

Division of Student Affairs

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Version 1

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**UFS**  
STUDENT AFFAIRS  
STUDENTESAKE  
DITABA TSA BATHUTI

# FOREWORD



**MR TEMBA HLA SHO**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
STUDENT AFFAIRS



**T**he work of the Division of Student Affairs is central to the academic project of the University. In support of the academic project, Student Affairs aims to create a socially just student-life environment that is conducive to student academic success, student well-being, the student experience and student development.

Our delivery sites are situated on all three university campuses and we provide aligned student services to all students of the University of the Free State. We deliver services through various portfolios, namely Social Support Service, Student Life (Active Civic Teaching; Arts, Culture and Dialogue; Gateway First Year Orientation; Food Environment; Leadership Development; Peer Mentor Programme; Student Media; Research and Co-Curricular), Student Governance, Kopsie Sport, Kopsie Health, Student Counselling and Development, Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support, and Housing and Residence Affairs.

The Division of Student Affairs (DSA) continues to provide services and projects that humanise the student environment, and aims to deliver DSA's Strategic Key Areas in support of the university's strategic objectives. This strategy (DSA 2022-2026) is committed to the realisation of the Institutional Transformation Plan (ITP). The DSA strategy articulates the aspirations and commitment of all Student Affairs departments to ensuring an alignment with the UFS strategy.

*To deliver this DSA strategy, our division will focus on the following key strategic areas:*



**Student Success**



**Student Health and Wellness**



**Student Experience; and**



**Student Development**

Following the decision to integrate Housing and Residence Affairs, Kopsie Health and Kopsie Sport into Student Affairs, there was a further change in the nomenclature of the DSA's accountable officer, from the Dean: Student Affairs to the Executive Director: Student Affairs. The Executive Director: Student Affairs is a fully-fledged member of the Rectorate and chairs the committees that were previously chaired by the former Vice Rector, Institutional Change, Student Affairs, and Community Engagement, and also chairs the Student Support Services Forum and Rectorate/ISRC Committee.

The Division of Student Affairs has also undergone a structural change as a result of the incorporation of Housing and Residence Affairs, Kopsie Sport and Kopsie Health into the division. The integration is premised on the university executive management's strategic decision to align Student Affairs – a resolution reached after a series of engagements with stakeholders. These engagements called to light a need to integrate Sport, Health and Housing into the Student Affairs portfolio, in line with how this is done in the majority of South Africa's 26 universities as a globally benchmarked exercise.

The expansion of the department necessitated revisiting the DSA's strategic objectives and structure. On 28 and 29 October 2021, the Department of Student Affairs underwent a strategic planning session to set a renewal trajectory in response to the division's external review report and the changes recently introduced in the division, including the integration of the three incorporated departments and the DSA's alignment to the university's Multi-Campus Management Model. The two-day strategic planning session produced a strategic document which gave rise to a new DSA organisational structure and related realignments. The new DSA structure was socialised with all DSA staff and engagement was held with the DSA Senior Leadership Group, consisting of the Executive Director, Senior Director, Directors, Deputy Director and heads of departments. The new Student Affairs structure is premised on Circles, Focus Areas, Cross Functional Teams and Community of Practice and is aimed at creating an effective, single Division of Student Affairs across the entire university so as to enhance alignment and offer equitable services to all three delivery sites. The newly restructured DSA will ensure consistent standards, policy direction and best practices through shared knowledge (MCM Model).

Former South African President Dr Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela once said, "No country can really develop unless its citizens are educated." The Division of Student Affairs contributes to the holistic development of students. Our aim is to nurture UFS students and offer them graduate attributes that meet ever-evolving and agile global demands.

Benjamin Franklin, an American writer, scientist and political philosopher, once said, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." The DSA takes pride in providing research-based co-curricular activities to enhance and broaden students' knowledge and thus improve their chances of academic success.

The department will build on the strength of its achievements as reflected in the self-evaluation report of 2021 and the external review report of 2021. Our mandate is clear, and we will continue to provide a humanising and socially just environment for all UFS students. We are cognizant of the challenges posed by the new normal while living and working through the Covid-19 pandemic, but are agile enough to transcend the odds in order to provide the required services with efficacy.



# CONTENTS







INTRODUCTION .....	1
A STUDENT-CENTRED VISION .....	1
KEY STRATEGIC AREAS .....	2
<i>Student Success</i> .....	2
<i>Student Well-being</i> .....	4
<i>Student Development</i> .....	5
<i>Student Experience</i> .....	6
DSA ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND STRUCTURE .....	8
<i>Creating Cross-Functional Strategic Teams</i> .....	8
<i>Grouping Functional Areas into Circles</i> .....	8
<i>Circle of Experts</i> .....	9
<i>Circle of Educators</i> .....	10
<i>Circle of Facilitators</i> .....	11
<i>Circle of Analysts</i> .....	12
<i>Operationalising the Integrated Organisational Structure</i> .....	14
<i>Management Structure</i> .....	14
<i>Senior Leadership Group</i> .....	14
<i>Management Modes</i> .....	15
<i>Communities of Practice</i> .....	15
<i>Staff Wellness – Wholeness</i> .....	15
MONITORING AND EVALUATION .....	15
CONCLUSION .....	17
ADDENDUM A .....	18





## INTRODUCTION

In 2021 three significant changes influenced the Division of Student Affairs (DSA) at the University of the Free State (UFS). Firstly, the executive leadership of the UFS initiated a process to reshape the DSA. To this end, it was decided to change the most senior leadership position at the DSA from *Dean* to *Executive Director*. This change also entailed the strategic repositioning of the Executive Director: Student Affairs to become a full member of the Rectorate that directly reports to the Rector and Vice-Chancellor. The second aspect of change involved incorporating the following three functional areas into the DSA portfolio: Housing and Residence Affairs, KopsieSport, and the Health and Wellness Centre. Thirdly, the DSA went through an external review process. Although the external review panel made many commendations, specific recommendations were also made. By their very nature, these changes suggested a new strategic direction and organisational structure for the DSA.

Thus, the all-inclusive Senior Leadership Group (SLG) of the DSA, together with its second-layer leadership, attended a strategic-planning breakaway on 28 and 29 November 2021 at Summerwood Estate, Bloemfontein. During these strategic discussions, five key strategic areas were identified. The purpose of this document is to outline the new strategic direction for the DSA as well as the integrated organisational structure that will enable the effective implementation thereof.

## A STUDENT-CENTRED VISION

The DSA aims to align itself accurately with the vision of the UFS:

*The UFS is a research-led, student-centred and regionally-engaged university that contributes to development and social justice through the production of globally competitive graduates and knowledge.*

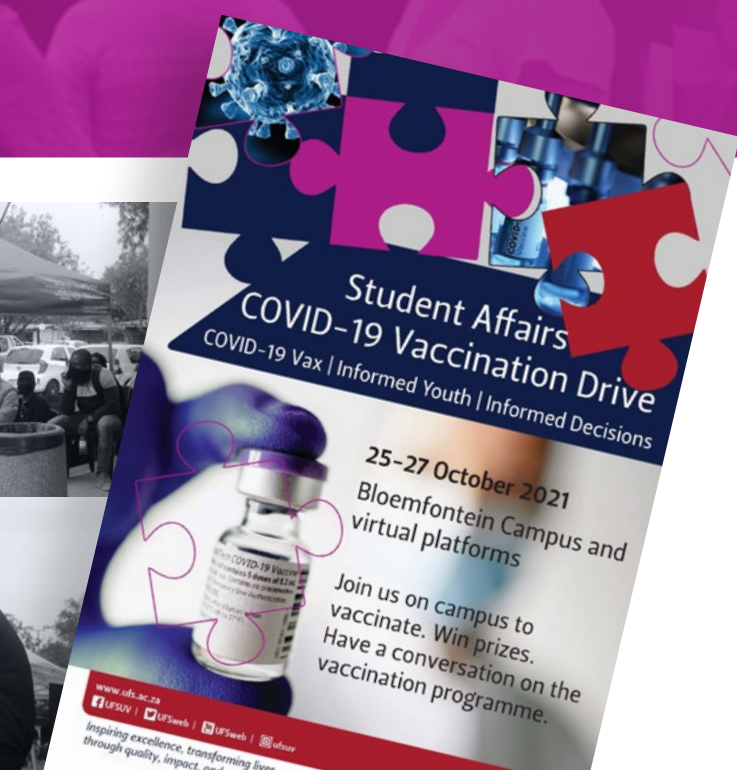
One aspect of this vision that is highly relevant to the specific institutional role of the DSA is the vision to be a student-centred university. Therefore, the new strategic direction and organisational structure of the DSA is underpinned by a vision to be *student-centred*.

This aspiration has three important implications. Firstly, it implies the nurturing of a disposition to deeply understand and respond to students' learning and developmental needs. This is important for the DSA, as it wishes to contribute to the "production of globally competitive graduates". Secondly, it implies the strategic alignment of DSA departments, centres, offices, programmes and services to enable sufficient agility and flexibility to effectively address students' learning and developmental needs. Thirdly, it implies that the DSA will position itself as a leader in the various areas represented by different functional areas, and in the process enhance the impact and visibility of the UFS.

Figure 1 illustrates the vision of the DSA to be student-centred.



Figure 1: Anchoring the strategic direction and organisational structure of the DSA in the UFS's vision to be a student-centred university.





