

University of the Free State

Social Support Policy – Draft

1. PREAMBLE

- 1.1. The University recognises that a campus environment conducive to student success extends beyond the classroom and that student wellbeing is a function of the interaction between individual students and their broader environment, including the people, processes and institutional systems in the environment.
- 1.2. The University is committed to:
 - 1.2.1. safeguarding and advancing the fundamental rights and freedoms of all, especially the constitutionally guaranteed rights of every person to inherent human dignity, equality and non-discrimination;
 - 1.2.2. creating a campus environment that is conducive to student success;
 - 1.2.3. providing support to students through all reasonable measures to ensure that cultural, social and economic context is not a determinant of ability to succeed, and to creating integrated mechanisms and structures to assist students facing a wide range of social and personal challenges, who if appropriately supported, would be able to successfully complete higher education.
- 1.3. UFS takes seriously its responsibility to:
 - 1.3.1. support for the entire student population through the creation of an environment conducive to success through a systemic approach to student support;
 - 1.3.2. adopt a preventative and holistic approach, which includes offering services and opportunities for personal growth and empowerment to students not experiencing severe/acute needs enabling them to thrive and maintain high levels of overall wellbeing, ultimately decreasing the demand for services to deal with severe and acute needs;
 - 1.3.3. provide through reasonable measures appropriate support to individual students who have acute or chronic needs for social support that require special accommodations.
- 1.4. To accomplish the above, the UFS supports, promotes and implements approaches that:
 - 1.4.1. build a campus environment that cares, collaborates and is committed to providing social support the student community in a systemic approach;
 - 1.4.2. are truly student-centred and responsive to students' expressed needs.
- 1.5. The successful implementation of the UFS social support policy:
 - 1.5.1. is one of the pathways through which the UFS addresses deeply rooted social inequities and helps build a just and equitable society;
 - 1.5.2. is a mechanism for mitigating risk at the institutional level through promoting and building an enabling environment within which students can succeed, and if appropriately monitored through integrated feedback mechanisms, can help the institution anticipate the social support needs of its students and thus plan to respond appropriately;

- 1.5.3. is a mechanism for mitigating the risk of drop out for individual students by providing holistic support for their overall wellbeing and responding to specific needs by providing services and accommodations (where relevant).

2. AIMS AND GOALS OF THE POLICY

Overarching goal is to establish an institutional climate and conditions that enable the UFS to retain its students and improve their chances of success by providing appropriate social support.

Specifically, the policy has the following goals:

- 2.1. Establish the scope of support that students may need to thrive and maintain high levels of overall wellbeing, and which the UFS seeks to make available to the student population;
- 2.2. Set basic norms and standards for the provision of social support to students;
- 2.3. Establish institutional arrangements/conditions under which student support can be provided, and facilitate cooperation between providers of support on campus and promote consistency in approaches;
- 2.4. Inform all members of the community about resources for providing social support to students to ensure that students in need of support are appropriately referred.

3. PRINCIPLES

- 3.1. A systemic approach to campus social support sees the whole campus environment as the site for intervention and seeks to foster a supportive environment for learning. The systemic approach includes individual-level interventions, (such as promoting coping strategies, mental health awareness, treatment, training, and skill-building), but also entails structural interventions to affect upstream determinants of wellbeing such as institutional structure, campus environment, organizational structure, policies and practices.
- 3.2. By adopting a systemic approach to support the UFS designs and delivers social support on three levels, (i) to the student population as a whole to promote overall wellbeing, (ii) to students with acute/short-term needs for social support interventions, and (iii) to students with chronic/long-term needs for social support or intervention.
- 3.3. Where feasible, the UFS seeks to provide an environment that focuses on prevention and early identification of social support needs, taking a proactive rather than reactive approach.
- 3.4. Acknowledging that many students in need of support are subject to marginalisation or even stigmatisation due to the nature of their situation, the UFS promotes and implements approaches that recognise the inherent value of each individual and seeks to provide social support in a manner that promotes individual dignity and destigmatisation.
- 3.5. The UFS delivers social support in a manner that is fully compliant with legislation governing the rights of and provisions for persons in vulnerable groups or in need of support, and with due compliance to all privacy laws and ethical codes of conduct in terms of confidentiality.
- 3.6. The UFS undertakes to make reasonable resources (human, financial and infrastructure) available in order to advance standards and mechanisms of good practice, aimed at providing appropriate social support to students.

