Increasing diversity in UFS main campus residences: A new policy and role for residences

(Approved by the Council on 8 June 2007)
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A new policy and role for residences

1. **Background**

In his 2005 Opening Speech, the Rector and Vice-Chancellor announced the launch of a 4th phase of transformation and the appointment of a transformation plan task team (the TPTT) to produce a transformation plan. In this context, he stated the following:

“...on the main campus in effect we have “two campuses” – one white and one black, separated in the classrooms and in the residences. This was certainly never our intention and is an unintended consequence of our parallel-medium policy (which allows for classes in Afrikaans and in English) together with the current hostel placement policy which gives students freedom of choice of which hostel they want to live in.

The current residence placement policy is the result of important negotiations with students in the transition phase of 1997/98. It was the consensus outcome of deliberations by black and white students, and based on the principle of voluntary association. Although never a policy intention of the UFS, the result has been a gradual gravitation to residences that are mainly black or mainly white. After 8 years, the time has come to review the policy. The situation that obtains now is very different from those years. Both white and black students come from a different environment as in 1997, many are used to mixed schools and school residences. When they arrive on this campus they suddenly have to choose, effectively, between mainly white or mainly black residences.

An intensive consultation and discussion process will be launched shortly on campus about the residence placement policy. Students and student leaders will necessarily be directly and intensively involved in this process. In fact students should take the lead in this review of the policy, with student leadership structures and governance structures. Residence wardens are an equally important group that should be able to come up with innovative ideas.”

This policy statement followed an Exco ‘bosberaad’ in November 2004, at which the Vice-Rector: Student Affairs, Dr Ezekiel Moraka presented a proposal for a
process to increase diversity in residences at the UFS. His view that the current residence placement policy and diversity situation of predominantly monoracial residences - especially the so-called junior residences - were matters of concern that needed to be addressed, was accepted by the Exco.

- The current placement policy is based on the principle of free association, with student preferences and date of application being decisive. Residence house committees can place 70% of new first-year students, and the University (Accommodation Services) places the remaining 30%. The policy has no diversity stipulations or goals, although it appears to have been the intention upon its inception in 1997/8.

- In practice the residences largely are racially segregated. See Appendix 1 for data on residence occupancy and racial profiles. While the overall picture shows an admirable approximate 50:50 balance between black and white residence students, at an individual residence level many residences are 100% monoracial, with an average racial diversity level of only 3%.

In the Strategic Plan 2005-2007, the following project was approved (in February-March 2005) by the Executive Management, the Senate and the Council: “Develop, approve and implement a new residence placement policy.”

In the TPTT Report, handed to the Executive Management 18 months later (October 2006), the review of the residence placement policy was also explicitly listed as a priority. The TPTT Report consulted widely with stakeholders including staff, student leaders and organisations, alumni, the provincial government, and so forth. In the resulting Transformation Plan of the Executive Management, finalised and approved by the Executive Management in February 2007, this policy review was placed at the top of the list of urgent priorities.

Whilst awaiting the TPTT Report, the Exco had several strategic discussions from May 2006 onwards and notably in August-September 2006. These discussions were based on a discussion document developed by Dr RE Moraka and Prof FCvN Fourie (“Increasing diversity in student residences of the UFS”, 2006). In its deliberations the Exco developed a conceptual and strategic approach to increasing diversity (in its many dimensions) in residences.

From March to May 2007 several discussions were held with stakeholders. These included residence heads, the main campus SRC, residence primes (who consulted, in turn, with residence members) and student organisations. Residence members were also requested, via the primes, to consult with their parents during the April holidays and then submit comments and suggestions. Meetings were also held with representatives of the alumni organisation (Kovsie-Alumni), as well as with some parents. A draft guideline document was made available to all these groups and their comments received. In addition to meetings, written submissions and comments were also requested.
Following all these processes, the Exco and Executive management propose that a new residence placement and diversity policy be adopted by the Council. The essence of the proposed new policy is an educational approach to the question of residence diversity (see section 3 below).