## KEY STRATEGIC AREAS

The DSA has identified five key strategic areas to implement its student-centred vision, namely: (1) Student Success, (2) Student Well-being, (3) Student Development, (4) Student Experience and (5) an Integrated Organisational Culture. It is important to note that there are two categories concerning these key strategic areas. The first four key strategic areas directly relate to a student-centred vision. However, the fifth key strategic area relates to the organisational culture and structure needed to effectively implement the other four key strategic areas.

The DSA aims to achieve a specific impact, outcomes and outputs for each of these key strategic areas. *Impact* refers to long-term (5+ years) systemic changes that the DSA intends to see in the organisation, the university community and the higher education sector. *Outcomes* refer to specific medium-term (3+ years) changes in the knowledge, skills and attitudes of individual staff and students. *Outputs* refer to specific short-term (1-2 years) projects that would result in tangible products (e.g. documents, publications, webinars, awareness campaigns, etc.). Various cross-functional teams will determine these outputs annually (see explanation on cross-functional teams below). It is envisaged that the effective implementation of short-term outputs would result in achieving medium-term outcomes. Furthermore, the achieving of medium-term outcomes would result in the long-term impact that the DSA envisions. These outputs, outcomes and impact will be revisited during the annual DSA strategic planning sessions (see the section below on Monitoring and Evaluation).

The following section outlines the five key strategic areas with their associated impact, outcomes and output. This section will uphold the categorisation of four key strategic areas into those related to student-centredness and the fifth area associated with the DSA organisational culture and structure.

### STUDENT SUCCESS

The DSA is passionate about enhancing the academic success of students and contributing towards closing the achievement gap. To this end, the DSA aims to create an environment conducive to all students' learning and success on all three UFS campuses. The DSA, therefore, builds close collaboration with academic centres and faculties to jointly create a student-success infrastructure at the UFS. In this regard, the DSA desires to achieve the following outputs, outcomes and impact (outlined in Table 1 below).



<b>OUTPUTS</b> The creation of <i>products</i> through specific <i>projects</i> . Timeframe: 12-24 months	<b>OUTCOMES</b> Change in the knowledge, behaviour and attitudes of DSA staff and students. Timeframe: 2-5 years	<b>IMPACT</b> Systemic changes in the DSA, the university community and the Student Affairs profession. Timeframe: 5< years
To be determined by specific cross-functional team on an annual basis.	<b>CHANGE IN KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data and data analytics to understand and respond to the needs of students.</li> <li>• Establish a knowledge base (conceptual understanding) on student learning and success.</li> <li>• Raise awareness among students about the availability of support functions throughout the student journey.</li> <li>• Raise awareness and create an understanding among coaches and sport managers about the academic support for students participating in HP (High Performance) sporting codes.</li> <li>• Raise awareness and create an understanding among staff about the necessity to create a holistic and integrated support structure for student success.</li> </ul>	An environment that is conducive to the learning and success of students. The DSA forms part of an integrated infrastructure of student success at the UFS.
	<b>CHANGE IN BEHAVIOUR AND SKILLS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create integrated and holistic support systems around relevant need areas (e.g. food insecurity, first-year students, etc.).</li> <li>• Build collaboration and partnership with faculties, academic entities and other support divisions.</li> <li>• Strategically communicate the availability of support functions to students throughout the student journey.</li> <li>• Recognise academic excellence.</li> <li>• Upskill and reskill support and academic staff (e.g. Universal Design Learning).</li> <li>• Use colleges as learning communities to integrate the social context and the academic context of the student experience.</li> </ul>	
	<b>CHANGE IN ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value collaboration.</li> <li>• Value the role of Faculty Councils and relevant sub-structures to make the faculty environment more conducive to student learning and success.</li> <li>• Motivate students toward success by exposing them to healthy role models.</li> <li>• Value and advance the social dimensions of learning.</li> <li>• Value data-driven praxis.</li> </ul>	

## STUDENT WELL-BEING

The DSA is passionate about the holistic well-being of students. The DSA aspires to use data and data analytics to understand students' biopsychosocial needs and respond accurately and appropriately. In this regard, it is essential to provide greater access to services and opportunities that will promote student well-being on all three UFS campuses. The DSA identified the use of digitalisation and technology (aligned with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, or 4IR) as well as infrastructure development as important strategies to scale relevant services.

Furthermore, the DSA aspires to establish a well-focused and internationally driven process, over the sport continuum, for an active campus community. Additionally, providing accurate and appropriate information to students and staff is crucial to establishing equitable services on all three UFS campuses. The DSA aspires to achieve the following outputs, outcomes and impact (outlined in Table 2 below):

**Table 2: Student Well-being – Outputs, Outcomes and Impact.**

<b>OUTPUTS</b> The creation of <i>products</i> through specific <i>projects</i> . Timeframe: 12–24 months	<b>OUTCOMES</b> Change in the knowledge, behaviour and attitudes of DSA staff and students. Timeframe: 2–5 years	<b>IMPACT</b> Systemic changes in the DSA, the university community and the Student Affairs profession. Timeframe: 5+ years
To be determined by specific cross-functional team on an annual basis.	<p><b>CHANGE IN KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data and data analytics to understand the needs of students.</li> <li>• Provide accurate and appropriate information to students and staff on relevant topics (e.g. mental health, GBV, safety and security).</li> </ul> <p><b>CHANGE IN BEHAVIOUR AND SKILLS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create integrated and holistic support systems around relevant need areas (e.g. social support, food insecurity, Covid-19, sport, GBV, safety and security, etc.).</li> <li>• Use technology and digitalisation (aligned with 4IR) to open access and scale services.</li> <li>• Enhance physical activity of students through greater access to facilities and opportunities.</li> <li>• Create and implement a GBV policy framework.</li> <li>• Partner with provincial and national entities (e.g. Higher Health, Department of Health, Department of Social Development, SAPS).</li> <li>• Create systems of support in student communities through peer mentors and peer educators (on-campus and off-campus).</li> <li>• Participation of all first-time-entry students in the Peer Mentor Programme (socio-emotional support).</li> <li>• Provide access to all students (specifically students who were historically excluded) to HP (High Performance) and recreational sport in a safe and secure environment.</li> <li>• Implement a multi-use programme for shared facilities.</li> </ul> <p><b>CHANGE IN ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value collaboration.</li> <li>• Value equitable services on all three UFS campuses.</li> <li>• De-stigmatise mental health.</li> <li>• Value data-driven praxis.</li> <li>• Prioritise a safe and secure environment for students.</li> <li>• Value the alignment and coordination of sport and recreational activities within the capacity of available resources and technology.</li> </ul>	An environment that enables the biopsychosocial flourishing of students.



## STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

The DSA is passionate about developing graduates who are ethical transformational leaders in society. To this end, the DSA aims to create experiences through co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes that will develop graduate attributes, employability and entrepreneurship. The DSA aspires to implement high-impact educational practices that are constructively aligned with the UFS Graduate Attributes Framework and assessment criteria. The use of technology is crucial to scale developmental opportunities for students, and the DSA aims to use this to create greater access to co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes. In this regard, the DSA will position college communities as specific contexts of programme delivery. Furthermore, High Performance (HP) sport and recreational sport are specific institutional capital assets enabling the holistic development of students. To this end, the strengthening of KopsieSport as the institutional capital assets manager of sport at the UFS is paramount. The DSA also aspires to form strong collaborative partnerships to implement its holistic and integrated approach to student development. Table 3 outlines the outputs, outcomes and impact that are associated with these aspirations.

**Table 3: Student Development – Outputs, Outcomes and Impact.**

<b>OUTPUTS</b> The creation of <i>products</i> through specific <i>projects</i> . <i>Timeframe: 12–24 months</i>	<b>OUTCOMES</b> Change in the knowledge, behaviour and attitudes of DSA staff and students. <i>Timeframe: 2–5 years</i>	<b>IMPACT</b> Systemic changes in the DSA, the university community and the Student Affairs profession. <i>Timeframe: 5+ years</i>
To be determined by specific cross-functional team on an annual basis.	<b>CHANGE IN KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance the digital literacy of students.</li> <li>Establish knowledge and understanding of the UFS Graduate Attributes framework.</li> <li>Apply knowledge on the constructive alignment of the DSA Co-Curricular Alignment Canvas.</li> <li>Create knowledge and understanding on career development, employability and entrepreneurship.</li> <li>Raise awareness among students of DSA co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes.</li> </ul>	UFS graduates possess the necessary attributes to be ethical and transformational leaders in society.
	<b>CHANGE IN BEHAVIOUR AND SKILLS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use DSA Alignment Canvas (and associated process) to constructively align all co-curricular programmes with UFS Graduate Attributes framework and ePortfolio Project.</li> <li>Map all DSA co-curricular programmes.</li> <li>Link co-curricular programmes with the development of solutions for global challenges in communities.</li> <li>Develop and implement a differentiated but systemic-holistic leadership-development framework.</li> <li>Use technology and software to enhance access and scale co-curricular programmes.</li> <li>Track student participation in co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes.</li> <li>Use college communities as “delivery sites” of co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes.</li> <li>Develop the necessary competencies to enable value-added propositions, product development and partnerships/joint ventures for HP (High Performance) sport.</li> </ul>	
	<b>CHANGE IN ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Motivate students to participate in co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes.</li> <li>Value the constructive alignment of all co-curricular programmes with graduate attributes and assessment criteria.</li> <li>Value the societal impact of co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes (engaged scholarship).</li> <li>Value and prioritise partnerships and collaboration.</li> <li>Value data-driven praxis.</li> </ul>	

## STUDENT EXPERIENCE

The DSA is passionate about creating a culture of care and a sense of belonging for students on all three UFS campuses with the aim of establishing a lifetime of interconnectedness between the university community and its graduates. In this regard, the DSA aspires to strengthen the social systems embedded in college communities, to enhance social solidarity among a diverse student population. In creating inclusive and diverse student communities, the DSA aspires to enhance access to co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes and in the process close the opportunity gap. The DSA will prioritise communicating with students in ways that will improve reciprocal engagement. Thus, the intentional engagement with students through dialogues, conversations and awareness campaigns will remain paramount for the DSA. Table 4 outlines the outputs, outcomes and impact associated with this key strategic area.

