



**Stellenbosch**

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# Transformation Policy



Implementation date: 1 January 2025

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# Transformation Policy

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| <b>Type of document:</b>                            | Policy  |
| <b>Purpose:</b>                                     | To inform, guide, enable and enhance the implementation of comprehensive and embedded transformation linked to the core functions, vision and strategy of Stellenbosch University |
| <b>Approved by:</b>                                 | SU Council  |
| <b>Date of approval:</b>                            | 2 December 2024   |
| <b>Date of implementation:</b>                      | 1 January 2025  |
| <b>Date of next revision/frequency of revision:</b> | 2029 (every 5 years)  |
| <b>Previous revisions:</b>                          | None  |
| <b>Policy owner<sup>1</sup>:</b>                    | Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel   |
| <b>Policy curator<sup>2</sup>:</b>                  | Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation and the Director: Social Impact and Transformation  |
| <b>Keywords:</b>                                    | comprehensive transformation, diversity, inclusion, equity, dignity   |
| <b>Validity:</b>                                    | The English version of this regulation is the operative version, and the Afrikaans version is the translation.  |

<sup>1</sup> Rules Owner: Head(s) of Responsibility Centre(s) in which the rules functions.

<sup>2</sup> Rules Curator: Administrative head of the division responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the rules

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| <b>Date of next revision</b>        | 2029  |
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### 1. Introduction and background

In 2018, Stellenbosch University (SU), as part of its Centenary celebrations, released a restitution statement acknowledging its complicity in the injustices of the past. 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).

This strategic focus led to the development and implementation of a number of transformative policies and practices. The SU Transformation Plan (2017) with its focus on people, places and programmes, was the first document that focused explicitly on transformation at and through the University.

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 revised 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 existing 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, 1996 (the Constitution).

With SU's responsive and future-oriented focus as outlined in its visionary and strategic documents, 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. These documents guide SU towards becoming a systemically sustainable, excellent and transformed university in and for Africa, with a positive impact on society. The University

strives to be a world-class environment where excellent staff, students and societal partners contribute to the transforming and renewal of local, continental and global communities.

The Transformation Policy is guided by the University's values:

- § 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 wellbeing of all our students and staff and societal partners
- § 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. These interdependent values inform and guide the transformation journey of Stellenbosch University.

The Transformation Policy serves as a framework that will govern SU's actions in pursuing its vision of a transformed and future-focused African university. SU has committed itself to becoming a leading research-intensive African university 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, and democratic future.

## **2. Policy statement**

The University's commitment is 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 staff, students and societal partners.

## **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 are dignity, freedom, equality, healing and justice.

## **4. Purpose of the policy**

To inform, govern, enable and enhance the implementation of comprehensive and embedded transformation linked to the core functions, vision and strategy of Stellenbosch University.

## **5. Aims of the policy**

The aims of this policy are as follows:

- § To serve as the basis upon which the revised SU Transformation Plan is developed, implemented, monitored and evaluated.
- § To integrate the logic and ethics of transformation with the University's core academic mandate, inclusive of the processes and programmes, and ensure shared ownership of transformation at SU.
- § To promote the realisation of the institution's vision, mission, strategy and central values.
- § To underpin and inform the development of other governance documents of the University.

## **6. Definitions and Conceptual Clarification**

**6.1 Transformation** at SU is a process of perpetual and profound, intentional and structured, comprehensive and deep change and renewal that seeks individual, institutional and societal life of dignity, freedom, equality, healing and justice for all.

Transformation implies a comprehensive and inclusive understanding of transformation as reflected by the following eight dimensions of transformation, namely transformation of the institution, of talent, of internationalisation, of teaching and learning, of the student experience, of social impact, of research and of leadership.

Transformation at SU envisages the formation of individuals, institutions and societies that reflect the constitutional principles of South Africa. This is achieved through the academic and professional academic support mandate of the University, namely research and innovation, learning and teaching, and transformative social impact. Transformation has both interdependent quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Decolonisation, Africanisation and restitution are crucial dimensions of transformation.