2. **Points of departure**

2.1 The residence policy should be derived from the intrinsic nature of the university as an educational institution where students are professionally, intellectually and socially prepared for the South African workplace.

2.2 Campus life, and residences in particular, have a strong socialisation and ‘social education’ effect, which constitute an important part of the total educational experience of residence students.

2.3 Since this social education effect of residences can either enhance or inhibit the preparedness of the student for the diversity of the South African workplace, the University cannot turn a blind eye to residence culture and practices.

2.4 Therefore, an educational approach to diversity in residences has to be followed (see section 3 below).

2.5 The residence policy must be aligned with the University’s vision, mission and values, Institutional Charter, strategic objectives and other relevant initiatives and plans. Such alignment is to be secured via appropriate guidelines (see section 4 below).

2.6 Human diversity encompasses many dimensions of human society in addition to race, including language, religion, sexual orientation, culture, class and economic background, school background, learning styles, social background, and urban vs rural background.

2.7 A differentiated spectrum of accommodation needs has to be addressed, including mature students, married students, international students, and students who prefer different academic, organisational or gender environments; this may include ‘co-ed’ accommodation and accommodation which is less organised and run more like flats or boarding houses. (The current range of options is restricted to ‘junior’ and ‘senior’ residences, the latter being much less structured than the former.)

2.8 There is a need for a migration strategy to move from the current menu of accommodation and diversity options, to a new and more diverse accommodation menu with more options available to students.

2.9 A well-supported and facilitated approach should be followed, in which specific measures and programmes will be implemented to empower, develop the diversity skills and build the necessary capacity of students and staff directly affected by a new policy.
2.10 Given the complexity of the situation in the historical and current context of the UFS, a new placement policy should be conceptually well-considered and principled, followed by careful but firm and well-supported implementation.

2.11 The issues, risks and paradoxes relating to residence issues should be considered carefully and incorporated into the models, parameters, support systems, communication strategies, phasing-in decisions, planning and implementation processes and time-frames.

2.12 The process of increasing diversity in residences has to be well-managed with inputs from relevant stakeholders, notably students. However, ultimately the decision on the kinds of residences in terms of their composition and diversity is a decision of the University.

2.13 Management should develop a particular position with regard to a specific model or models of increasing diversity in residences, whilst maintaining balanced macro-diversity (overall racial and language balance, i.e. 50/50 in residences as a whole). Parameters, minimum requirements or constraints should be specified in this regard.

3. **An educational rationale for increasing diversity in residences**

The University of the Free State is an educational institution established to provide higher education to all its registered students that:

- will enable them to play a leading role in the development of a non-racial South African society, in which language, cultural, religious and other rights and freedoms are enshrined by the Constitution; and
- prepare them for the world of work, in which managing and respecting diversity among colleagues has become an important element

In line with this, the UFS Mission includes the “development of the total student as part of its academic culture” as an integral part of the University’s core business.

**UFS Mission**
The pursuit of scholarship as embodied in the creation, integration, application and transmission of knowledge by promoting the following within the ambit of financial sustainability:

- An academic culture
- Critical scientific reflection
- Relevant scientific education
- Pure and applied research
- Community service
- Development of the total student as part of its academic culture

The Management believes that enhancing diversity at the UFS (in the academic environment, residences, student activities, etc.) and empowering our students
with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes to respect and manage diversity on campus, in residences and ultimately in the workplace, will have **academic and social benefits** such as:

- Enhancing the educational experiences of all students.
- Teaching students (black and white) to live, work, socialise and interact with students from other backgrounds.
- Encouraging the exchange of new ideas.
- Empowering students to think about issues in different ways.
- Empowering students not to think in group terms.
- Introducing novel perspectives to discussions.
- Encouraging a robust exchange of ideas.
- Broadening the scope of problem solving and improving decision-making.
- Fostering inclusiveness.
- Preparing students for the world of work.
- Producing graduates with valuable people and diversity management skills that are crucial for the labour market.
- Increasing graduate employability and workplace success due to exposure to and skills in diversity management as well as multilingualism.