**Table 4: Student Experience – Outputs, Outcomes and Impact.**

<b>OUTPUTS</b> The creation of <i>products</i> through specific <i>projects</i> . Timeframe: 12–24 months	<b>OUTCOMES</b> Change in the knowledge, behaviour and attitudes of DSA staff and students. Timeframe: 2–5 years	<b>IMPACT</b> Systemic changes in the DSA, the university community and the Student Affairs profession. Timeframe: 5+ years
To be determined by specific cross-functional team on an annual basis.	<b>CHANGE IN KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use data and data analytics to understand the student experience and areas of transformation.</li> <li>• Raise awareness among students regarding the DSA and all its associated functional areas.</li> <li>• Establish knowledge on Generation Z communication preferences.</li> <li>• Raise an awareness and understanding of needs and expectations of prospective, undergraduate, and post-graduate students.</li> </ul>	A sense of belonging that creates a lifetime of interconnectedness between the university community and its graduates.
	<b>CHANGE IN BEHAVIOUR AND SKILLS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the social systems embedded in colleges to create a sense of belonging for all students on all three campuses.</li> <li>• Engage with students through dialogues and conversations.</li> <li>• Optimise advocacy and awareness campaigns.</li> <li>• Create inspirational experiences for students.</li> <li>• Communicate with students in a relevant and coherent way as DSA.</li> <li>• Create opportunities to enhance the student experience through participation in recreational sport, organised mainstream sport, and high-performance sport.</li> </ul>	
	<b>CHANGE IN ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value engagement and involvement of students – embody inclusion, not exclusion.</li> <li>• Value the role of co-curricular and extra-curricular participation and support to enhance social cohesion.</li> <li>• Value data-driven praxis.</li> </ul>	



## IN SUMMARY

*The first four key strategic areas relate directly to the student-centred vision of the DSA. Figure 2 illustrates the four key strategic areas that focus on student-centredness.*

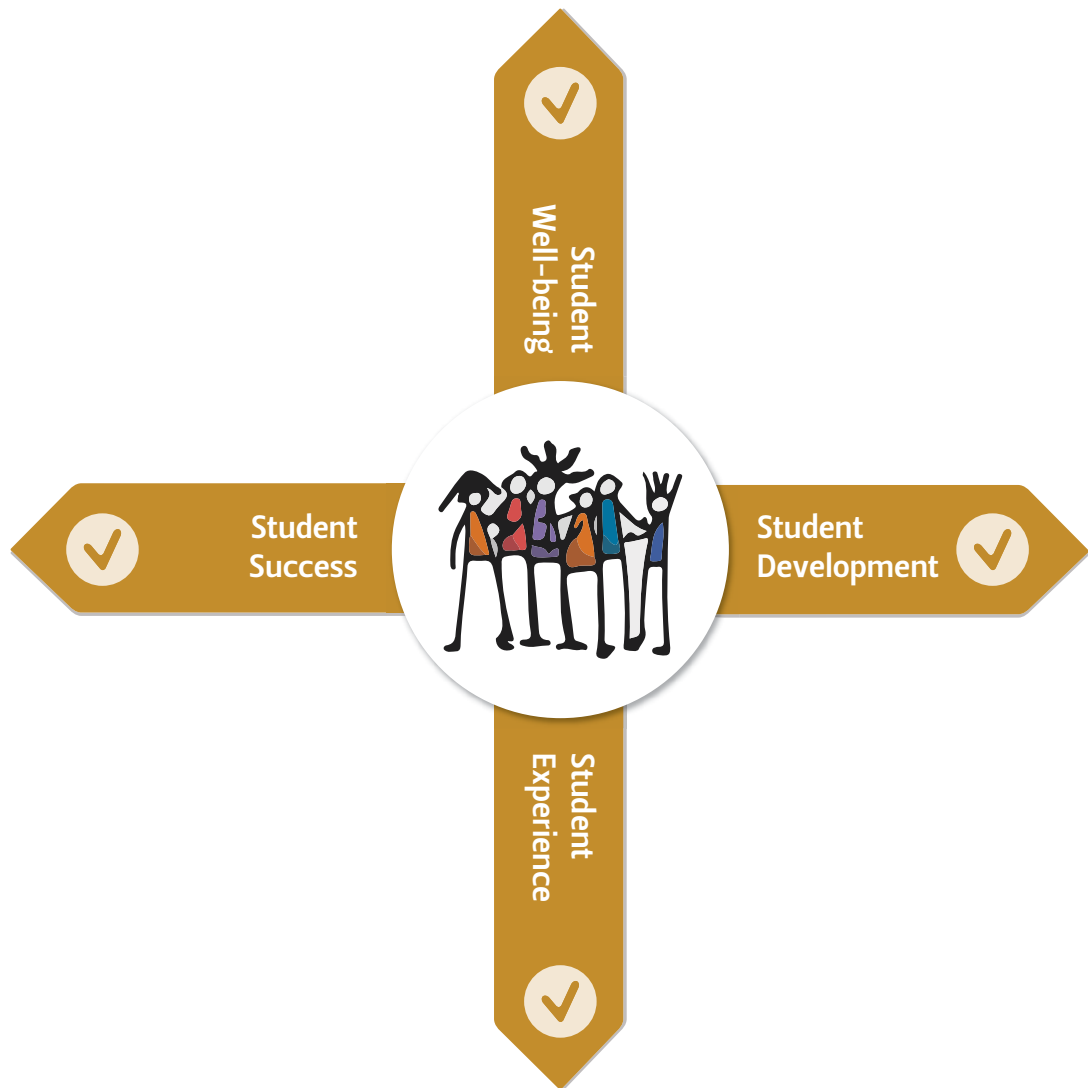
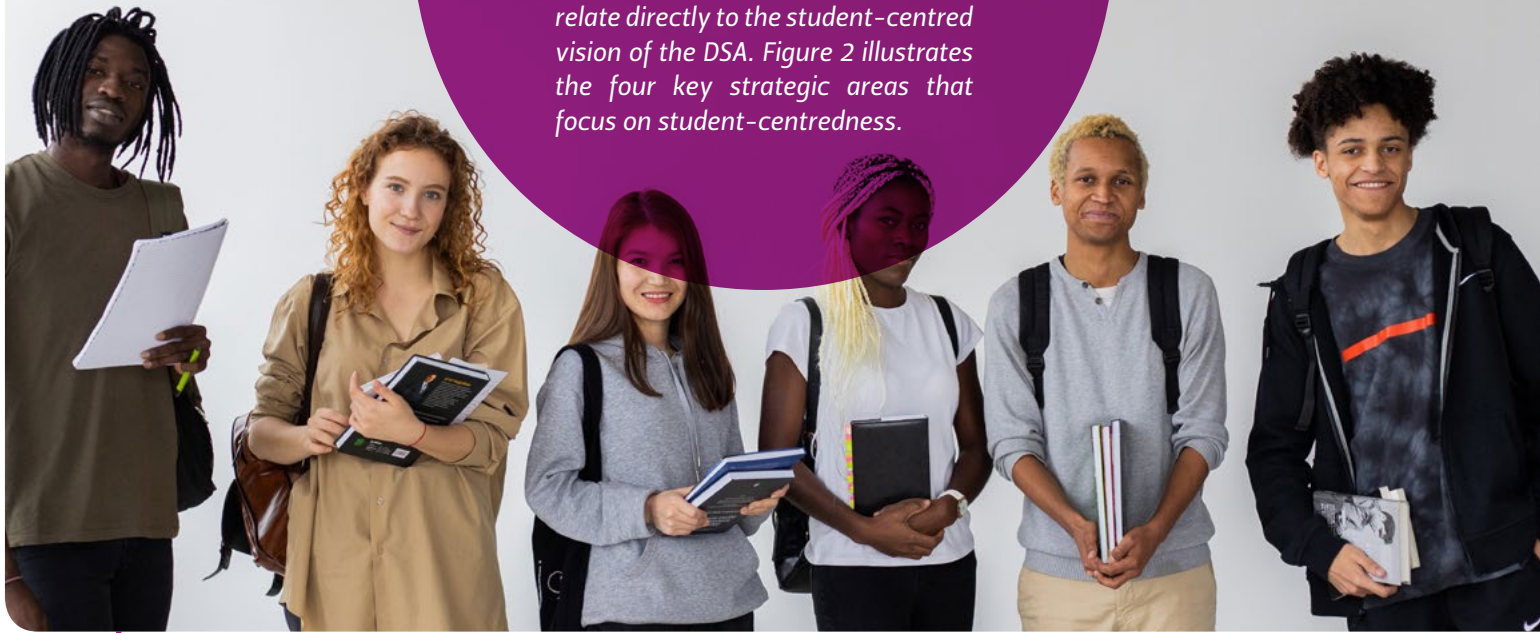


Figure 2: Four key strategic areas related to the vision of a student-centred university.