4. EXISTING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS OF RELEVANCE TO THE SOCIAL SUPPORT POLICY

List to be supplemented during the policy draft consultation process

- 4.1. National
 - Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System (March 2018, Department of Higher Education and Training)¹
- 4.2. Institutional
 - Anti-Discrimination, Promotion of Equality, and Social Justice Policy and Procedures²
 - Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Policy (2018)³
 - Universal access / disability policy (*currently under development through the ITP processes*)
 - Student Code of Conduct (*currently under development*)

5. SCOPE AND CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

5.1. Scope of social support and its interrelationship to factors impacting student wellbeing

- 5.1.1. In the context of this policy, social support is interpreted as the institutional arrangements (including services, activities and campus environment) that the UFS provides to help students cope with the non-academic aspects of their lives specifically as it relates to their emotional and social wellbeing.
- 5.1.2. The policy thus directly addresses issues related to (i) proactively promoting student wellbeing, (ii) mental health difficulties and disability, (iii) supporting students experiencing stress and/or trauma as a result of discrimination, harassment, bullying or violence (iv) support to cope with substance misuse and abuse, and addiction and (vi) supporting pregnant students.
- 5.1.3. Furthermore, the policy acknowledges that the wellbeing of students is connected both to their material circumstances, and their subjective experience and perception of the quality of their lives.
- 5.1.4. Student material circumstances include access to appropriate and affordable accommodations, access to basic necessities such as food, and access to funding to support themselves as well as to pay for study related costs (including tuition and books etc.). The absence of adequate material circumstances (such as limited finances, lack of food sovereignty and inappropriate accommodation) impact significantly and adversely on students physical and mental health, which directly impacts on their academic performance.
- 5.1.5. Quality of life experience is influenced by the multitude of factors that affect students' day-to-day lives, such as access to affordable and reliable transport, a sense of personal safety, freedom from vulnerability and fear of victimisation in any form and the extent to which students feel socially connected to others (on and off campus).

¹ <http://www.dhet.gov.za/SiteAssets/Gazettes/Approved%20Strategic%20Disability%20Policy%20Framework%20Layout220518.pdf>

² https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/all-documents/ufs-anti-discrimination-policy_council-approved.pdf?sfvrsn=f33dbe21_0

³ [https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/all-documents/sexual-harassment-sexual-misconduct-sexual-violence-policy_council-approved_15-06-2018-\(1\).pdf?sfvrsn=dc3dbe21_0](https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/all-documents/sexual-harassment-sexual-misconduct-sexual-violence-policy_council-approved_15-06-2018-(1).pdf?sfvrsn=dc3dbe21_0)

- 5.1.6. Whilst this policy does not address issues related to students' material circumstances, nor does it directly address issues related to transport or safety, it acknowledges that the chronic and insidious stress that a not insignificant proportion of students face as a result of these issues influences their overall wellbeing and thus has direct relevance to the scope of social support that needs to be provided by the UFS.
- 5.1.7. This interrelationship between the material circumstance of students' lives, the everyday conditions students must contend with and their overall wellbeing reaffirms the need for an integrated approach to supporting students through complementary campus policies and interventions.