These considerations highlight the need for a structured dispensation to facilitate interaction and mutual learning between students in UFS accommodation facilities who come from different racial, cultural, economic and historical backgrounds (amongst others dimensions of diversity).

### 4. Guiding principles for a new policy

#### 4.1 Using key principles in the draft Institutional Charter to guide the proper design and implementation of a nonracial residence model:

4.1.1 Promoting an all-pervasive academic culture and intellectually stimulating environment.

4.1.2 An educational approach to student support.

4.1.3 Creating a sense of belonging.

4.1.4 Maintaining sufficient diversity in the student body and residences.

4.1.5 Equity, justice and fairness in dealing with diversity.

4.1.6 Innovativeness in the pursuit of equity and justice.

4.1.7 Sufficient diversity of symbols and artefacts to reflect the diversity of histories and cultures unambiguously and in a balanced, respectful manner.

4.1.8 Substantive and sufficient multilingualism.

4.1.9 Substantive multiculturalism and embracement of the diversity of cultures within the context of an open university community.
4.1.10 Non-dominance amidst diversity, i.e. preventing the dominance of any group over others.
4.1.11 Non-marginalisation, respect for minorities and appreciation for human diversity in personalities, individual preferences, etc. (non-alienation; a human rights environment).
4.1.12 Substantive presence of different population groups and genders in governance, management and decision-making bodies.
4.1.13 Sufficient diversity in the composition of the student body to constitute the necessary institutional space for nurturing non-racialism, non-sexism, multiculturalism, multilingualism and non-dominance.

4.2 Using the values of the UFS and of the South African Constitution to forge a sense of unity and co-operation based on integrity, mutual respect and fairness, within the context of the constitutional values of non-racialism, non-sexism and non-discrimination (compare the UFS Vision and Mission Statement as well as the draft Institutional Charter).

5. Main recommendations

5.1 Different accommodation markets

Given a spectrum of preferences amongst its current and future clients, the UFS needs to supply a menu of accommodation options with regard to (a) the extent to which it is structured and organised with residence committees, etc.; and (b) the physical design of the facility. This could include the following:

a. Junior residences, existing (structured with residence committees, etc.).
b. New junior residences, to be constructed (structured).
c. Faculty-based junior residences (structured).
d. Senior residences for mature students (partially structured).
e. Come-and-go residences with bachelor pads, to be constructed (unstructured).
f. Come-and-go residences for married students and/or international students, to be constructed (unstructured).
g. Flats & townhouses, to be constructed (unstructured).

The detail of this strategic Accommodation Facilities Plan is to be worked out by an accommodation facilities task team and submitted to Council as soon as possible. Private enterprise and/or partnerships can be used where appropriate. The current shortage of academic office space should
also be considered in evaluating the optimal use of accommodation facilities (including the option of the conversion of residences into offices).

Sufficient diversity, as specified in 5.4 below, is to be an integral element of all these accommodation types.

5.2 Migration strategy

A migration strategy should be adopted to move from the current pattern of accommodation offerings to a new, differentiated and broader-spectrum accommodation offering within which a sufficient and differentiated level of diversity is built in.

- Proposals for phasing in increased diversity in existing residences must be understood as elements of such a migration strategy.

5.3 A differentiated approach to diversity in residences

When increasing diversity through placement, the following dimensions of diversity must be taken into account (in addition to race and language) insofar possible (also see 2.6):

- Educational background (Former Model C / township / rural area / city schools / monocultural / mixed-integrated)
- Rural / farm / urban / township
- Geographical (e.g. province / country)
- Economic and class background (poor / middle class / rich)
- Field of study (insofar as these may imply a concentration of similar thinking students)

Note: While these aspects are important to increase diversity, practical implementation with regard to some of them may be difficult since all of these dimensions may not be reflected in the application form.

