

**Committee for the Institutional Response to the Commission's Recommendations
(CIRCoRe)**

REPORT TO COUNCIL

15 April 2024

A. INTRODUCTION

This report is a slightly adjusted and updated version of the report that served at the Rectorate meeting of 18 March 2024, for discussion, and at the Senate meeting of 19 March 2024, for noting. It provides an overview of developments in CIRCoRe's work, particularly those in 2024. It begins by summarising the **change in the leadership structure** and then outlines the **reviewed focus areas, deliverables** and some **plans of action** in the five workstreams that all address the recommendations of the Khampepe Report. This approach takes seriously the request of Council in September last year that concretisation, coordination, sharp focus, planning, aspirational and practicable targets and timelines be developed within the CIRCoRe process.

A lens for reading this report is that **the logic and *modus operandi* of CIRCoRe** entail that all activities of CIRCoRe, including research initiatives, data collection and discussion forums in various genres and modes aim to **develop research- and data-informed recommendations** to the Rectorate and other relevant decision-making bodies at the University, to Council level, for consideration for short, medium and long-term intervention and implementation. The work of implementation is not that of CIRCoRe, but of the relevant permanent structures, and in some cases even new structures that might be suggested and established.

The aim is that the CIRCoRe work will end at the end of March 2025. Some rounding-off work will be done, e.g. report-writing and assessment until the end of June 2025. The implementation of short, and especially medium and long term recommendations will be part of the legacy, impetus and momentum that the CIRCoRe process intends bringing to the University's ongoing transformation journey.

It is aimed that a follow-up meeting with Judge Sisi Khampepe will take place in the new year, preferably before the end of the second term of prof Wim de Villiers on 31 March 2025. A final report will be submitted to her after the end of June 2025. The first meeting with judge Khampepe on progress with the CIRCoRe process took place on 11 December 2023 and went extremely well. The Chancellor, Chair of Council, Rector and Vice-Chancellor, DVC Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel and prof Aslam Fataar attended the meeting.

B. JOINT LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

The resignation of Professor Aslam Fataar in February 2024 prompted a reorganisation of the CIRCoRe leadership structure. The intention is to build with appreciation upon the solid foundations that Prof Fataar laid since the inception of CIRCoRe in mid-2023 and to ensure continuity within and coordination amongst the five workstreams established at that time.

In the Advisory Committee meetings of CIRCoRe held on 15 February 2024 and on 26 March 2024, the Rector confirmed the University's continued commitment to CIRCoRe and its activities. He introduced the new joint leadership structure for taking the work forward. This involves the five workstream heads – Prof Ronelle Carolissen, Dr Sharman Wickham, Prof Kopano Ratele, Mr Phila Msimang and Dr Leslie van Rooi – together with Prof Nico Koopman and Mr Mohamed Shaik in forming the **CIRCoRe Steering Committee (Steerco)**. This committee will meet regularly, almost weekly, to coordinate the activities and events across the workstreams in order to achieve closer synergies in addressing the high-level recommendations in the Khampepe Report.

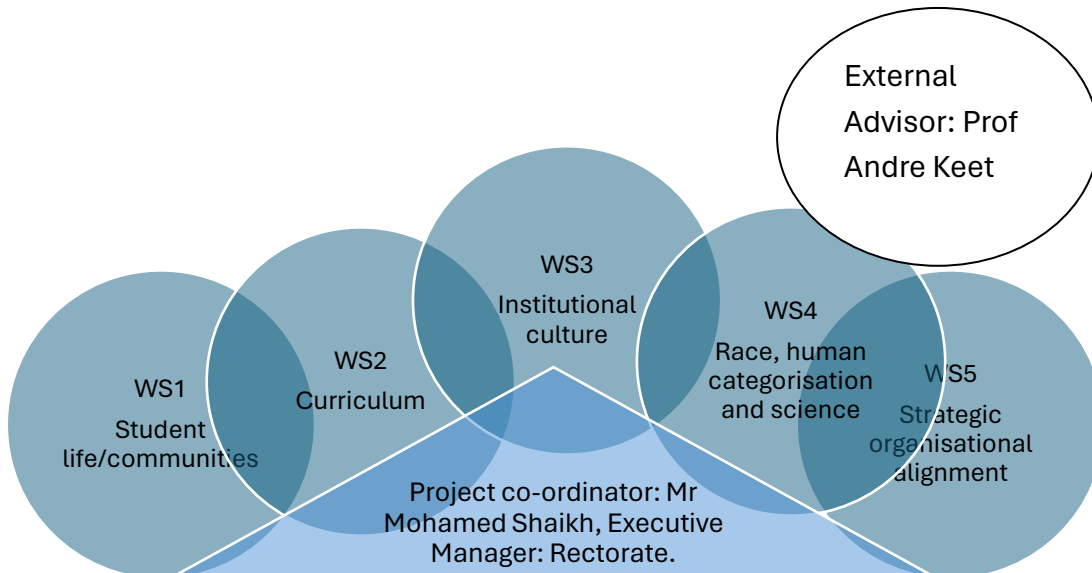
As Rector, Professor Wim de Villiers remains the **project owner** with Professor Nico Koopman, the DVC: Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel, the **project leader**. Mr Mohamed Shaik, Executive Manager: Rectorate, is the **project coordinator** and he will play a key role in the Steering Committee and in liaising with the CIRCoRe office staff, particularly Ms Carol Goss and Yusuf Omar.

