



Towards an inclusive UCT

A Framework for Implementing
Transformation

Developed by DVC Transformation (2018)





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Introduction

The Strategic Plan of the University of Cape Town – Vision 2020 – is born of an understanding that transformation must be a key factor driving the University as it delivers its core activities of teaching and learning, research and social responsiveness. Transformation is at the heart of the University's vision.

The events of 2015 and 2016 emphasised that many students and staff experience UCT as an alienating, hyper-masculine space constructed on and powered by “whiteness”. This awareness underpinned the development of a Strategic Plan that overtly and deliberately seeks to bring about change in the University's institutional culture, using an approach centred, not on changing what we have or who we are, but on the kind of institution UCT would like to be.

In this respect we have stated that,



“In 2020 we want our university to feel very different from how it does today. We want a university with an inclusive culture at which everyone feels at home. We want a community in which there is respect for different values, views and heritages; in which none of us feels “othered”, whether white or black, cis- or transgender, straight or gay, from private or township schools, wealthy or poor. We want a university where we can all speak our minds freely without fear of being stereotyped. We want a community, which is more unified, where we feel we belong. We want a university, which makes us proud to be spending the best part of our working, lives here, for it is the vehicle for each of us to leave our personal and collective legacies. In 2020, we want UCT to be an institution that makes an even greater impact than it does today – on the lives of students, in producing new knowledge, and on the lives of the communities we serve.”¹



The Strategic Plan is constructed around five goals. Goal 1 addresses institutional culture change and elements of it are integrated and embedded in the other four goals, which focus on our identity as an African university (Goal 2), on research (Goal 3), on teaching and learning (Goal 4) and on social responsiveness (Goal 5).

It is no coincidence that Goal 1 is concerned with institutional culture change: this is our greatest challenge and consequently the cornerstone of UCT's vision of transformation.

This document outlines the current Framework for operationalising UCT's Strategic Plan. While transformation informs each of the other goals, this Framework does not focus on transformation in the spheres of teaching and learning, research or social responsiveness, as each of these areas has developed or is developing its own strategic response. Where it does address these terrains, it is to highlight ways in which we seek to support them.

¹ Excerpt from *Context and direction for a new strategic plan for UCT, 2016–2020*, approved by Council in 2016.

In 2018 this Framework is importantly also framed by the Vision of the new Vice-Chancellor of UCT, which foregrounds Transformation, Excellence and Sustainability. These principles are interrelated in that excellence in research and teaching cannot be sustained without transformation, and a transformed institution is one that is grounded in excellence. Sustainable transformation thus requires transformation that is intentional and impactful.

The Framework focuses on what we aim to achieve, how we will seek to achieve it (and measure our success) and, finally, who will be responsible and accountable. In many respects the Strategic Plan is an overarching architecture that informs the operational work within the DVC Transformation portfolio.

In conclusion, we acknowledge the idealism inherent in the UCT strategic plan. This is an idealism that recognises that transformation is an evolving process. There is no silver bullet; this journey of transformation is life-long. The journey begins by identifying the change and the culture we want at UCT and proceeds by committing each member of the UCT community to pursuing our desired culture and change – every day.

We are in a dynamic context that is shaped by political agendas. However, we must be open to being influenced by the truth that our students and staff bring with them to UCT – a truth that demands of us the constant revaluation and adaptation of our policies, processes and actions to ensure that UCT is responsive to the current academic, social and economic realities of staff and students.

Governance and Structures for Implementation

Responsibility and Accountability

Transformation requires both a top down and a bottom up approach in that the responsibility for transformation rests with every member of the executive and of Council, every member of staff, every student and every member of the alumni. The University we want to see and live needs to be something we all own. The executive and senior leadership structures of the university (i.e. the Leadership Lekgotla and heads of departments and units) are, however, accountable for ensuring and creating the necessary conditions for transformation.

The following people have specific roles in respect of transformation:

- The VC has overall responsibility and accountability.
- The DVC Transformation is responsible for driving and facilitating the operationalisation of

transformation across all sectors of the University and needs to ensure that operational and support structures are in place.

- The DVC Teaching and Learning is responsible for leading transformation in teaching and learning (Goal 4), with the support of and in collaboration with the DVC Transformation.
- The DVC Research is responsible for ensuring that research-related goals as set out in Goals 2, 3 and 5 are met in collaboration and with the support of the DVC Transformation.
- The COO needs to ensure that there is adequate support for institutional culture change in respect of human resources, finances and technology.
- All Deans, HoDs, Executive Directors and Directors are responsible for leading transformation in their respective departments.

