences that would allow its students and staff to unleash their full potential. The Transformation Policy serves as a set of guidelines that will govern SU's actions in pursuing its vision of a transformed and future-focused African institution. SU has committed itself to becoming Africa's leading research-intensive university (Vision 2040) where its students and staff are engaged in producing new knowledge to move our society from an exclusive past to a socially just, sustainable, thriving, democratic future (Transformation Plan, 2017).

The Transformation Policy is guided by the University's values as outlined in Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024. These are as follows:

- Equity: Restitution in response to our past legacy, and fairness in our aspirations
- Excellence: Academic freedom to pursue knowledge that adheres to the highest standards of integrity, renewal and relevance
- Compassion: Recognition of, and care for, the well-being of all our students and staff
- Accountability: Accepting the highest level of responsibility for our actions
- Respect: Civility in our mutual and public discourse, due regard for the freedom, equality and dignity of all, and respect for the environment

Values are central to transformation, as they guide institutions to be open, reflective, self-critical and inclusive. SU's values are an expression of the type of university it is and wants to become. While the pursuit of transformation is primarily based on the overarching value of equity, all other values are deemed necessary for guiding the University on its path of transformation.

2. Policy statement

Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024 articulates the core strategic themes that will guide SU towards becoming a systemically sustainable and transformed university with a positive impact on society. In its vision, SU makes a commitment to be Africa's leading research-intensive university, globally recognised as excellent, inclusive and innovative, where knowledge is advanced in service of society. The University's mission, in turn, is to "attract outstanding students, employ talented staff and provide a world-class environment; a place connected to the world, while enriching and transforming local, continental, and global communities" (Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019-2024).

In line with the above, this policy outlines the University's commitment to ensure systemic transformation cutting across its core functions. The policy is intended to guide the institution on a clear journey of transformation by eliminating exclusionary practices and promoting transformative programmes and processes. Through the implementation of the policy provisions, SU aspires to increase equity, access, success and inclusivity, thereby reaffirming the institution as a thriving university of choice for both staff and students.

3. Policy principles

SU strives to uphold the founding principles of South Africa's constitutional democracy as integral components of the University's transformation path. These principles (dignity, healing, justice, freedom and equality) resonate with Africa's aspirations for the future, as outlined in the National Development Plan 2030 and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

3.1 Human dignity

SU believes that everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected. The right to dignity supersedes all dehumanising forms of differentiation based on class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion and ability that prevent people from living optimally.

3.2 Inclusion

Inclusion means to improve conditions for participation. It is both a process and a goal. To promote inclusion, exclusion needs to be challenged by removing barriers to participation. This demands deliberate steps, including empowerment and promotion. Inclusion processes involve addressing both the drivers of exclusion, such as policies and procedures, and discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

3.3 Restitution

SU's recognises its inextricable connection with generations past, present and future, and its responsibility towards present and future generations, as informed by the University's 2018 restitution statement.[1]

3.4 Equity

As an integral component of SU's transformation journey, equity is achieved through the identification and elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that create and reinforce unfair outcomes. SU considers equity as a means to achieve equality. Therefore, an equity-informed approach informs corrective and restorative processes across the University to create a fair and inclusive campus were all staff and students are valued for their role and contribution in developing SU into a world-class African university.

4. Purpose of the policy

To guide, enable, inform and ensure the implementation of embedded transformation linked to the core functions, vision and strategic framework of SU.

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[1] "Stellenbosch University (SU) acknowledges its inextricable connection with generations past, present and future. In the 2018 Centenary Year, SU celebrates its many successes and achievements. SU simultaneously acknowledges its contribution towards the injustices of the past. For this we have deep regret. We apologise unreservedly to the communities and individuals who were excluded from the historical privileges that SU enjoyed and we honour the critical Matie voices of the time who would not be silenced. In responsibility towards the present and future generations, SU commits itself unconditionally to the ideal of an inclusive world-class university in and for Africa."

5. Aims of the policy

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- To ensure the development, implementation and the monitoring and evaluation of SU's Transformation Plan.
- To integrate the logic and ethics of transformation with the University's core business and ensure shared ownership of transformation at SU.
- To promote the realisation of the institution's six key strategic themes as well as SU's values contained in Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024.
- To underpin and inform the development of other policies of the University.

6. Definitions

Employment equity: A process of "promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination" and "implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce", with 'designated groups' referring to "black people, women and people with disabilities" (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998). Employment equity is an important tool for advancing the demographic change required for transformation.

Equality: Understood as "the full and equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms as contemplated in the Constitution" (Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000).