*The following section will focus on the fifth key strategic area, namely the integrated organisational culture and structure of the DSA.*

## DSA ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE AND STRUCTURE

The DSA cares deeply about the kind of organisational culture and organisational structure it creates. It aspires to create an organisational culture that will allow individuals and teams to thrive and develop their potential. It is envisioned that this organisational culture will promote collaboration, ownership, wholeness and a unique collective identity. The DSA, therefore, aims to eradicate the formation of silos and power hierarchies and aspires to establish an organisational structure that will foster mutual support, collegiality and agility.

The organisational structure that will enable these aspirations hinges on two aspects: the formation of *cross-functional teams* and the grouping of *functional areas into circles*, each with its relevant focus areas.

## CREATING CROSS-FUNCTIONAL STRATEGIC TEAMS

The purpose of cross-functional teams (also known as C-teams) is to give practical expression to the four key strategic areas mentioned above (directly related to student-centredness) through the implementation of strategic projects. To this end, the DSA will allocate staff members from all DSA departments, services, centres and programmes to teams that will each focus on a specific strategic project (see reference to *outputs* above). The functioning of C-teams will be project-based to optimise agility and dynamic cooperation within the broader DSA environment. The designing and updating of strategic projects will take place during the DSA's annual strategic planning. The DSA will appoint C-team coordinators for each of the key strategic areas. They will coordinate the strategic projects associated with their respective key strategic areas, and will report on progress to the DSA Senior Leadership Group (SLG). It is important to note that the DSA will prioritise the alignment of C-team activities with the UFS Strategic Plan and the UFS ITP.

## GROUPING FUNCTIONAL AREAS INTO CIRCLES

The aim of creating a new organisational framework for the DSA is to move away from a rigid hierarchical structure towards a system of interconnected circles that is agile and collaborative, to best support students.

These interconnected circles are formed by grouping similar functional areas together. Categorised by their unique roles within the university, these functional spheres form crucial systems that operationalise support and collaboration between similar functional areas. These functional circles will form Communities of Practice within the DSA. It is believed that this focused support and cooperation will enhance the impact and visibility of the DSA in an integrated and holistic way.

The grouping of similar functional areas into functional spheres will also enable the DSA to align management modes<sup>1</sup> across all three UFS campuses. The reality of a three-campus management model is a particular challenge facing the DSA. Thus, the alignment and integration of the management modes that would best suit the DSA (both on collective and decentralised levels for different units) is crucial to creating an optimal organisational structure for the DSA across all three UFS campuses.

The integrated organisational structure arranges DSA functional areas into the following functional spheres, each with its unique management mode.

<sup>1</sup> Incorporating differentiated management modes is an intentional step to align the new DSA organisational structure with the new multi-campus model of the UFS. "Functions and Processes are categorised in Management Modes that determined the predominant execution mode for these processes and also align with primary Responsibility and Accountability." (Learning Strategies Consulting Service, 2021)



## CIRCLE OF EXPERTS

The Circle of Experts comprises all functional areas that require expert knowledge and skills to provide a specialised service to students. This sphere of functions generally deals with complicated challenges that demand professional expertise to analyse and respond appropriately and accurately to students' needs. It often involves the evaluation of different possibilities that require expert knowledge and skills.

The following DSA functional areas are considered to be “experts”:

- 1 Student Counselling and Development (SCD);
- 2 Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (CUADS);
- 3 Social Support;
- 4 Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA) – [Structures and operations];
- 5 Health and Wellness Centre; and
- 6 Koviesport (High Performance sport, CEM, facilities).

Figure 3 illustrates the grouping of these functional areas into a Circle of Experts (blue circle) and how this specific functional sphere fits into the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.



Figure 3: Circle of Experts (blue).

## CIRCLE OF EDUCATORS

The Circle of Educators includes all functional areas involved with the education, holistic development, and preparation of students. In this regard, the development of *employability* and *entrepreneurship* are important objectives. This circle positions the DSA as an active partner in the broader campus curriculum. In this regard, student learning and development are perceived as interwoven, inseparable elements distributed across the entire student experience, both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, the Circle of Educators is concerned with how Student Affairs affects student outcomes. The primary mechanisms that this group uses to develop graduate attributes are co-curricular and extra-curricular programmes.

The following DSA functional areas are considered to be “educators”:

- 1 Student Leadership Development;
- 2 First-Year Orientation and Peer Mentoring Programme;
- 3 Student Media;
- 4 Arts and Culture;
- 5 Dialogues;
- 6 Career Services;
- 7 Kovies ACT;
- 8 Student Wellness; and
- 9 KoviesSport (recreational and mainstream sport).

Figure 4 illustrates the grouping of these functional areas into a Circle of Educators (orange circle) and how this specific functional sphere fits into the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.

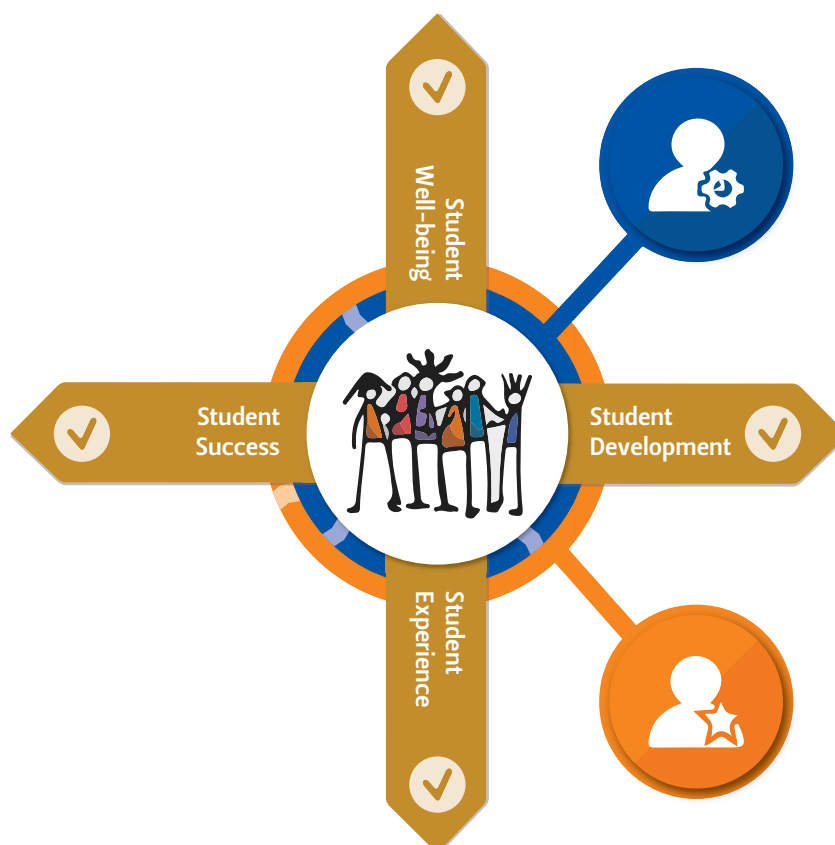


Figure 4: Circle of Educators (orange).

## CIRCLE OF FACILITATORS

The Circle of Facilitators includes all those functional areas concerned with facilitating complex processes associated with student communities, student associations, student organisations and their respective leadership structures. The DSA requires staff in these functional areas to be flexible, interactive and agile because the contexts they are dealing with are often unpredictable and in constant flux. Managing functional areas in this circle usually requires opening up discussions and setting boundaries to allow social systems to be self-regulated within safe parameters. It encourages debate and strives to foster interconnectedness amid diversity.

The following DSA functional areas are considered to be “facilitators”:

- 1 Housing and Residence Affairs (HRA) – [College Communities] (*Although College Communities are part of the Circle of Facilitators – due to the nature of this functional area – the head of College Communities will report to the Senior Director: HRA in order to establish an integrated accommodation system at the UFS*); and
- 2 Student Governance (governance structures, student associations and organisations).

Figure 5 illustrates the grouping of these functional areas into a Circle of Facilitators (purple circle) and how this specific functional sphere fits into the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.



Figure 5: Circle of Facilitators (purple).



## CIRCLE OF ANALYSTS

The Circle of Analysts aims to advance the impact and visibility of the DSA (and the UFS) through design-based research. To this end, *data-driven praxis* is intentionally linked to *innovation* to solve complex problems and refine theoretical design principles. Firstly, this circle focuses on building internal capacity and systems within the DSA to advance its student-centred approach, through data evidence and data analytics. Secondly, the Circle of Analysts stimulates innovation through linking design-based research with projects in cross-functional teams (i.e. C-teams). The goal of the Circle of Analysts is, therefore, to enhance the impact of the DSA concerning its four strategic areas (i.e. Student Success, Student Well-being, Student Development and Student Experience) and position the UFS as a thought leader in the field.

By incorporating the Circle of Analysts into its integrated organisational structure, the DSA confirms its commitment to build key partnerships and collaboration with relevant research and academic units and advance the UFS's research and scholarly objectives.

Figure 6 illustrates the incorporation of the Circle of Analysts (red circle) and how this specific functional sphere fits into the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.



Figure 6: Circle of Analysts (red).

A holistic, integrated and student-centred organisational structure for the DSA would, therefore, comprise a dynamic intersection between the first four cross-functional strategic teams (i.e. Student Success, Student Well-being, Student Development and Student Experience) and the four functional spheres (i.e. Circle of Experts, Circle of Educators, Circle of Facilitators and Circle of Analysts).