The Office for Inclusivity and Change

The Office for Inclusivity and Change (OIC) formulates institutional policy related to transformation, amends and re-aligns existing policies, develops and communicates university-wide interventions and develops the capacity of students and staff. The OIC also provides direct and indirect support for Transformation Committees. It works across three broad operational areas:



Transformation Committees

Transformation Committees (TCs) are primary catalysts for institutional culture change. They are essential to the bottom-up approach and have to take the lead in spearheading transformation. They should be the “first responders” when issues relating to institutional culture arise and must advise HoDs on appropriate culture change interventions. TC members participate in the Transformation Forum (see below), which plays an important role as a Community of Practice for shared problem-solving, learning and builds the capacity of Transformation Committees to develop and implement transformation action plans with departments and faculties.

Monitoring and oversight

The following forums play central roles in monitoring and oversight:

- The Institutional Forum (IF) is established in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997, and advises the Council, *inter alia*, on race and gender policies, the selection of senior management, institutional codes of conduct and the fostering of an institutional culture based on tolerance and respect for human rights.
- The Employment Equity Forum (EEF) is a sub-committee of the IF. It advises the Vice-Chancellor on a range of issues:
 - Employment equity and transformation matters related to employment equity, including employment policies, practices and procedures, the working environment and employment barriers that adversely affect people from designated groups;
 - The University of Cape Town’s employment equity plan and barriers to its implementation, including impediments to recruitment, retention, staff development, the institutional climate, and discrimination in the workplace.
- The Transformation Forum (TF) is a forum of the (IF) that, in addition to its capacity-building role for TCs, advises the IF on all matters related to transformation.



Operationalising Change

UCT's institutional culture change strategy is brought into being in six areas: (1) student and staff access, support and success; (2) place and space – focusing inter alia on artworks, symbols, naming of buildings, identity and the UCT work, academic and social spheres; (3) institutional responses to discrimination, harassment, and violence, (4) community engagement and partnership with community, (5) owning our African identity and (6) curriculum support, including the development of inclusive classrooms.



STUDENT ACCESS, SUPPORT & SUCCESS

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

Desired outcomes

A more diverse undergraduate and postgraduate student and graduate profile that is representative of the population with higher proportions of black, socio-economically disadvantaged and disabled students; and

Continue to improve educational and psychosocial support for students and adapt mainstream programmes to address the unequal schooling of students admitted to UCT in a manner that avoids stigmatisation and labelling.

Actions to achieve culture change

Review policy and practice in respect of the structure of the academic programme, the academic calendar, the curriculum and assessment to address obstacles to academic success.

Increase financial aid, including for students who do not qualify for NSFAS support.

Grow the student housing pool by securing off-campus private residences and building a new residence.

Address student hunger through a task team on food security.

Implement the University's mental health policy by enhancing mental wellness support through additional services, including advocacy and awareness, and investigating the inclusion of traditional practices.

Accountability:

DVC Transformation

DVC Teaching and Learning

COO

STAFF ACCESS, SUPPORT & SUCCESS

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

Desired outcomes

Attain our institutional employment equity targets in order to place UCT on a clear trajectory towards a more representative profile of institutional leadership and of academic and PASS staff at all levels;

Invest in growing the pipeline of black, women and disabled academics and managers;

Attract more black, women and disabled South African postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows to broaden the pool of potential future academics.

Actions to achieve culture change

ALL STAFF

Develop and implement a new employment equity plan with progressive targets.

Monitor all appointment processes through Employment Equity Representatives (EE Reps) who are trained to guide, monitor and report on selection processes to departmental and faculty Transformation Committees and the Office of the DVC Transformation.

Support strategic appointments through the Employment Equity Fund.

Maximise the use of government initiatives such as the New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP).

ACADEMIC STAFF

The Recruitment, Development and Retention Programme that supports nGAP appointments and the Next Generation Professoriate (NGP), which supports the advancement of mid-career academics.

Repurpose the EE Fund to align with the EE Plan.

The Research Office's support for developing the pipeline through:

- Increased visibility of marginalised researchers,
- Access to funding/grants,
- Targeted donor funding,
- Funding postgraduate students,
- Assisting the pipeline of future academics,
- Composition of Committees and working groups, and
- Targeted research programmes.

PASS STAFF

Career development of PASS staff.

Accountability: *DVC Teaching & Learning*
DVC Transformation
COO

PLACE AND SPACE

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

LANGUAGE, NAMES, SYMBOLS, ARTWORKS AND IDENTITY

Desired outcomes

To affirm the dignity, contributions and experiences of all, with specific attention to those who have been historically marginalised in the University community.

To create an affirming and inclusive teaching, learning and research environment for gender and sexual diversities.

To identify and address institutional policies and practices that reproduce power relations based on historical privilege, colonialism and apartheid, and impede transformation.

To reinforce a new inclusive identity for UCT through an appropriate display of artworks, symbols, choice of names of buildings, and use of indigenous South African languages.

Actions to achieve culture change

Policy development and amendment

- Heritage
- Disability
- Gender
- Language

Interventions

- Renaming of buildings, roads and venues (NOBC).
- Re-curation of artworks (WoAC).
- Heritage and Restoration, e.g. slave memorial.
- Disability inclusion.
- Dialogues and seminars to improve the classroom, work and social environment (OIC, TCs and HR).
- Sexuality inclusion – i.e. diversification of pronouns.
- Development of SA-specific Unconscious Bias training tool.