Equity: Means "taking deliberate actions to remove systemic, group, and individual barriers and obstacles that hinder opportunities and disrupt well-being. Equity is achieved through the identification and elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that create and reinforce unfair outcomes. … Equity achieves [equality] through treating people differently dependent on need, circumstance and consideration of historical and systemic inequities" (Molefi, O'Mara and Richter, 2021).

Institutional culture: Means the "deeply embedded patterns of organisational behaviour and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs or ideologies that members have about their organisation or its work" (Peterson and Spencer, 1990). It also refers to the "dominant ethos" or norms, assumptions and values that are enacted through structures, policy and practice through institutions every day (Steyn and Van Zyl, 2001). These norms determine what is encouraged, discouraged, accepted or rejected in the organisation (Groysberg, Lee, Prince and Yo-Jud Cheng, 2018) and, as such, guide sensemaking (Toma, Dubrow and Hartley, 2005) and socialise members of the institution on what behaviour is acceptable and how things generally work.

People: Refers to the people of the University, including its staff, students, alumni, institutional partners, publics and other relevant stakeholders and role-players.

Place: Understood as social inclusion and changes in both the physical spaces and the foundational institutional culture that facilitate a sense of belonging among students and staff. This includes visual redress, inclusive practices and the design and organisation of spaces that enable access for students and staff living with a range of disabilities.

Programmes: Refers to core SU programmes as well as specific transformation competencies that engage teaching, learning, innovation, research and training tools to enable systemic transformation.

Restitution: Means the University's acknowledgement of its contribution to the injustices of the past, and its unconditional commitment to the ideal of an inclusive world-class university in and for Africa.

Transformation: Refers to an intentional and structured process of profound change from one state to another. The aim of transformation at SU is to advance and realise the University's vision by promoting the realisation of the institution's overarching strategic priorities, thus contributing to change and renewal of society so as to reflect the central values of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. 'Quantitative transformation' refers to demographic change relating to underrepresentation in terms of race, socioeconomic status, gender and disability, among others (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998). 'Qualitative transformation' involves processes relating to institutional culture, particularly how institutional culture enables oppression and privilege. Qualitative transformation emphasises the distribution of political, social and economic power, and the processes through which social inclusion and exclusion are effected. While it includes psychosocial phenomena such as prejudice and attitudes, it also involves cultural and social patterns of inclusion and exclusion that go beyond psychosocial phenomena. In essence, therefore, qualitative transformation involves the implementation of measures for both social and economic inclusion (Soudien, 2008). 'Systemic transformation' refers to the changing of systems at the University that are exclusionary (whether intentionally or unintentionally) to systems that are inclusionary. It also reflects SU's view of transformation as being system-wide and embedded, i.e. that all dimensions of university life are involved in the transformation and renewal process, and that the process of transformation is guided and informed by specific institutional structures, entities and functionaries. In addition, systemic transformation implies a comprehensive scope of transformation as reflected by *Times Higher Education*, which includes the transformation of the institution, talent, internationalisation, teaching and learning, the student experience, impact, research and leadership.

Visual redress: Refers to changes in the University's visual environment and culture that promote restitution, inclusivity and institutional cohesion (Fataar and Costandius, 2021).[2]

7. Pillars of the policy
The three pillars of transformation at SU are place, programmes and people.

7.1 Place

In becoming an employer of choice, delivering a transformative student experience and creating a thriving university, SU is committed to:

7.1.1 creating and maintaining an inclusive institutional culture through ensuring inclusive practices, universal access for people with disabilities, inclusive communication, multilingualism, and the monitoring and evaluation of institutional culture; and

7.1.2 facilitating visual redress by renewing the public semiotics, i.e. the public meaning and symbolism, of SU's physical infrastructure (buildings, signage, statues, pictures, etc.) in a resolute, intentional and coordinated way.

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[2] Fataar, A. & Costandius, E. 2021 *Evoking Transformation: Visual Redress at Stellenbosch University*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.

7.2 Programmes

In becoming an employer of choice, delivering a transformative student experience and creating a thriving university, SU is committed to:

7.2.1 ensuring that all staff and students are empowered with transformation competencies in order to address discriminatory attitudes and behaviours;

7.2.2 prioritising, expanding and developing curriculum renewal and teaching methodologies to ensure that the University's teaching and learning programmes are relevant to societal transformation needs in the context of Africanisation and decolonisation; and

7.2.3 prioritising, expanding and developing research outputs and themes that address the transformation needs of local and broader African societies and the imperatives of decolonisation.