**6.2 Dignity** refers to the inherent worth, value, esteem and splendour of every human being. Dignity is the foundational principle of the Constitution, and it calls to be acknowledged, affirmed, advanced and actualised. Human dignity is protected, advanced and actualised through human rights, including civil and political rights, social and economic rights, ecological and developmental rights. The right to dignity supersedes all dehumanising forms of differentiation based on class, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, age, nationality, and ability that prevent people from living optimally.

**6.3 Freedom** refers to freedom from all forms of enslavement and oppression, intimidation and unfair discrimination. Freedom also refers to the freedom for fulfilling civic responsibilities in the contexts of campus, community, country, continent and cosmos.

**6.4 Equality** refers to the full and equal enjoyment of rights and freedoms as contemplated in the Constitution. This includes both formal and substantive equality. Whereas formal equality requires that all persons similarly situated be treated the same, substantive equality requires that attention is given to context and equality of outcomes so that some disparate treatment may be necessary having regard of the impact of the differentiation and the nature of the harm of an act of differentiation. Therefore, depending on the context, equality may be advanced through similar or differential treatment.

**6.5 Equality** is advanced through **equity**, i.e. through intentional attempts to address the unacceptable levels of inequality and the achievement of higher levels of equilibrium (*aequitas*) on campus and in society, which means that some do not have too much and others too little. Equity implies the identification and elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, environments, and cultural messages that create and reinforce unfair outcomes<sup>1</sup>. Equity means taking deliberate actions to remove systemic, group, and individual barriers and obstacles that hinder opportunities and disrupt wellbeing. Equity informs an approach where corrective and restorative processes across the University create a fair and inclusive campus where all staff and students are valued for their role and contribution in developing SU into a world-class university in and for Africa. As an integral component of SU's transformation journey, equity implies the identification and elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that create and reinforce unfair outcomes. Employment equity is a specific domain of equity. It is 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.

**6.6 Healing** refers to the physical, psychological, social, political, economic, ecological, moral and spiritual healing of all people, especially after the trauma and injury of centuries of colonialism and decades of apartheid.

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<sup>1</sup> Equity advances equality through treating people differently dependent on need, circumstance and consideration of historical and systemic inequities" (Molefi, O'Mara and Richter, 2021).

**6.7 Justice** refers to the consistent quest for equitable and fair treatment and outcomes, including redress and reparation, restoration and restitution, redistribution and reconciliation in the personal, professional, public and planetary dimensions of life.

**6.8 Quantitative transformation** refers to demographic change relating to underrepresentation in terms of race, socioeconomic status, gender and disability, amongst others. It relates to matters that can be counted and expressed in data. This includes the diversification of staff, students, partnerships, clients, names of buildings, and of institutional structures like the Student Representative Council, Faculty Boards, Senate, Institutional Forum, and Council.

**6.9 Qualitative transformation** refers to matters that cannot be measured easily, but that can be weighed, felt and experienced. It encompasses the feeling and experience of inclusion (both social and economic), co-ownership and co-definition of the University and its culture and customs, spaces, policies and practices. Institutional culture(s) is an indispensable dimension of qualitative transformation.

**6.10 Systemic transformation** refers to the changing of systems at the University that are exclusionary (whether intentionally or unintentionally) to systems that are inclusionary. Transformation is system-wide and embedded.

**6.11 Embedded transformation** refers to the fact that transformation is not an isolated and insignificant activity. Transformation is dispersed and distributed thus radiating to and impacting upon all dimensions and facets of university life. Embedded transformation implies that all the people of the University are involved in and responsible for transformation. Embedded transformation simultaneously implies that the process of transformation, change and renewal is inspired, informed and guided by specific institutional structures, entities and functionaries.

**6.12 Visual redress** refers to changes in the University's visual environment and institutional culture that promote restitution, inclusivity and institutional cohesion (Fataar and Costandius, 2021).

**6.13 Africanisation** is a process of incorporating contextual African cultural values, practices, and perspectives into various aspects of life, such as education, politics, economics, and social systems. It seeks to promote identities, heritages and autonomy by reasserting African values and traditions.

Africanisation refers to SU's vocation to be a University in and for Africa, practising learning and teaching, research and innovation, transformative social impact, based in Africa and being part of the global community, cherishing indigenous knowledge and wisdom, and contributing to local and global quests for transformative knowledge. Africanisation includes the recognition of the cultural heritage of previously marginalised African people, by upholding multi-ethnic cultural expressions and the adoption of Afrocentric approaches to the creation, production and dissemination of knowledge.