Figure 7 illustrates the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.

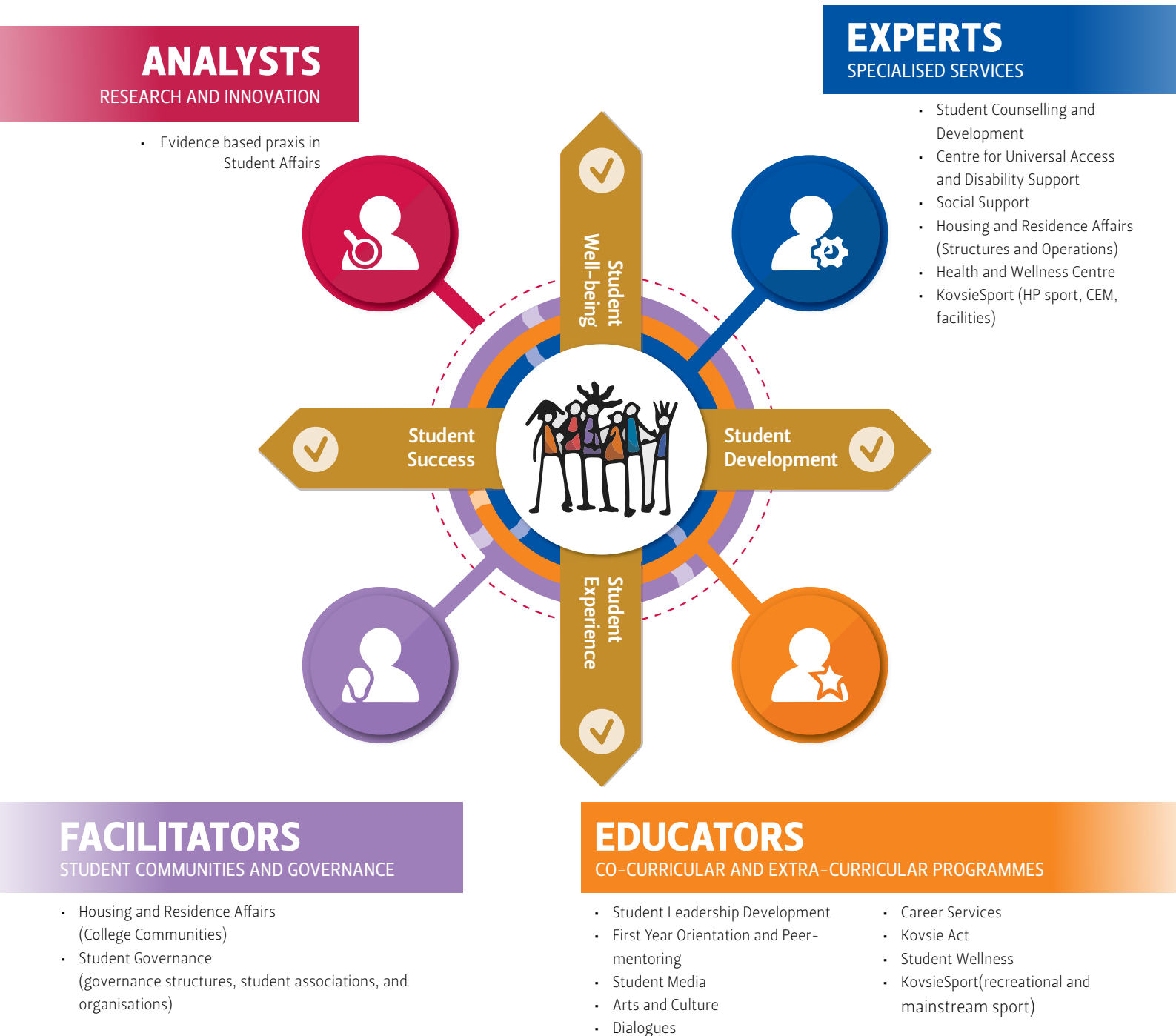


Figure 7: Integrated organisational structure of the DSA.



# OPERATIONALISING THE INTEGRATED ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE<sup>2</sup>

The DSA aims to create a flat organisational structure that enables self-organising teams to remain agile and innovative. The effective functioning of such an integrated organisational structure hinges on the operationalisation of functional spheres (i.e. circles) and cross-functional teams.

The DSA will create specific roles for the effective coordination of these functional spheres and cross-functional teams. It will appoint (from amongst existing heads of departments) a Circle Coordinator for each functional sphere (circle). Circle Coordinators will be responsible for coordinating the functional areas in their respective circles in ways that will foster Communities of Practice (see explanation below).

The Circle Coordinator for the Circle of Analysts will also provide strategic leadership to all cross-functional teams (i.e. C-teams). This leadership arrangement is crucial to uphold the connection between data-driven praxis and innovation as described above.

<sup>2</sup> Addendum A outlines the reporting lines (relating to HR and financial matters) for each of the departments listed under the respective functional spheres (circles).

## SENIOR LEADERSHIP GROUP

The Senior Leadership Group (SLG), under the leadership of the Executive Director: Student Affairs, will provide strategic leadership to the DSA. The SLG will comprise the following individuals:

- 1 Executive Director: Student Affairs.
- 2 All Senior Directors, Directors, Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors that are heads of departments in the DSA (see Addendum A).
- 3 All Circle and C-team Coordinators (if not included under point 2 above).

Figure 8 illustrates the leadership framework that will assist in operationalising the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.

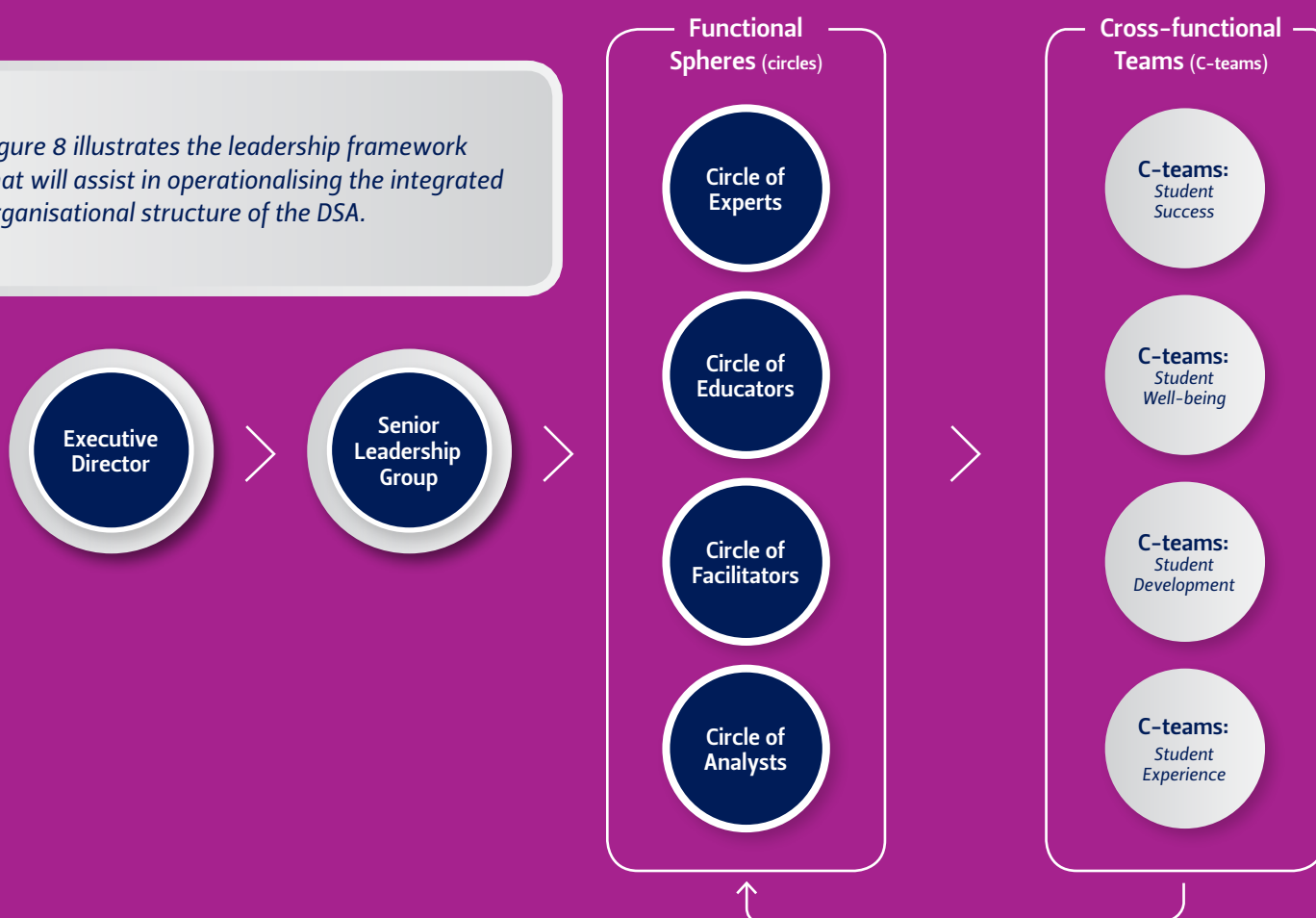


Figure 8: Leadership framework for the integrated organisational structure of the DSA.