5.2. Support for mental health, mental distress, acute mental health difficulty and mental disability

- 5.2.1. **Mental health** is the emotional resilience that enables one to enjoy life and to handle difficult or painful situations, and an underlying belief in one's dignity and worth, as well as one's ability to cope with the personal circumstance of their daily life.⁴
- 5.2.2. Support to students to maintain mental health at the UFS include *(this description of supported will be developed through the consultative process of engaging with relevant units and committees)*
- 5.2.3. **Mental distress or crisis of coping.** Major life events or chronic stress can impact significantly on how students feel about themselves and how they engage with the transitions of student life. As a result, students can experience mental distress or a crisis of coping. Symptoms may beset anyone at any time and may affect student's ability to manage their day-to-day lives.
- 5.2.4. Students experiencing mental distress can often resolve this through receiving appropriate levels of emotional support from family, friends or campus staff. These difficulties are of a transient nature and students may not need professional interventions. In such cases, students do not require any accommodations (such as those made for students with acute health conditions, see below) but they do require additional social and emotional support to cope with their immediate situations.
- 5.2.5. Students dealing with mental distress or a crisis of coping should have access to counselling that can assist them in the short term to cope with their immediate situation and they should be followed-up on in the medium-term to ensure that the situation has indeed been adequately resolved. Structured interventions to help these students build resilience and improve coping mechanisms should be offered once the immediate crisis has been appropriately resolved and the student's situation has been normalised.
- 5.2.6. In more extreme cases, students may experience **acute mental health difficulty** which is more severe than a situation where students experience mental distress. Acute mental health difficulty refers to mental health symptoms that are short-term or temporary in duration (less than 12 months), may or may not meet a full psychiatric diagnosis but significantly interfere with academic functioning.

⁴ Based on the World Health Organisation definition.

- 5.2.7. Support to students with acute mental health difficulties should be appropriate to the seriousness of the situation and must involve the appropriate professional support (in the form of psychological, psychiatric or other appropriate medical attention). Students with acute mental health difficulties should be considered for temporary reasonable accommodations in the same way as students with acute physical health conditions (see below for elaboration on reasonable accommodations).
- 5.2.8. **Mental health disability** refers to a mental health condition that has been diagnosed by a registered mental health practitioner using a recognised psychiatric classification system, is of long duration (at least 12 months) and substantially limits the student's ability to perform academically.
- 5.2.9. The support to students with mental health disabilities needs to be integrally linked to and complementary to the provisions made in the UFS Policy on Universal Access and Disability (*currently under development*).
- 5.2.10. Support to students with a mental health disability must involve the appropriate professional support (in the form of psychological, psychiatric or other appropriate medical attention). Where reasonable these services will be provided to the student by the relevant campus support unit (including Kopsie Health, Kopsie Counselling and *others to be added?*). In cases where appropriate professional support cannot fully be provided on campus, reasonable efforts will be made to assist students with mental disabilities to access adequate support from service providers off-campus.
- 5.2.11. Students diagnosed with mental health disability qualify to benefit from reasonable accommodations (see elaboration below).
- 5.2.12. Misunderstanding and stigma surrounding mental ill health are widespread which can lead to abuse, rejection and isolation and exclude people from health care or support. The UFS is committed to the equal and just treatment of persons with a mental health disability and will address instances of discrimination against these students appropriately in accordance with the Anti-Discrimination, Promotion of Equality, and Social Justice Policy and Procedures of the UFS.
- 5.2.13. **Reasonable accommodations** refer to necessary and appropriate modification and adjustments, as well as assistive devices and technology. People with acute or chronic social support needs should not be excluded from a situation, where the enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others is available through reasonable accommodations.
- 5.2.14. In the context of mental health 'reasonable accommodations' refers to appropriate adjustments to teaching and learning activities to ensure that students with mental health disabilities or acute mental health difficulties are not placed at a substantial disadvantage compared to other students.
- 5.2.15. Reasonable accommodations may vary between students, depending on specific needs and on the specific nature of their academic course requirements,
- 5.2.16. Reasonable accommodations by academic departments may differ and may include flexible assignment deadlines or the use of equivalent make-up assignments, adjustments to lecture and tutorial attendance requirements, the use of lecture recordings to facilitate access to

missed lectures, adjustments to group work requirements, and allowing students to take alternative examination opportunities.

5.2.17. The provision of reasonable accommodations should not place an unjustifiable burden on academic departments.

5.2.18. **Leave of Absence.** There may be occasions when a student feels unable to study due to mental health difficulties/disability. Withdrawing temporarily from the University may offer the best chance of making a full recovery, and students may therefore decide to take a Leave of Absence from their studies on mental health grounds.