Prof Andre Keet will remain as the **external advisor** to the project. He serves in both the Steering Committee and Advisory Committee.

The diagram below illustrates the key role-players in CIRCoRe's new joint structure and the increased levels of coordination that will take place across the workstreams.

Project owner: Prof Wim de Villiers, Rector and Vice-Chancellor

Project leader: Prof Nico Koopman, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Social Impact, Transformation and Personnel



Since mid-February 2024, Steerco has met regularly to review and prioritise the focus areas and activities of the workstreams and to consider synergies across them.

C. REVIEWED WORKSTREAM PLANS

WORKSTREAM 1: STUDENT LIFE/COMMUNITIES

Focus

The focus of this workstream is to contribute to thinking about how the University might become a key site for developing an evaluation/critique of student experiences of race and their intersectionalities (e.g. gender, masculinities), with the aim of ensuring opportunities/platforms for *all* students to flourish.

- The workstream will provide insight into how student experiences are marred by racism and its intersectionalities.
- It will help SU re-imagine how it may conceptualise and operationalise its work with students in a democratic society in transition to allow students to leave SU as citizens who value and implement an ethos of democracy.
- The workstream will facilitate scholarly insight and awareness of challenges and opportunities that students face in the University, including in its research, teaching, and community engagement.

- This workstream will feed into the relevant university student structures to align all its engagements into policy, both at university and national levels.

Key deliverables

1. Develop a process and deliverables (outcomes) to work systematically with key structures responsible for student matters on campus.
2. Create operational structures (how should we set up our structure) to effectively understand the extent of our work
3. Conduct scholarly work, (how do we understand student challenges and flourishing), with the aim of understanding and making recommendations towards a transformative student experience for all students.
4. Consultation to provide informed input on various student related questions on campus.

The above will provide for the fifth deliverable:

5. Informed strategies (and activities) that focus on inclusion and democracy to educate and generate participation from students and staff.

Plan of action

The following projects and activities will be prioritised, implemented, and supported. These will be monitored and continuously (re) assessed in order to maximise efficacy and impact.

1. Literature review on university student experience of race. The key question is: What are the out of class experiences of race, and other forms of discrimination among university students?
2. Findings to be shared with students in workshops to generate participatory recommendations. What recommendations are made to address students' challenges?
3. Conduct research into student ecologies, particularly commuter students

These first three activities are related to Khampepe Report recommendations 518, 522, 529-532

4. Consult and provide input on matters related to student issues, e.g. de Lange / Wilgenhof commission
Recommendation 517
5. Engaging in existing symposia on campus and involving students in symposia
Recommendations 529-532
6. Training to build democratic citizenship in collaboration with other workstreams and university role-players.
Recommendations 511, 515

Recommendations to date

This workstream has provided a set of recommendations for consideration by the panel that is investigating the Wilgenhof matter. Other concrete recommendations for consideration by the Rectorate are being developed.

WORKSTREAM 2: COMPULSORY CURRICULUM OFFERING EMBEDDED IN PROCESSES OF CURRICULUM, TEACHING AND LEARNING RENEWAL

Focus

While the Khampepe Report recommended that the University considers implementing a compulsory module for all first-year students to facilitate their learning and critical engagement on matters related to equality, transformation and justice, Workstream 2 has broadened the focus to better understand how the undergraduate curriculum and co-curriculum environments help students to engage critically with received ideas about individuals, society and knowledge in order for them to actively contribute to the development of a democratic institutional culture and a just society after graduation.

Key deliverables

1. A research report that summarises approaches and examples of compulsory modules similar to that recommended in the Khampepe Report
2. Principles for curriculum, teaching and learning renewal, incorporating elements of examples in the above
3. Recommendations for content and delivery for staff training courses – to include material from other workstreams

Plan of action

The following steps will be prioritised and supported:

1. Completion of the research report – includes wider dissemination of findings and identification of opportunities within SU faculties
2. Collection of additional information of similar examples of curriculum renewal as well as learning in the co-curriculum environment – additional seminars to be held this year on these themes (e.g., experiential learning, modules used by Higher Heath etc)
3. Task team to draw up principles to guide curriculum renewal (these will be a set of recommendations)
4. Task team to draw up recommendations for staff training courses

Recommendations

Recommendations that are in the process of being distilled from the research report and from the seminars already held are being collated. These will be included in the deliverables 2 and 3.