## MANAGEMENT MODES

The functions and processes associated with the Circle of Experts, Circle of Educators and Circle of Facilitators necessitate a Distributed Management Mode. In a Distributed Management Mode, core operations are decentralised to campus units, which provides capacity close to the point of service delivery. However, the Circle of Analysts will function as a small central function (preferably from South Campus) that will provide services to all functional spheres and cross-functional teams on all three UFS campuses (illustrated in Figure 7 as the red circle circumventing the entire DSA organisational structure). The Circle of Analysts will therefore necessitate a Central Management Mode that will report directly to the Executive Director: Student Affairs.

Note: The integrated organisational structure of the DSA promotes self-organisation. Although the DSA gives direction regarding overarching management modes (as per the UFS three-campus model), the individual leadership function of each head of department/centre/unit is encouraged and upheld.

## COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

The DSA recognises the need for closer collaboration between individuals in functional areas who share a particular area of specialisation. This need for mutual support and more enriching engagements about a particular professional practice go beyond the mere operational aspects of individual departments, units and centres. To this end, the DSA will perceive functional spheres (circles) as specific Communities of Practice (CoP). It is important to note that the aim of establishing CoP is not to create a new hierarchical structure but rather to foster professional communities that will enable staff to share tips and best practices, exchange questions about practical challenges, and support one another in a collegial manner.

## STAFF WELLNESS – WHOLENESS

The DSA genuinely cares about the wellness of staff. It is, therefore, paramount that the new organisational culture and structure of the DSA prioritises staff wellness. A specific emphasis will thus be placed on making “wholeness” an integral part of the DSA organisational culture.

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In its most basic form, the DSA strategic process will be monitored and evaluated through a Participatory Action Research (PAR)<sup>3</sup> cycle. This recommendation is crucial to ensure an evidence-based approach to the implementation of the DSA Strategic Plan.

Figure 9 illustrates the four steps of a participatory action research cycle: plan, act, observe and reflect.

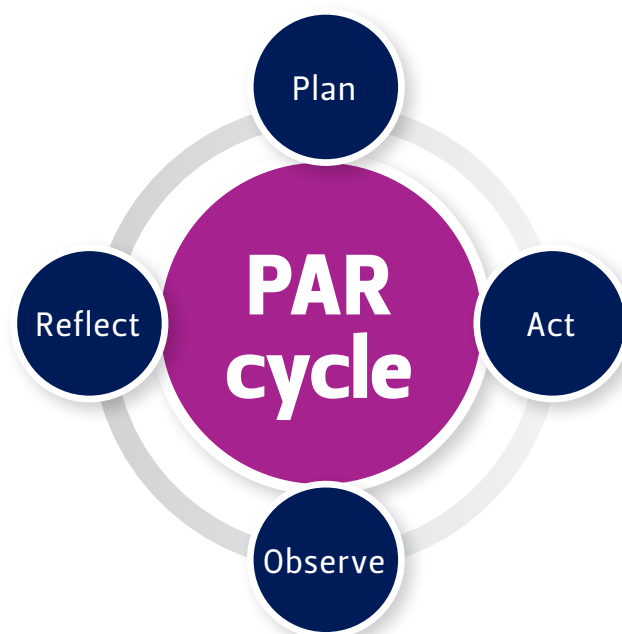


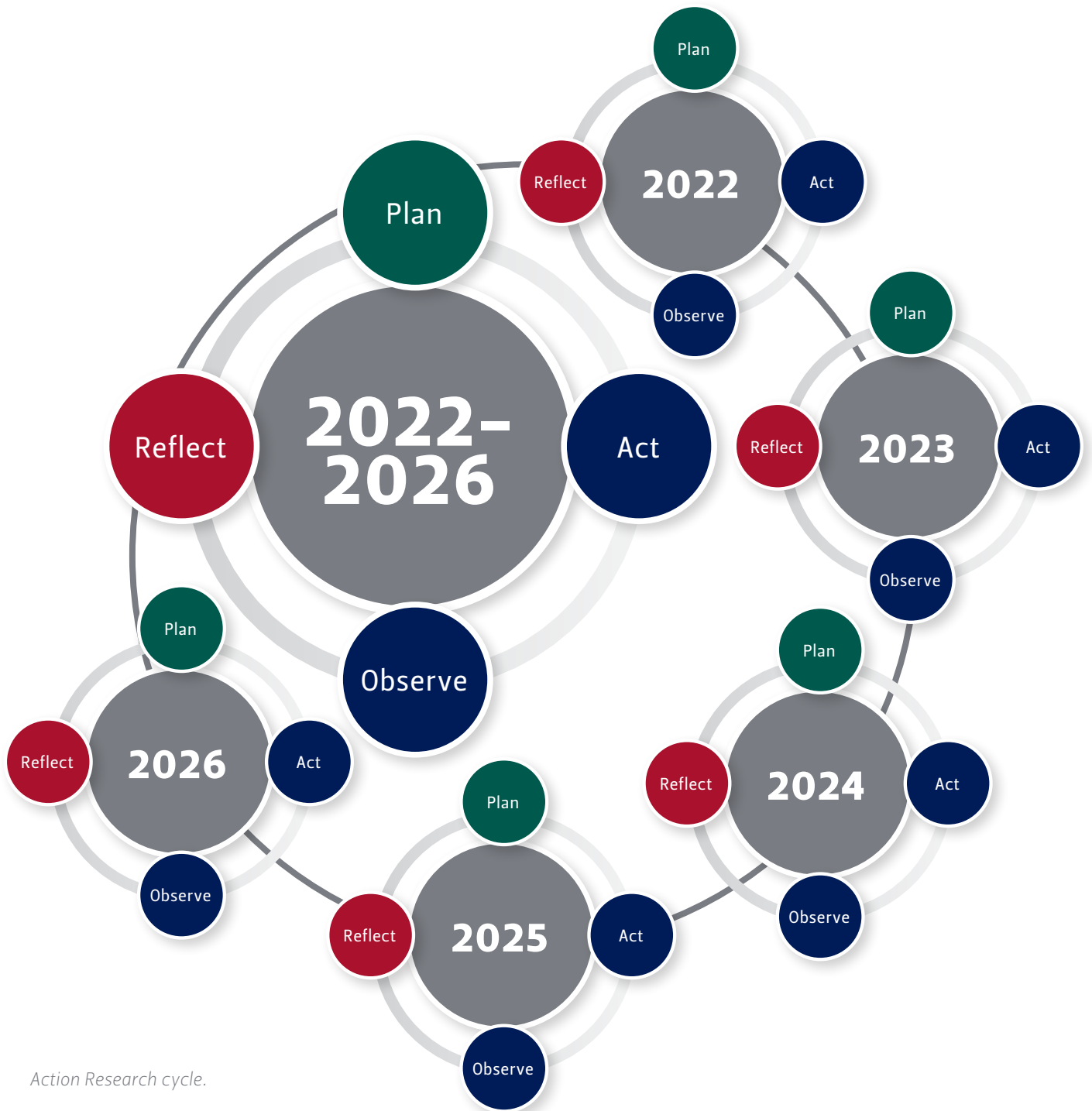
Figure 9: Basic process of the Participatory Action Research cycle.

The PAR cycle will be implemented on a macro level over five years, i.e. 2022–2026. This five-year macro period will be subdivided into annual cycles, each with its own planning, implementation, observation and reflection cycle. To put it differently, the macro-level implementation of the DSA Strategic Plan will comprise five annual cycles that collectively form an overarching five-year cycle. It is envisaged that each planning step will result in a particular version of the DSA Strategic Plan (illustrated by the green circles in Figure 10 below). This is important to indicate the agility and adaptability of the DSA to changes in the environment. Furthermore, it is envisaged that each reflection step will result in an annual report (indicated by the red circles in Figure 10 below). All yearly reports will culminate into a collective five-year report (that would also address the recommendations of the 2021 DSA external review report).

Figure 10 illustrates this macro-level implementation.

Figure 10: Macro-level implementation of the Participatory

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see McIntyre, A. 2008. *Participatory Action Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.



Action Research cycle.

## CONCLUSION

The DSA aligns its vision to that of the UFS – namely, to be a student-centred university. This student-centred vision will find practical expression in four key strategic areas: Student Success, Student Well-being, Student Development and Student Experience. The DSA will create a specific kind of organisational culture and structure that will enable the effective implementation of its student-centred vision. The formation of the DSA organisational culture and structure will be the fifth key strategic area.

The DSA organisational culture is underpinned by two systems: cross-functional teams and functional spheres.

*Cross-functional teams* (C-teams) create an integrated system that enables DSA staff from different functional areas and campuses to work together on strategic projects associated with one of the following key strategic areas: Student Success, Student Well-being, Student Development and Student Experience. C-teams are predominantly interested in advancing the strategic objectives of the DSA and the UFS in an integrated way.

*Functional spheres* group different functional areas (i.e. existing departments, centres, offices, programmes) into one of the following four spheres: Circle of Experts, Circle of Educators, Circle of Facilitators and Circle of Analysts. The functions and processes associated with these functional spheres primarily require a distributed management mode, except for the Circle of Analysts, which necessitates a central management mode.

The DSA wishes to foster mutual support and collegiality beyond the operational aspects of departments, units and centres. To this end, functional spheres will form *Communities of Practice* that create opportunities for individual staff and departments to establish closer reciprocity around a specific area of specialisation.

The DSA cares deeply about staff wellness. The notion of *wholeness* will therefore be an integral part of the DSA organisational culture.

It is believed that the DSA strategic direction, together with its associated organisational culture and structure, will enhance the DSA's impact and visibility, both internally and outside of the UFS.