5.4 Minimum diversity levels

The current residence placement policy does not specify any diversity levels or goals. (As noted above, the factual position is an average of approximately 3% racial diversity in individual residences.)

Attaining and maintaining sufficient racial diversity (cf. section 4.1) within the residences of the UFS is a key element of the diversity objective of this policy.

5.4.1 The concept of ‘sufficient diversity’ with regard to race can be understood as being within the 30%-50% range.
5.4.2 It can also be argued that a mix of roughly 50:50 would be ideal to create the environment and institutional space for nurturing non-racialism in the longer term. The attainment and maintenance of both substantive multilingualism and substantive multiculturalism (cf. section 4.1) are additional key elements of the diversity objective.

Given these considerations and those listed in section 6 below, the following is proposed:

5.4.3 The aim of the migration period is to reach a minimum racial diversity level in each existing junior residence of 30% (see 6.4 below).

5.4.4 Following the migration period and a review of the situation, the introduction of an overall minimum level of 40%, and later even 50%, can be considered by the Management, if deemed appropriate.

5.4.5 For all other categories the general aim of the migration period is to attain an approximate 50:50 mix within a 40%-60% interval. (This includes new junior residences, faculty residences, senior residences, and ‘unstructured’ or non-organised residences.)

5.4.6 The overall goal is an overall diversity balance of roughly 50:50 for all junior and senior residences together is the goal.

5.4.7 Residence rooms are regarded as private spaces where personal preferences hold sway.

5.4.8 No pattern of ‘black’ or ‘white’ areas or floors or clusters of rooms is allowed.

Ultimately the goal and ideal are for a non-racial paradigm to become so entrenched that racial categories cease to be relevant and that such percentages and mechanisms become anachronistic and unnecessary (cf. the vision for the future in the draft Institutional Charter).

5.5 Phasing-in and time frames

The approved minimum diversity level of 30% is to be implemented by starting with 30% with regard to new first-year students in 2008. In 2009 this is to be extended to reach 30% for the first-year and second-year students together, and in 2010 to first-year, second-year and third-year students together. (Thus senior students are not to be re-placed to achieve overall diversity goals.)

For senior residences, a 40%-60% interval will be the norm from 2008 onwards.
Thus the time frame for the diversity element of the migration strategy (i.e. to reach the minimum diversity level in all residences) is three years.

The time frame for new accommodation facilities is to be determined when the Accommodation Facilities Plan is drawn up.

5.6 Placement

Currently residences (Residence Committees) place 70% of students, and Accommodation Services the remaining 30%. No diversity considerations, constraints or goals are specified.

It is proposed that residences be allowed to place up to 50% of first-year students so as to take ownership and responsibility for diversity in the residences. It is expected of residences to use this portion to pursue diversity goals with reference to the desired minimum diversity levels (also see section 5.7 regarding incentives).

*This is to be monitored carefully by the University.* If the diversity goals with regard to race, language and multiculturalism are not met by the residence, or are undermined in any way, the University may and should use its placement portion to attain these goals. Appropriate criteria will be specified.

The University may and should also use part of its portion for other strategic or diversity objectives, notably dimensions of diversity other than race (see 5.3 above).

If a residence cannot reach or utilise its 50%, the University will assist it to fill the places.

5.7 Incentives and disincentives

Residences are to be encouraged to increase their diversity level above the minimum level voluntarily. Incentives may be instituted by Management to encourage residences to do this.

In the case of residences that do not reach and/or maintain the approved diversity levels after a reasonable time period, more drastic steps may be considered, e.g. closure and restarting as a ‘new’ residence with a 50:50 mix.

Incentives may also be used to reach the minimum level as such, if necessary.
6. Considerations in implementing the new approach

The implementation of the new policy is to be approached as a change management process, both during the preparation stage in the second half of 2007 and the actual migration period of 2008-2010.

The processes of consultation and strategic analysis have identified the following issues that need to be addressed during implementation if the goal of a smooth transition to harmonious, diverse residences is to be achieved. The implementation process is to be guided by the points of departure and guiding principles listed in sections 3 and 4 above.