WORKSTREAM 3: INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

Focus

The principal focus of the work of the CIRCoRe Institutional Culture (IC) Workstream is to study, deliberate on, and recommend how to align the University's institutional culture with a democratic human rights ethos.

The following four questions are being addressed:

1. What is the institutional culture, especially as it relates to intersectional inclusions and exclusions, at SU, and how is it experienced?
2. How and under what conditions is institutional culture produced, reproduced, and resisted at SU?
3. What might a collective, institutional culture path or paths look like? In other words, what are the leverage points for systemic change?
4. What indicators would need to be put in place to monitor institutional culture and social change?

Key deliverables

1. The Workstream will study, deliberate upon, develop and recommend the adoption of a Transformation Charter for the University. The Workstream may, following its processes, recommend the adoption of a different mechanism to effect institutional culture transformation.
2. The Workstream is tasked with thinking about, studying and recommending a compulsory training of staff to build intersectional transformation competencies.
3. The Workstream will offer concrete short, medium, and long-term implementation strategies and practices to align the University's environments with a culture of human rights, inclusion, and non-discrimination.

Plan of action

Taking into account that changing institutional culture is a long-term endeavour, the workstream has drawn its plan of action from the 'Changing the University Culture' document. The 'Changing the University Culture' document of Workstream 3 contains the working definition on institutional culture, identifies key themes and projects, and proposes hard and soft interventions to effect institutional cultural change. Emerging from the document, the following projects and activities will be prioritised, implemented, and supported. It is necessary that the activities that are implemented be monitored and continuously (re)assessed in order to maximise efficacy and impact.

1. Host scholarly, policy, advocacy, corporate events
2. Provide research-driven, teaching-related, training focused or social engagement interventions

The first two activities are related to recommendations 531-539 in the Khampepe Report.

3. A performance / engagement titled *The SU Krotoa is Present Project: The Elephant in the Room* performance. This will be part of the Human Rights Month activities.
Recommendations 522-523
4. Development of a webpage on the university website with rich resources on institutional racism, institutional culture and institutional change.
Recommendation 512
5. Pro/Test intervention for first years /Welcoming.
Recommendation 512
6. (En)countering transformation: a two-day symposium by FASS transformation committee and IC workstream (STIAS, August).
Recommendation 531-539
7. A documentary on the history of Stellenbosch from the perspective of institutional culture and change.
Recommendation 519
8. Flagship research project on institutional racism, institutional culture and institutional change.
Recommendation 531-532
9. Conference on Institutional Racism/Beyond Whiteness at SU, envisaged to be held around September/October 2024 or February 2025 depending on availability of suitable venue.
Recommendations 531-539
10. Training to build antiracist/multicultural competencies.
Recommendations 511-515
11. Book on Changing the Culture at SU
Point 16 and recommendation 512
12. Establishment of a Chair in Critical Race and Cultural Studies
Points 112, 12i, 12x and recommendations 509-510

Each of these activities will contribute to changing the culture of the University. For example, the envisaged conference titled *On Institutional Racism/Beyond Whiteness at SU* aims to attract local and international scholars who think about institutional culture and how to effectively change entrenched, stubborn ways of being and doing. One of the key aims of this conference is to signal to the broader South African and global community that Stellenbosch University is actively, critically and meaningfully engaging with its own identity, as well as how it is perceived by others. This addresses one of the

key problems identified by the Khampepe Report, that SU has a problem with recruiting diverse members of staff and students, because of its problematic past and present.

Recommendations

A number of recommendations are emerging out of the plan of action and its activities.

WORKSTREAM 4: RACE, HUMAN CATEGORISATION AND SCIENCE

Focus

The principal focus of the CIRCoRe Race, Human Categorisation and Science (RHCS) workstream is to study, deliberate on, and make recommendations about how Stellenbosch University should manage the use of race and other human categorisations in the sciences. In its recalibrated focus, the RHCS workstream will be working predominantly on the issue of race in science. Key questions that guide this workstream are listed below:

1. What are the main problems in the use of race in science, and what best practices have been developed to deal with these problems?
2. Are there scientific contexts in which the use of race is justified, and are there contexts in which it is not? What are those respective contexts?
3. What guidance can be given to research ethics committees at Stellenbosch University in respect to the use of race in research?
4. What is the state of knowledge about race across different environments in the University, and how can every environment be exposed to the most up-to-date practices about the use of race in science as it pertains to the research of specific disciplines?
5. How is data about race in research, policy, planning, and other contexts of the University to be produced (if and where appropriate) and managed where such data already exists? Are there legal and ethical implications or limitations to the use of such data?