**6.14 Decolonisation** is the process of dismantling the political, economic, social and intellectual systems of colonialism, and restoring dignity for marginalised groups. The culture, epistemology and pedagogy of decoloniality involves undoing the structures and systems that afforded privileges to certain groups, by empowering marginalised groups to affirm their agency, to be authors of the stories of their lives, and to reclaim their cultural identities. It is a complex and ongoing process that requires confronting and correcting the legacy of colonialism, including the social, economic, and political inequalities that it created.

**6.15 Restitution** has both legal and moral dimensions. Restitution focuses on contractual and criminal violations as well as personal and social injustices, and historical harm and injury. Restitution refers to reparations and restorations related to slavery, colonisation and racism in apartheid South Africa. Restitution is about corrective measures related to discrimination and dehumanisation in the forms of sexism, patriarchy, classism, violation of dignity and human rights having regard of both the past and the future.

Restitution at SU means disconnecting from the injustices of the past by consciously recognising historical privileges and addressing these to ensure that there is no further marginalisation of previously disadvantaged individuals and

communities. SU 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.<sup>2</sup>

**6.16 Institutional culture** has been characterised as the “deeply embedded patterns of organisational behaviour and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs or ideologies that members have about their organisations or its work”.<sup>3</sup> It has further been identified as a critical transformation challenge for the higher education system in South Africa.

A discriminatory institutional culture in need of transformation, change and renewal has the following dimensions: It refers to conscious and mostly subconscious **biases**, prejudices, presuppositions, perceptions and pictures of individuals from other colours, genders, orientations, levels of ability, age groups, socio-economic positions, cultures, creeds, confessions etc., which imply that these groups are ordered from superior to inferiority in terms of factors like physical appearance, intellect, level of creativity, sophistication, civility, morality etc.. Institutional and societal **structures** are established on basis of this presumed picture of superiority and inferiority. **Power** is mustered to establish these structures. Intellectual, cultural and religious **legitimisations and rationales** are provided for these biases and accompanying structures. These biases, structures and rationales are portrayed as normal, as **the norm**. Transforming discriminatory institutional cultures with dimensions like these, is an indispensable part of the transformation imperative.

## 7. Pillars of the policy

The three pillars of transformation at SU are people, place and programmes. The pillars are interrelated to the ECARE values (namely equity, compassion, accountability, respect and excellence) as part of the university ecosystem.

### 7.1 Place

Place is 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 universal access.

In being a University in transformation mode, SU is committed to:

7.1.1 creating and maintaining an inclusive institutional culture through ensuring inclusive practices, universal access that promotes accessibility for all which would hereby include people with disabilities, inclusive communication, multilingualism, and the monitoring and evaluation of institutional culture;

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

7.1.3 creating an open intellectual campus environment where rigorous debate on all academic and societal issues is encouraged and facilitated, in the context of transformation, restitution and aligned with SU's values, where different viewpoints and perspectives can interact.

### 7.2 Programmes

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<sup>2</sup> “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.”

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Suransky and J.C. van der Merwe. 2016. Transcending apartheid in higher education: Transforming an institutional culture. *Race Ethnicity and Education* 19(3): 577–597. DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2014.946487.

Programmes refer to SU's programmatic offerings in the domains of learning and teaching, research and innovation, as well as transformative social impact in curricular and so-called extra-curricular contexts. Programmes include specific transformation competency-building offerings for both students and staff.

In being a University in transformation mode, SU is committed to:

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

7.2.2 embedding transformation competencies in modules as part of academic renewal both in terms of curriculum content and pedagogy 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 and global societies and the imperatives of decolonisation.

### **7.3 People**

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

In being a University in transformation mode, SU is committed to:

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

7.3.2 ensuring fair, professional, competent treatment of all staff, students and other stakeholders by all institutional environments; 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, binds SU staff (permanent and temporary), all SU students, the members of the statutory bodies of the University, all University environments and governance structures including the Council as well as the members of all companies or legal entities under the University's control that are involved in the implementation of policy and management documents.