5.2.19. The application for Leave of Absence, as well as the application for re-admission thereafter must comply with the rules for Leave of Absence from the university. *Specifics to be added in here.*

5.2.20. **Crisis support and suicide prevention.** The UFS will develop, and create campus wide awareness of, mechanism(s) for staff and students to be able to report and request support for dealing with crisis situations resulting from mental health distress, difficulty and disability as a proactive measure to prevent all forms of self-harm, including suicide. Where it is not within the resources (human or financial) of the UFS to provide the aforementioned on-campus, the institution will seek to build collaborative partnerships with outside stakeholders to accomplish this (including, but not limited to, faith-based organisations, not-for-profit organisations and professional bodies/associations).

5.2.21. **Confidentiality.** All information related to a student's mental health shared by students with a University staff member, health or mental health practitioner is confidential and may not normally be conveyed to others without the student's signed consent.

5.2.22. Confidentiality may only be breached without the student's consent when the life or safety of the student or someone else is seriously threatened due to the student's state of mind or the student's stated or implied intent or the disclosure of information is required by the law.

5.3. **Support for students to cope with stressful and traumatic events**

5.3.1. As noted in 5.2. disruptive life events may result in the onset and/or aggravation of mental distress, acute mental health difficulties or mental disability. The UFS acknowledges that after experiencing stressful or traumatic events students may need short- to long-term social support to cope. Although several instances where this may be applicable are noted below, the list should not be considered exhaustive.

5.3.2. **The emotional and psychological impact of experiencing sexual violence** can severely impact on student's capacity to function. The processes and procedures for dealing with sexual harassment and sexual violence is outlined the UFS *Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Policy*⁵. The latter policy acknowledges potential need for

⁵ Policy available at [https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/all-documents/sexual-harassment-sexual-misconduct-sexual-violence-policy_council-approved_15-06-2018-\(1\).pdf?sfvrsn=dc3dbe21_0](https://www.ufs.ac.za/docs/default-source/all-documents/sexual-harassment-sexual-misconduct-sexual-violence-policy_council-approved_15-06-2018-(1).pdf?sfvrsn=dc3dbe21_0)

counselling support for affected students, but provides limited details outlining the scope of the support to be provided.

- 5.3.3. This Social Support Policy acknowledges the impact of such instances on students and commits the UFS to actively extending systematic emotional support to students who have experienced sexual violence so as to proactively limit the risk of the onset of mental health difficulties.
- 5.3.4. Emotional, psychological and medical support will be provided to students in both the short and the long term, as per the need of the individual case, by the relevant service on campus.
- 5.3.5. Furthermore, in cases of extreme and severe sexual violence the UFS will consider a temporary Leave of Absence as per the General Rules and Procedures (*these will need to be referenced here*).
- 5.3.6. **Support to students who have been victims of bullying and harassment, including but not limited to, on social media.** The UFS Student Code of Conduct (*currently under development*) will outline the expectations for behaviour by all UFS students in terms of bullying and harassment and will make explicit what constitutes bullying and harassment on social media platforms. The Code of Conduct will outline the processes and disciplinary procedures students who bully or harass other members of the campus community will face.
- 5.3.7. Students who have experienced bullying and harassment, including on social media, will receive counselling and support from the relevant support service on campus as is appropriate for the severity of the case. Students who have been victims of bullying or harassment will be offered the opportunity to participate in empowerment workshops/support groups to strengthen their social support.

5.4. **Support to cope with substance misuse and abuse, and addiction**

- 5.4.1. Ongoing educational/awareness programmes will be presented by the appropriate support service on campus to educate students on the use and misuse/abuse of substances, including alcohol, illegal drugs and the misuse/abuse of prescription medicine and stimulants.
- 5.4.2. Students who contravene the Student Code of Conduct with regards to substance use/abuse will be subject to the relevant disciplinary processes outlined in the code of conduct but will also be compelled to take part in an alcohol/substance abuse counselling programme on campus.
- 5.4.3. Confidential and professional treatment programmes will be made available to students experiencing problems with addiction. If the necessary services are not available on the campus, the student will be referred to relevant treatment or rehabilitation centres. Where feasible, and appropriate to the individual case, the UFS support services will supplement the rehabilitation process with counselling support.
- 5.4.4. The UFS will consider a temporary Leave of Absence as applied for under the General Rules and Procedures for students who need to spend an extended period of time in rehabilitation to overcome addiction (*these will need to be referenced here*).