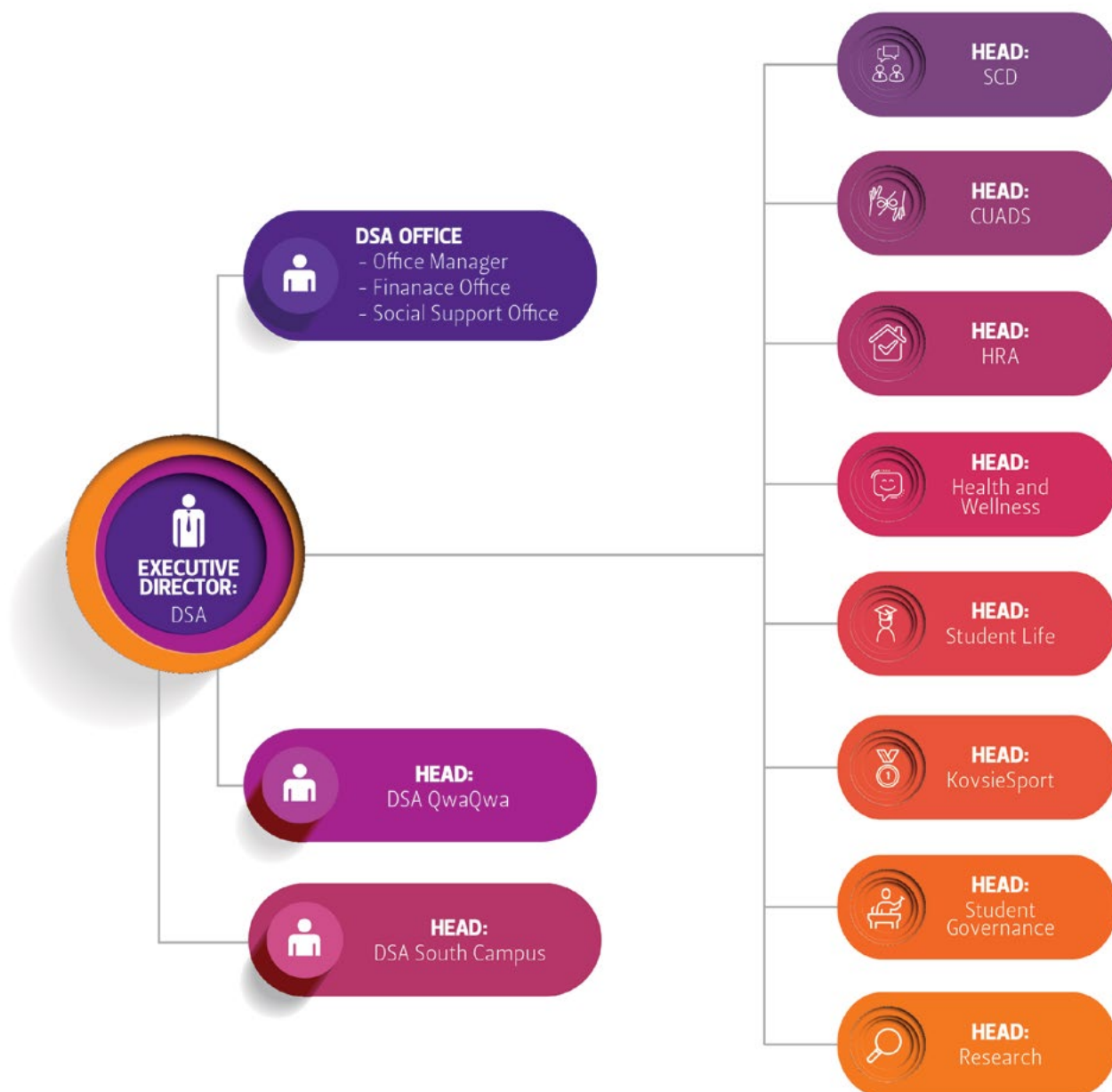
(Last updated 30 November 2021)





## ADDENDUM A

REPORTING LINES WITH REGARDS TO HR MATTERS AND FINANCIAL APPROVALS





**HEAD:**  
SCD



**Bloemfontein  
Campus**

- 5 Senior Counselling Psychologists
- 4 Junior Counselling Psychologists
- 2 Office Managers
- 1 Cleaner
- 5 Intern psychologists  
(on rotation from UNIBS)

**QwaQwa  
Campus**

- 1 Senior Clinical Psychologist  
(when offer is accepted)
- 1 Junior Counselling Psychologist
- 1 Registered Counsellor

**South  
Campus**

- 1 Junior Psychologist



**HEAD:**  
CUADS



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

**HEAD OF DEPARTMENT  
Deputy Director: CUADS**

**Senior Officer:**  
Administrative manager  
Communication Access Programme  
Disability Support Programme

**Senior Assistant Officer to HOD:**  
Administrative Assistant  
Accessible Transport Programme

**1 x Ad Hoc Driver  
1 x Ad Hoc Student Assistant**

**Assistant Officer (QwaQwa Campus):**  
CUADS Coordinator

**Assistant Officer (South Campus):**  
CUADS Coordinator

**Officer:**

Accessible Study  
Material Production:  
Braille Production  
  
Student Academic  
Support Programme:  
Computer training  
  
Disability Support  
Programme

**Officer:**

Accessible Study  
Material Production:  
Data-capturing & Editing  
  
Disability Support  
Programme

**Officer:**

Accessible Study  
Material Production:  
Data-capturing & Editing  
  
Disability Support  
Programme

**Officer:**

Alternative Assessment  
Programme  
  
Disability Support  
Programme

**Officer:**

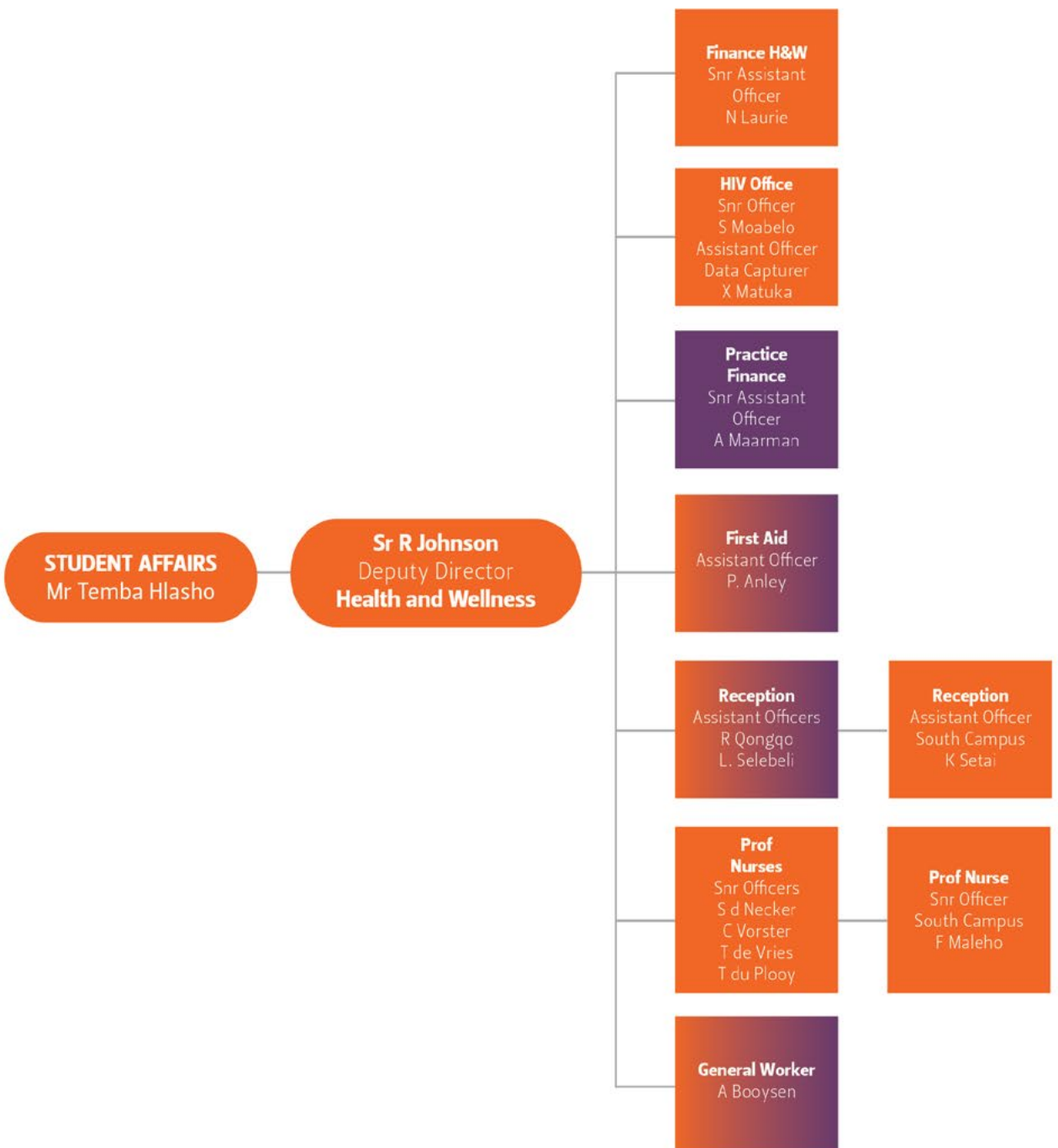
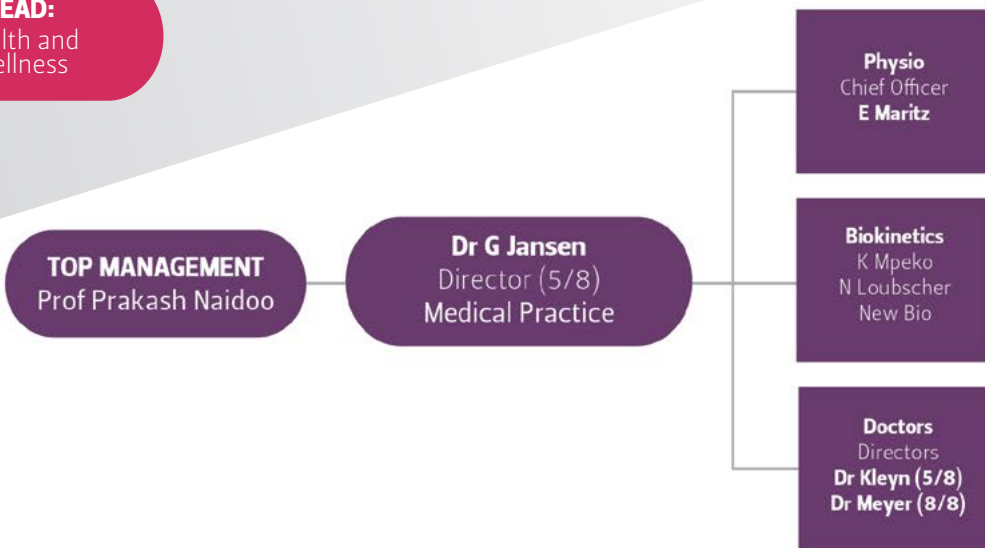
Liason, Awareness &  
Advocacy Programme  
  