6.1 Dealing appropriately with residence traditions and ‘character’

- Identifying those traditions and symbols that carry weight, are worth preserving and are compatible with non-racialism, non-sexism, non-discrimination, diversity and non-dominance (in contrast to those that are not compatible or desirable).
- Finding ways to deal respectfully and in a balanced fashion with such traditions and accompanying symbols, given a new, more inclusive and diversity-oriented dispensation.
- Identifying and eliminating traditions and elements of ‘character’ that are not compatible with the strategic objectives, values and principles of the transforming UFS.
- Creating new traditions and symbols that exemplify a new dispensation of dealing equitably and innovatively with student diversity.
- Accommodating students that have a more individualistic approach and have less need to be part of a strong culture, group or residence ‘character’.
- Finding ways to deal appropriately with the need of residences to have a say in the placement and selection of residents (e.g. within certain parameters and constraints).
- Balancing loyalty towards residences with loyalty towards the UFS.

6.2 Designing mechanisms to handle language and cultural diversity

with regard to aspects such as the following:

- Role and management of residence meetings (language, etc.).
- Notice boards.
- Residence websites.
- Social events, dances/bashes, music selection.
- Social customs and arrangements for “silence”-times for study.
- Inter-residence activities.
- Dating practices and customs.
- Visitation rights of opposite genders.
- Personal habits (music, friends, bathrooms, food).
- Academic habits and study hours.
- Financial contributions by residents towards residence activities.
- Disciplinary rules and procedures of residences.
- Sports codes, teams and events.
- Television viewing, subscription to newspapers.
- Religious rituals.
- First-year welcoming ceremonies.
- Orientation events and practices.
- Rag events.
- Placement and re-placement procedures.
- Room selection and allocation (see 5.4.7 above).
- Roommate selection (see 5.4.8 above).
- Residence committee constitution (competencies) and elections (with the senior residence model as a possible reference point).
- Diversity orientation, mediation and facilitation.
- Language facilitation/interpreting.
- Language courses to develop language skills of residents in additional languages.

6.3 Designing mechanisms to reduce the dynamics of fear

- **Possible fears of black students**
  - Fear of being assimilated into the white culture.
  - Fear of being or remaining marginalised on campus.
  - Fear of losing their traditions (however defined).
  - Fear of being manipulated by whites.
  - Fear of having no control over residence/student activities.
  - Fear of not being accepted by whites.
  - Fear of being victimised.
  - Fear of conflict.

- **Possible fears of white students**
  - Fear of losing their traditions (however defined).
  - Fear of losing their ‘language space’ in residence activities.
  - Fear of being dominated and marginalised by the black culture.
  - Fear related to being a minority group (given the wider political context).
  - Fear of losing control of residence/student activities.
  - Fear of being manipulated by blacks.
  - Fear of not being accepted by blacks.
  - Fear of being victimised.
  - Fear of conflict.
6.4 Designing mechanisms and regulations to avoid the following:
- Dominance by one group over another (cf. section 4.1).
- Marginalisation of a group or minority (cf. section 4.1).
- Alienation of a group, minority or individuals (cf. section 4.1).
- Excessive influence of TTT (territory, tradition and testosterone) in or between men’s residences.
- Racist, sexist and other discriminatory practices (e.g. a zero tolerance approach to such transgressions needs to be considered).
- Conflict.

6.5 Designing effective orientation and diversity skilling mechanisms
- Continuous and comprehensive orientation and re-orientation towards non-racialism and non-sexism (in a human rights environment)
- Managing the role of peer pressure.

6.6 Redesigning supervision, support and facilitation mechanisms (live-in wardens, etc)
- Given the sensitivity around various racial and cultural groups starting to come together within a residence context, it becomes imperative to have a professional adult warden or residence head on 24-hour basis to provide strong guidance and support. Such a person would also ensure continuity in terms of effective management.
- Residence heads will also have to play a strong role in creating and maintaining an academic culture in residences.