5.5. **Support to students who are pregnant**

- 5.5.1. The right to make decisions concerning reproduction is a personal choice and consequences flowing therefrom will be the responsibility of the student. While the UFS endeavours to provide guidance to Students on sexual and reproductive matters, such decisions ultimately remain with the student;
- 5.5.2. The duty of the UFS towards students is primarily of an academic nature and no obligations can be imposed on the UFS to assist (either financially, medically or otherwise) in the event of pregnancy;
- 5.5.3. With the above provisions, the UFS acknowledges the need to provide student expectant mothers with support in so far as is reasonable in terms of academic matters and accommodation on campus (in the case of residential students);
- 5.5.4. Social support provided to students who are pregnant will encompass counselling *from (to be clarified)* and health support from Kovsie Health, in so far as is feasible. (*Kovsie Health, Counselling and Wellness to assist in elaborating here to describe what is feasible*).
- 5.5.5. **Strongly consider including the following.** Students who disclose their pregnancy to the UFS Kovsie Wellness Office will be assisted to undertake a risk assessment to help identify any elements of their academic programme of study that present a health and safety risk to either the expectant mother or the unborn child. Expectant students will be assisted to develop a written plan to manage the impact of their pregnancy on their academic life. The plan will assist students to identify any potential need to (i) consider a temporary Leave of Absence, (ii) apply for extensions to coursework requirements, (iii) apply for alternative means of assessment. Along with their written plan, students will be provided with information to assist them in applying for the relevant alternative academic arrangements in their Faculty and Department.
- 5.5.6. It is the expectant student's obligation to disclose their pregnancy to the Faculty and Department if they wish to apply for and benefit from academic accommodations (as specified below). All accommodations must be applied for proactively (and will not be accommodated retrospectively) and within reasonable time for accommodations to be considered.
- 5.5.7. The UFS will make reasonable academic accommodations for students who are expectant and will not require students to participate in academic activities that would endanger the health of the mother or her unborn child. This includes limiting exposure to chemicals or radiation in laboratories, *additional examples to be added in*. However, expectant students are not exempt from fulfilling their academic course requirements and may be required to complete any unfulfilled requirements at a later date (once medically safe to do so) or to complete alternative assessments.
- 5.5.8. The UFS cannot be held responsible for any teratogenic or other harmful effects on the developing foetus should a student not disclose their pregnancy and become to risk.
- 5.5.9. Temporary academic accommodations during the pregnancy – such as delaying the taking of tests and/or exams, as well as delaying practical requirements (clinical placements, laboratory time etc.) must be arranged with the respective Department and Faculty.
- 5.5.10. Expectant students may apply for a temporary Leave of Absence from their studies according to the General Rules and Procedures of the UFS.

5.5.11. It is the expectant student's obligation to inform Accommodation Services of the pregnancy within a reasonable time frame after the decision to continue with the pregnancy has been made, but prior to the 24th week of the pregnancy term.

5.5.12. Accommodation on-campus for expectant mothers at the UFS is regulated by the "Pregnancy Regulation" which provides guidelines on student pregnancy in UFS affiliated accommodation facilities. As per the Regulation, any expecting Student who has reached the 24th week of her pregnancy term is no longer permitted to stay in UFS Accommodation Facilities.

5.6. Support to students facing adverse material circumstances

5.6.1. The absence of adequate material circumstances (such as limited finances, lack of food sovereignty and poor living conditions) impact significantly and adversely on students' physical and mental health, which directly impacts on their academic performance.