Key deliverables

1. Two conferences from the RHCS workstream: the first being a national conference on the use of race in science and the second being an international conference on the issue of race in science as it manifests on a global scale.
2. Establishment of an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary conversation about the use of race and ethnicity across environments on campus that should continue past CIRCoRe.
3. The development of tools for researchers that may need to consider the use of race and ethnicity in their research.
4. Developing best practices and basic standards for deliberation about race and ethnicity for SU RECs through the introduction and testing of a question in the REC application process.

Plan of action

Given that the problems related to race and other human categorisations in science are immense and constitute a number of traditions in distinct scientific research areas in numerous academic disciplines, the activities of the RHCS workstream aim to make decisive first steps in ameliorating the challenges of the use of race in research.

1. National conference “*Controversies in the use of race and other human categorisations in the South African Higher Education sector*” - 12-13 June to be held at STIAS.
2. Stakeholder and responsibility holder engagements. These are engagements with institutional bodies such as the Division of Clinical Anatomy, talks with the various RECs, etc.,
3. Development of tools for researchers. These tools will aid researchers in reasoning through the appropriateness or lack thereof of human categorisations in their studies.
4. Science communication about the change of SA categories over time. This activity is connected to the development of the aforementioned research tools.
5. Design of additional REC form question.
6. International conference on race and science.
7. Research centre focused on race and science.

Recommendations

Recommendations will emanate from the activities listed above.

WORKSTREAM 5: SIMPLIFYING AND ALIGNING UNIVERSITY STRUCTURES, POLICIES AND REGULATION WITH TRANSFORMATION

Focus

The principal focus of the work of this workstream is to simplify and align University structures, policies and regulations to more effectively enhance transformation at SU. The workstream will focus its work on possible recommendations linked to the efficacy of the transformation infrastructure (structures, policies, processes). Further to this the workstream will also consider recommendations made by other workstreams linked to the focus of its work.

Key deliverables

1. Align the Transformation Structures (apparatus).

Understanding the history, current structures and line functions of the Transformation Office, Employment Equity, the Disability Office and the Equality Unit as to determine foci, process flow, relatedness and thus to recommended possible re-alignment of structures. Related structures/offices/committees will be considered as part of the deliberations.

Link with the Khampepe Recommendations: 408, 414, 417- 421, 517- 518

Timeframe: recommendation on structural re-alignment to be considered before the end of June 2024.

2. Enhance the role and function of the Equality Unit with a focus on case management.

Re-activate the policy consultation and recommendation process for the policy on Unfair Discrimination, GBV and HIV/AIDS as well as the policy plan/regulations.

Link with the Khampepe Recommendations: 428 - 436, 502 - 508

Timeframe: Recommendation(s) ready to be considered by the Rectorate

3. Center and empower the Equality Unit in case management processes in relation to Employee Relations and Student Discipline.

Link with the Khampepe Recommendations: 428 - 436, 502 - 508

Timeframe: Some recommendations are almost ready to be considered by the Rectorate

4. Align and strengthen transformation related policies.

SU has a myriad of policies and plans. Some of these link directly and indirectly to transformation. The workstream will consider all relevant SU policies related to transformation and will determine (i) any policy gaps, (ii) the possible need to integrate certain transformation linked policies and (iii) to consider the possibility of an overarching transformation policy and/or strategy.

Link with the Khampepe Recommendations: 405 - 407

Timeframe: over the next year.

5. Align the student accommodation structures

Focus to be determined and prompted by the work of workstream 1 as it related to confusion and possible misalignment of offices linked to student accommodation, e.g. Student Affairs, Placement Office, SUNCOM, Facilities Management.

Plan of action

The workstream deliberations will focus on conversations, workshops and deliberations linked to the themes. In this regard the help of external experts will be called upon to guide matters and advise on processes.

Recommendations to date

See above – recommendation for deliverables 2 and 3 are ready to be submitted to the Rectorate, still in April.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND GOING FORWARD

CIRCoRe is an ambitious institution-wide project – and one that will influence the direction of the University and external stakeholders’ perceptions of it. As can be seen from the diagram of the new joint structure and the summaries of the workstreams, CIRCoRe’s planned activities are becoming better aligned with each other in order to optimise their effectiveness in responding to the recommendations in the Khampepe Report. For example, each of the workstreams will be able to contribute to recommendations for staff training courses, events and conferences planned in conjunction (rather than in isolation within the workstreams) ensuring that these events speak to each other. As originally planned, the recommendations of the first four workstreams will be taken up by the fifth workstream. Alignment and coordination will continue to be an important subject of Steerco’s discussions going forward.

Steerco would appreciate inputs from Council on this report and the planned activities. Sincere appreciation is expressed to all role-players who ensure that the CIRCoRe ship is sailing resolutely forward. Special gratitude to the CIRCoRe workstream heads and workstream members for consistent commitment to this process.

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