6.7 Redesigning residence governance structures: Jurisdictions, elections, composition, minority representation, first-year representation, competencies and rules of residence committees, role definition of residence committees and heads, etc.

6.8 Designing mechanisms to manage risks such as:
- Failing to provide a sense of belonging to all students of a non-racial, multicultural, diverse, multilingual UFS.
- Potentially dominant role of ‘group identity’ of either white or black students.
- Racial tension and racism, conflict and polarisation, potential disruption of academic activities and racial harmony.
- Student flight from residences, leading to a significant reduction in diversity on the campus and in student life.
- Failure to retain students from a minority group.
- The academic performance of residence students, which may decline as a result of ‘institutional trauma’ etc.
- Vandalism.
- Reaction of political stakeholders.
- Reaction of alumni, both white and black.
- Reaction of parents and potential students.
- Reaction of management and Council members.
- Communication and media risks.
- Exploitation of the transitional phase in UFS residences by marketing offices of other universities.
- Financial risks to the University in case of adverse student or parent reactions to the new policy, which may lead to a decline in student numbers or in residence occupancy.

6.9 Special measures for the first year

It may be extremely difficult to, first, place and, secondly, keep white students in black residences. A special effort will have to be made to communicate with parents of prospective students.

Special measures may be necessary especially in the first year (2008), to prevent conflict and students leaving residences (thus decreasing diversity) - i.e. it is crucial to develop a strategy proactively to maintain diversity in all residences.

Possible measures could include organisational or physical/facility arrangements to ensure bonding of the diverse first-year students as a group and protect them against seniors wishing to undermine the diversity objective, as well as using selected senior students as change agents. (This problem relates in particular to the potentially domineering role of senior students, also in the context of ‘orientation’.)

6.10 Task teams, capacity and financial resources

Three task teams have already been appointed by Exco:
- The accommodation facilities task team is to propose a strategic plan for accommodation facilities (convenor: Ms E Pelzer).
- The second task team (convenor: Dr N Luyt) is to propose steps to address risks relating to marketing.
- The third task team (convenor: Dr E Moraka) is to propose steps to address the other implementation issues noted above and in section 5 in consultation with students, residence heads, etc.

The Director: Strategic Communication has already been tasked to develop a communications strategy to support the process.
Additional capacity may have to be created or outsourced to assist in the implementation and facilitation processes.

**Special financial allocations** to enable necessary physical alterations to residences as well as other support mechanisms, including interpreting services, may also be necessary. These are to be considered by Exco.

7. **Frequently asked questions: What is the proper role of the following principles?**

- Freedom of association: This right can be exercised freely within a diverse residence with regard to friendships, joint academic work, socialising, sport, etc.
- Compulsion vs voluntarism: Whilst the University regards the presence of a substantive and sufficient diversity in residences as non-negotiable for the educational reasons noted above, the application of this principle allows substantial room for the voluntary exercising of choice by individuals as well as by Residence Committees, notably in the placement of students, as well as the determination of the future ‘character’ and traditions of a diverse residence.
- Respect for preferences: Students can choose their residences, subject to availability of places, can choose a roommate, and so forth.
- Respect for the traditions and ‘character’ of residences: Traditions and elements of ‘character’ that are reconcilable with the values of the University and the SA Constitution and with principles such as non-racialism, non-sexism, non-discrimination, diversity and non-dominance, can be retained (and new ones developed).
- Normalisation of human interaction in a non-racial context: This is a key element of the approach, in line with the intentions of the draft Institutional Charter.
- Non-discrimination and the elimination of racism and sexism: These are key principles of the new dispensation, built on a proposed zero tolerance approach to such transgressions.
# APPENDIX 1

## UFS Residence occupancy report

**28 May 2007**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Main Campus Junior</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Occup</th>
<th>Vacancies</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Coloured</th>
<th>Indian</th>
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**TOTAL: RESIDENCES**

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