5.6.2. Students facing adverse material circumstances may experience acute or chronic emotional distress as a result, in which case they will benefit from counselling and emotional support which the UFS provides through its Wellness and Counselling Offices.

5.6.3. The UFS will ensure that the entire campus community has access to information on the services and programmes which aid students who are experiencing adverse material circumstances. Thus, when students seek emotional support as a result of their material circumstances they can be appropriately referred to other campus services and programmes they may benefit from.

5.6.4. Although the responsibility of the UFS towards students is primarily academic, the Institution will seek to build partnerships (on-campus and external) and promote innovation (technological and social) that will enable the design and implementation of sustainable mechanisms and programmes that provide affordable access for students to material circumstances conducive to academic success.

6. PROVISION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT EXISTING SERVICE PROVIDERS

The UFS currently delivers support to the student population through the following mechanisms:

[Social Support Team established - what role does this team have?](#)

6.1. **Student wellness programme which is responsible for:**

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6.1.1. Presenting developmental workshops to first, second and third years aiming to equip students with soft skills necessary for both the academic and post academic working environment.

6.2. **Social work office which offers**

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6.2.1. social services to students in order to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the functioning of students. The services further prevent and alleviate distress and use resources effectively to create an academic climate that facilitates learning.

6.3. **Student Counselling and Development which**

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- 6.3.1. supports students in the resolution of individual challenges that may impede the fulfilment of their potential;
- 6.3.2. creates a conducive environment for the development and achievement of individual, academic and career goals;
- 6.3.3. offers individual, confidential counselling in various psychological, emotional and developmental issues;
- 6.3.4. creates and presents a variety of developmental workshops;
- 6.3.5. supports academic development in the form of study skills training and time-management;
- 6.3.6. Offers career counselling, comprised of a complete psychometric evaluation and an intensive decision-making process.

6.4. **Center for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS)**

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- 6.4.1. aims to ensure that the University of the Free State increasingly becomes a universally accessible higher-education institution, which embraces and is welcoming to all students, including students with any form of disability;
- 6.4.2. provides a support service for the following categories of students with disabilities specific learning difficulties, mobility impaired, visually impaired, hearing impaired, various psychosocial, other chronic conditions and temporary impairment;
- 6.4.3. assist students with disabilities to access and utilise the needed reasonable accommodations in the teaching and learning environment, ~~including as it relates to physical access, assistive devices and technologies.~~ This includes:
 - 6.4.3.1. assisting with access to accessible study material and textbooks according to the format of choice, which includes Braille, audio (material is read on a digital recorder), enlarged material and E-text;
 - 6.4.3.2. providing amanuensis during tests/exams;
 - 6.4.3.3. assisting in application for extra time during tests/exams according to their specific impairment, ~~including an accessible test / exam venue;~~
 - 6.4.3.4. seeking tutors for students in cooperation with the A-step programme on campus for individual tutor sessions ~~for specific inaccessible module content;~~
- 6.4.4. assists in applying for financial aid or bursaries earmarked for students with disabilities.

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6.5. Social Support Team (including representatives of SCD, CUADS, Social Work, DSA, KvsieACT.....)

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6-5-6.6. Kvsie Health(to be supplemented in the consultation process)

6-6-6.7. HIV/Aids Office(to be supplemented in the consultation process)

6-7-6.8. Financial aid office

6-7-1-6.8.1. Offer Financial Support to qualifying students in the form of NSFAS Bursaries, UFS Bursaries and External Bursaries

6-7-2-6.8.2. Refer students in need of social support to relevant staff/sections (e.g. Social Worker's Office)

6-8-6.9. The following UFS committees deal with matters related to student social support (to be supplemented in the consultation process)

7. SYSTEMIC APPROACH TO STUDENT SUPPORT ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All members of the campus community have responsibilities, individually and collectively for ensuring that the provisions of this Policy are adhered to. The specific duties and responsibilities of the institution, specific units and committees, staff and students are made explicit below.