7.3 People

In becoming an employer of choice, delivering a transformative student experience and creating a thriving university, SU is committed to:

7.3.1 increasing the diversity of its staff through improved recruitment, retention and mentorship initiatives and the elimination of barriers to inclusion;

7.3.2 increasing the diversity of its student body through improved recruitment, retention and support initiatives and the elimination of barriers to inclusion; and

7.3.3 expanding and developing institutional partnerships with alumni, external and internal community stakeholders, funders and other higher education institutions to strengthen transformation at, and adhere to the strategic priorities and values of, the institution, as well as respond to societal transformation needs.

8. Implementation of the policy

8.1 The policy, including any regulations and rules flowing from it, shall by default be applicable to all SU staff (permanent, temporary and outsourced), all SU students, the members of the statutory bodies of the University, as well as the members of all companies or legal entities under the University's control who are involved in the governance of policy and management documents.

8.2 All policies and management documents developed after the date of approval of this policy shall align with this policy.

8.3 Existing policy and management documents shall be adapted to align with this policy during a general and planned revision process to be undertaken in the first three years after approval of this policy.

8.4 This policy should be read and interpreted as an overarching policy for all other policies and management documents that have a particular focus on transformation at SU.

8.5 The policy is applicable to all University environments, including Council. All other SU policies must be read together with this policy, the principles of which will take effect immediately upon approval by Council.

8.6 All SU policies, plans, procedures and protocols should adhere to the transformation parameters laid out in this policy. To this end, environments should familiarise themselves with and consult this policy where relevant or applicable.

9. Roles and responsibilities

9.1 The allocation of roles and responsibilities ensures that transformation evolves from a paper-based exercise to actual accountability. The Transformation Plan, which is to be drafted following approval of this policy, will articulate the transformation-related roles and responsibilities of various portfolios in more detail.

9.2 SU's Rector and Vice-Chancellor is accountable for the transformation mandate of the University. The Rector and Vice-Chancellor is also responsible for the transformation-related performance management of the University's:
- Deputy Vice-Chancellors (DVCs);
- Registrar; and
- Chief Operating Officer.

9.3 The DVC: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel is the owner of, and institutional functionary with overall responsibility for, this policy, and shall be responsible for establishing the requisite controls to monitor its implementation.

9.4 The Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation and the Head: Transformation Office are the co-curators of this policy. They shall be the primary functionaries in terms of implementing the policy, and facilitating and guiding the process of its development and revision.

9.5 The Institutional Transformation Committee (ITC) serves as an advisory structure to the Rectorate on transformation matters, and initiates recommendations for policy adjustments as required.

9.6 Staff are responsible for co-developing their workplans with their line managers, and for meeting their transformation key performance areas.

9.7 Students are responsible for taking up opportunities to participate in transformation-related engagements, and for holding the University to account for providing (or the failure to provide) a transformative student experience.

10. Monitoring

Compliance with this policy will be monitored at multiple levels.
10.1 All heads of SU environments must monitor compliance with this policy.
10.2 The ITC plays a consultative and advisory role in implementing transformation at the University and, as such, shall initiate recommendations for policy adjustments as required.

11. Reporting

11.1 The ITC shall report annually to the Rectorate on progress with the implementation of the Transformation Plan.

11.2 The achievement of transformation-related objectives shall form part of the key performance indicators of all deans and heads of environments.

12. Revision

12.1 This Transformation Policy is subject to approval by Council.

12.2 Upon approval of the Transformation Policy, a Transformation Plan will be developed for approval by the Rectorate.

12.3 A revision of the policy shall be conducted every five years.

13. Related documents
- Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024
- SU Transformation Plan 2017

This Transformation Policy also draws on various external documents, including the following:

- Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview
- Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996
- Durban Statement on Transformation in Higher Education (DHET 2nd Higher Education Summit Oct 2015)
- Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998
- Higher Education Act 101 of 1997
- Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) Report on Transformation in Higher Education, 2017
- Keet, A. and Swartz, D. 2015. A Transformation Barometer for South African Higher Education. Retrieved from https://www.usaf.ac.za/wpcontent/uploads/2016/09/Transformation-Barometer-_A-Discussion-Paper.pdf
- National Development Plan 2030, https://www.nationalplanningcommission.org.za/National_Development_Plan#:~:text=The%20 NDP%20aims%20to%20achieve%20the%20following%20objectives,the%20economy%20more% 20labour%20absorbing%20More%20items...%20
- Policy Framework for the Realisation of Social Inclusion in the PSET System, 2016
- Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education: Education White Paper 3, 1997
- Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000
- Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions (or the Soudien report, 2008)
- White Paper on Education and Training, 1995