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

8.3 Existing policy and management documents must 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 principles of this policy 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 adhere to the provisions of this policy where relevant or applicable.



## **9. Roles and responsibilities**

9.1 SU's Rector and Vice-Chancellor is accountable for the transformation mandate of the University.

9.2 The revised 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.

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

9.4 The Senior Director: Social Impact and Transformation and the Director: Social Impact and Transformation are the co-curators of this policy. They are 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) is a committee of the Rectorate that advises, advances and advocates on transformation related matters. It makes recommendations to the Rectorate for policy adjustments and necessary interventions required to enhance the implementation of the SU Transformation Policy and Plan, as well as related SU and national policies and plans. This is a different structure to the Employment Equity Committee which is established according to the Employment Equity Act of 1998.

## **10. Monitoring**

Compliance with this policy will be monitored at multiple levels.

10.1. The Responsibility Centre, Divisional and Faculty heads are responsible for and must advance and monitor compliance with this policy. Details in this regard will be provided in the Transformation Plan.

10.2. The Student Institutional Transformation Committee (SITC) is a subcommittee of the ITC that will provide input to the ITC in matters related to transformation on behalf of students across campuses, faculties and student communities.

10.3 The Institutional Forum and the Social and Business Ethics Committee, in line with their statutory role, will advise Council on compliance and non-compliance to this policy.

## **11. Reporting**

11.1 The DVC: Social Impact, Transformation & Personnel must regularly report in writing to Council on progress with the implementation of the Transformation Policy.

## **12. Revision**

12.1 This Transformation Policy is subject to approval by Council.

12.2 Upon approval of the Transformation Policy, a revised Transformation Plan will be developed for approval by the Rectorate in consultation with faculties, senate, professional academic support environments and students.

12.3 The Transformation Policy must be reviewed during its fifth year of operation. It may be reviewed earlier, or more than once during its period of operation, if the owner of the Policy considers it necessary.

## **13. Related documents**

## Internal University documents:

- § SU Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019–2024 (with the 2018 SU Restitution Statement)
- § SU Disability Access Policy 2018
- § SU Transformation Plan 2017
- § SU Visual Redress Policy 2021
- § SU Task Team for the Decolonisation of the Stellenbosch University Curriculum (31 July 2017)
- § SU Talking Transformation: A Quick Reference Guide- Siyakhula ( 2017 )
- § SU Social Impact Policy and Plan
- Code 2040: [SU's Integrated Ethics Code](#)

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

- § Agenda 2063: [The Africa We Want](#).
- § Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.
- § Currie, I and De Waal J. 2017. *The Bill of Rights Handbook* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) Cape Town: Juta.
- § Durban Statement on Transformation in Higher Education (Department of Higher Education and Training 2<sup>nd</sup> Higher Education Summit, Oct 2015).
- § Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998.
- § Fataar, A. and Costandius, E. 2021 *Evoking Transformation: Visual Redress at Stellenbosch University*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.
- § Higher Education Act 101 of 1997.
- § Human Sciences Research Council Report on Transformation in Higher Education, 2017.
- § Keet, A. and Swartz, D. 2015. A Transformation Barometer for South African Higher Education. Retrieved from [Transformation-Barometer- A-Discussion-Paper.pdf](#)
- § Maart, R. 2021. Cape Peninsula University of Technology: Vice-Chancellor's Transformation Seminar Series Report.
- § Maart, R. and Dey, S. 2025 (eds). *Palates of Pleasure: Food, Memories and Culture*. Routledge.
- § Molefi, N. O'Mara, J. and Richter, A. 2021. Global Diversity, Equity and Inclusion benchmarks: Standards for organizations around the world. [www.centreforglobalinclusion.org](http://www.centreforglobalinclusion.org)
- § National Development Plan 2030 [National Development Plan](#)
- § 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
- § Smit, DJ. 2014. Restitution, in R Brawley (ed), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Bible and Ethics* Vol.2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.204-207.
- § White Paper on Education and Training, 1995.
- § Woolman, S and Bishop, M. 2013. *Constitutional Law of South Africa* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cape Town: Juta.

Note: The primary source of this document is the English version.