7.1. University responsibilities

- 7.1.1. Ensure that University staff and students are informed about their respective responsibilities arising under this policy;
- 7.1.2. Ensure that all students have access to information about how to apply for reasonable accommodations and various forms of support provided for under this policy;
- 7.1.3. Put in place structures and processes to monitor and review this policy;
- 7.1.4. Make reasonable resources available to implement this policy.

7.2. Campus support services responsibilities

7.2.1. The primary implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the following units and committees (*to be supplemented during the consultation process*)

7.2.1.1. Student Affairs under the leadership of the Dean of Student Affairs, including the Wellness Programme, the Office of the Social Worker, Counselling and Development, CUADS

7.2.1.2. Support services in the form of Kovie Health and the HIV/Aids Unit.

~~7.2.1.2.~~ 7.2.1.3 what about the newly established Social Support Team??

- 7.2.2. Collectively these units and committees will be responsible for the development of a comprehensive set of protocols, guidelines and procedures to the operationalisation of the policy (see Section 8).
- 7.2.3. Collectively, and in a coordinated and integrated fashion these units and committees will work to develop and effect a campus-wide education action plan with regard to the availability of social support at the UFS.

7.3. Faculties and academic departments

- 7.3.1. Ensure that reasonable accommodations in teaching and learning are provided for students who are registered for a mental health disability;
- 7.3.2. Ensure that temporary accommodations for students with acute mental health difficulties are applied in the same way as procedures for students with acute physical health difficulties;
- 7.3.3. Ensure that reasonable teaching and learning accommodations are made for expectant mothers as outlined in this policy.
- 7.3.4. Processes Leave of Absence applications (*unclear whose responsibility this would be – faculty?*)

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- 7.3.5. Provide information about procedures for applying for reasonable accommodations on mental health grounds are made available to students and known to all academic staff in the faculty and department.
 - 7.3.6. Share information and promote awareness of campus support services available to students within the faculty to ensure that students in need of support are timeously and appropriately referred.
 - 7.3.7. Treat all information regarding students' support needs with the appropriate confidentiality.
- 7.4. Individual staff members at the UFS are responsible:
- 7.4.1. For familiarising themselves with the University's Student Social Support Policy and complying with it;
 - 7.4.2. For handling written, electronic or verbal information which relates to a student's social support needs in a secure and confidential manner, ensuring full consent before sharing personal information related to any social support or accommodations a student is receiving, yet recognizing when emergency situations require breach of confidentiality
 - 7.4.3. While individual staff members are not responsible for providing social and emotional support to students in need, all staff members can be expected to participate in creating a campus climate that cares and collaborates to effectively support students. Thus, individual staff are responsible for familiarising themselves the suite of support services available to students at the UFS, and encouraging students in need of support to seek help at the relevant service.
- 7.5. Responsibilities of students studying at the UFS
- 7.5.1. Students at the UFS are responsible for familiarising themselves with the social support policy and complying with it.
 - 7.5.2. UFS encourages students to consider declaring their social support needs to the relevant campus structure, including disclosing social support needs on their application forms so that the University can prepare to offer the student reasonable accommodations;
 - 7.5.3. The UFS encourages students make appointments with the relevant campus facilities if their social support needs are not disclosed and receive guidance on support opportunities available;
 - 7.5.4. Students must ensure that they have a clear idea of what will be expected of them in their course of study and, where relevant, apply for the accommodations provided in this policy prospectively and not retrospectively.

8. PROCEDURES, STRATEGIES PROTOCOLS AND GUIDELINES

A comprehensive set of procedures, protocols and guidelines will be developed to operationalise the UFS Social Support Policy.

The aforementioned will be developed in an integrated and consultative fashion engaging a wide range of stakeholders to ensure that all procedures, protocols and guidelines are complementary to each other,

eliminate duplication of services where possible and promote the efficient use of time, financial and human resources available to operationalise the policy.

9. MONITORING AND EVALUATING SOCIAL SUPPORT

The policy will be reviewed at regular intervals and updated to ensure that, at minimum, it remains compliant with relevant national legislation.

Entities responsible for delivering social support services on campus will participate in the policy monitoring activities as guided by the monitoring plan developed by the Dean of Students.