Accountability: *DVC Transformation*
DVC Teaching and Learning
DVC Research
COO

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

STRATEGIC GOAL 1

DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

Desired outcome

Actions to achieve culture change

A zero-tolerance approach to any form of unfair discrimination, harassment, sexual violence and behaviour that demeans others.

Policy development and amendment

- Sexual Offences Policy.
- Sexual Harassment Policy.
- Discrimination Policy.
- Gender Policy.

Interventions

- Develop a case management system for sexual offences.
- Create new, specialized staff and student tribunals – for discrimination, harassment and sexual offences.
- Develop & implement alternative approaches – mediation and bystanders. Training, advocacy and awareness through the OIC streams of Staff Capacity Building and Student Capacity Building.
- Focused support for both survivors and alleged perpetrators, where the latter are students/staff.

Accountability: *DVC Transformation
COO*

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

STRATEGIC GOAL 5

ANCHORING IN COMMUNITY

Desired outcomes

UCT as anchor in community through social engagement.

Long-term relationships and mechanisms for multi-stakeholder engagement to share research findings, test new insights, evidence and innovations and engage collectively around highly complex societal problems and economic development;

Enhanced contributions to public-sector and industry-provided services and/or support for the needs, aspirations and development challenges of community-based organisations (NGOs and community-based organisations), via innovations, systems development, technical support, service-learning or community-based education;

Opportunities for staff and students to learn how to build reciprocal relationships with external constituencies in different social contexts and apply their learning in practical projects as part of the formal curriculum;

A reputation for the scholarship of engagement, including evaluating the societal impact and quality of engaged scholarship;

Strengthened faculty involvement in the work of the UCT Knowledge Co-op.

Expanded access for students to the Global Citizenship Programme and/or other outreach programmes, and increase opportunities for local and international students to engage with community-based activities;

Expanded provision of continuing education courses and lectures, opportunities for public dialogue and on-line courses.

Actions to achieve culture change

Intervention examples

- Slave memorial site.
- Restoration – Sutherland Remains.
- Engagement of Xhosa leadership around renaming of Memorial Hall.
- Co-curricular activities, e.g. Decolonial Winter School.

CURRICULUM SUPPORT

STRATEGIC GOAL 4

Desired outcomes

Decolonised curriculum and pedagogy to address the obstacles that impede success for black students in particular.

The extent to which current curricula may marginalise particular identities and perpetuate dominant cultural assumptions and philosophies of knowledge is understood and addressed.

Access for disabled students is enabled and disability issues are mainstreamed in the curriculum.

Actions to achieve culture change

Course redesign for content and pedagogy.

Focus groups to inform cultural change and curriculum.

Staff training and capacity building.

Embedding intersectional discourse in core curricula with course conveners.

Support for co-curricular activities.

Mapping of Curriculum content (HIV/AIDS) and GBV.

Research and publication.

Accountability: *DVC Transformation*
DVC Teaching and Learning

OWNING OUR AFRICAN IDENTITY

GOALS 2 AND 3

Desired outcomes

UCT is a vibrant and supportive intellectual environment that attracts and connects people from all over the world and advances the status and distinctiveness of scholarship in Africa.

Our academics are challenged to develop new thinking about the problems that should most urgently be addressed by us as an African university, and to feed this thinking not only into published research and innovative products and solutions, but also into the curriculum.

Actions to achieve culture change

Course redesign for content and pedagogy.

Class discussions and focus groups.

Staff training and capacity building.

Support for co-curricular activities.

Accountability: *DVC Transformation*

Measuring Success


Ownership of change is foregrounded and the desired change is one that is informed by research and collaboration with practitioners and academics. With this collective wisdom, UCT processes and policies are being reviewed in accordance with the UCT strategic framework and related indicators. In this way UCT is acting in accordance with good governance and in the interest of fairness and transparency. In certain instances, we may need to develop new policies and procedures. However, driving institutional culture change will also require innovative interventions. These innovations must be monitored and evaluated for success and respond to the current UCT monitoring and evaluation indicators.

The IRTC roadshows and conversations with some students and staff have reiterated what most of us know or have experienced at UCT. The current institutional culture is not wanted. So what then, is the culture we seek? This is the question we have started with.

While we are already implementing areas of institutional culture change, UCT is currently utilising three processes that will provide further input and clarification:

- The report from the Institutional Reconciliation and Transformation Commission (IRTC);
- The Inclusivity Survey (Students and Staff); and
- The Employment Equity Barrier Analysis, which underlies the new Employment Equity Plan for 2019 – 2021.

This data will enable us to use qualitative and quantitative measures to identify the sought-for culture. It is essential that we use baseline data to determine the multiple issues we have to address and to prioritise where to intervene and the kinds of interventions we design to effect change.

 *“The culture at UCT is toxic. I can’t breathe!”* 