Disability Support  
Programme  
  
Student Academic  
Support Programme:  
Tutor coordination

**1 x Assistant Officer  
2 x Contract Assistant Officers  
10 x Ad Hoc Editors**

**1 x Ad hoc  
Student Assistant**



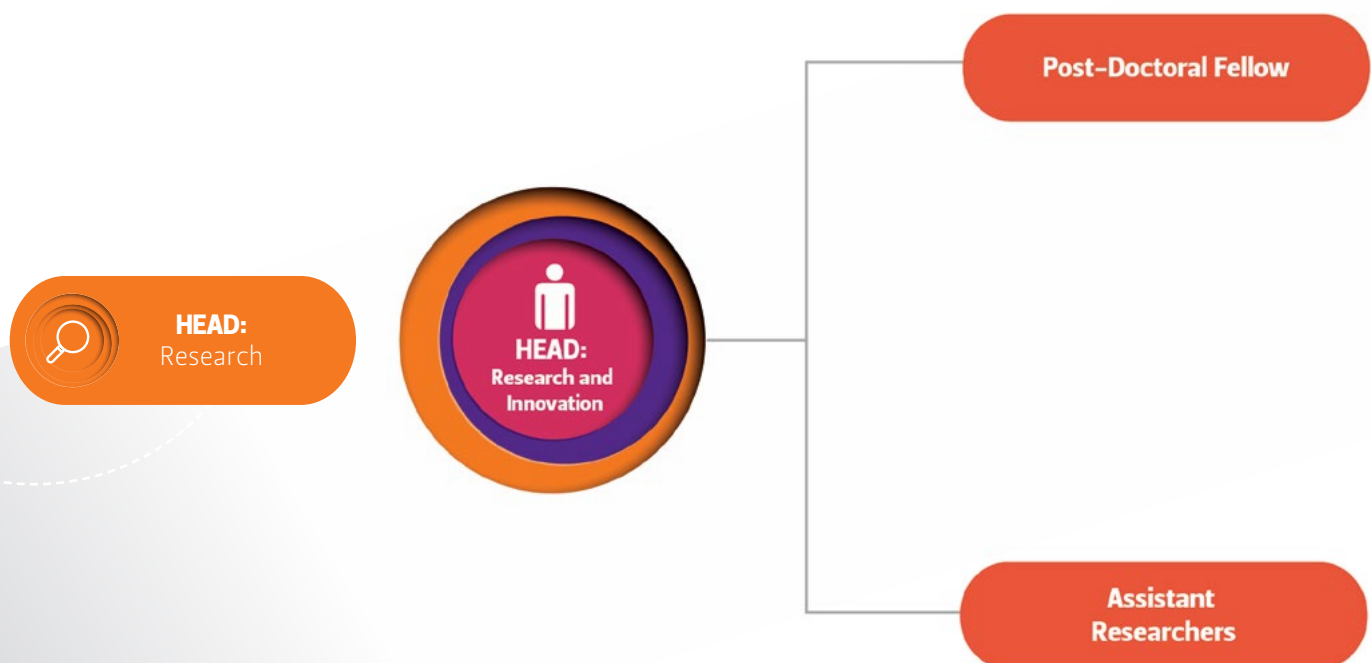
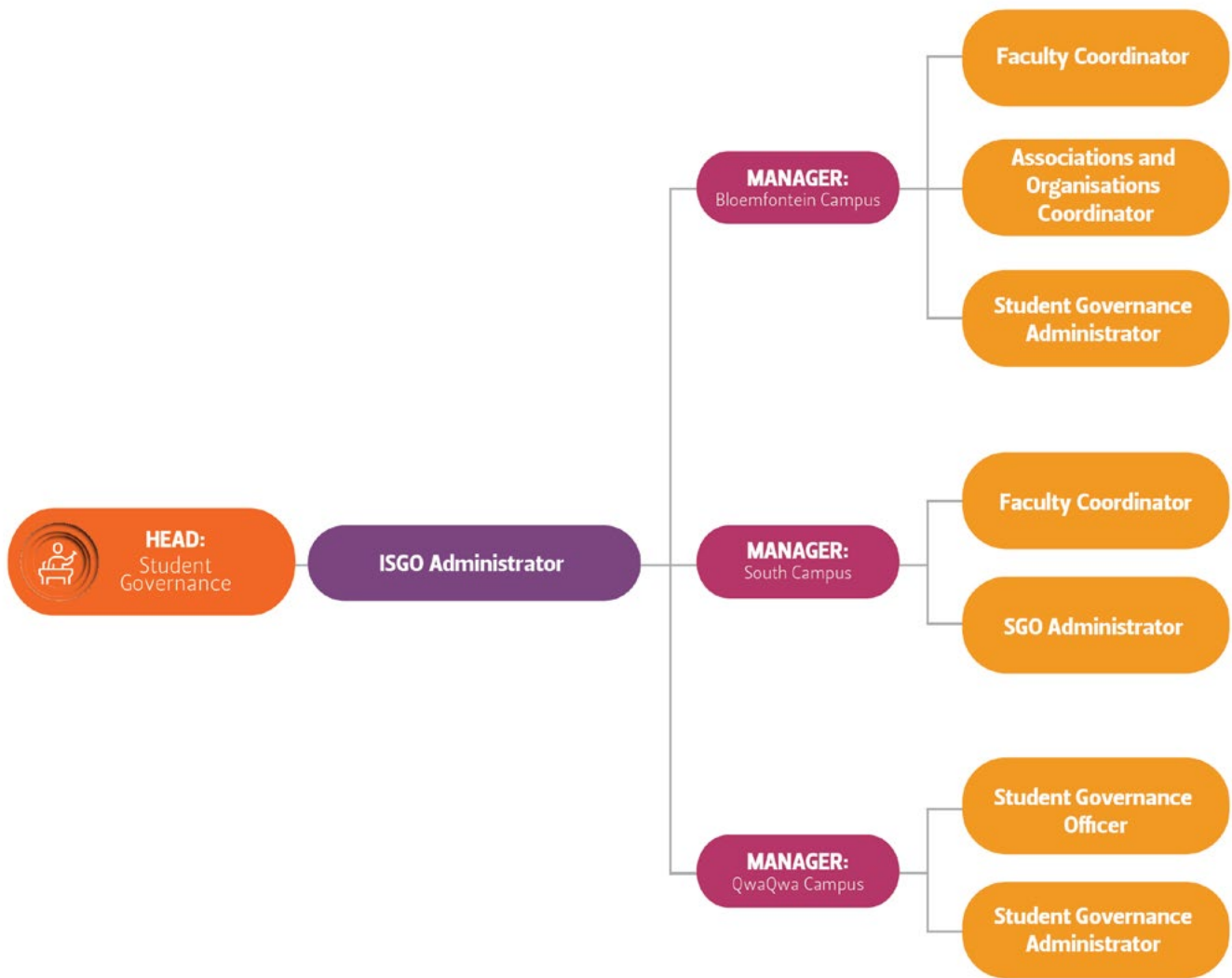














DSA Qwaqwa Campus



Assistant Officer



Director

**Student Governance**

- Senior Officer  
- Assistant Officer  
- SRC Administrator

**CUADS**

- Assistant Officer

**Sports Center**

- Senior Officer  
- 2 Assistant Officers  
- 2 Maintenance personnel

**Student Life and  
Career Services**

- Senior Officer

**Social Worker services**

- Senior Officer  
- Senior Assistant Officer

**Health Center**

- Chief Officer  
- 3 Professional Nurses  
- Enrolled Nurse  
- Assistant Officer

**Student Counselling and  
Development**

- Senior Psychologist  
- Junior Psychologist  
- Assistant Officer





# NOTES









*Inspiring excellence, transforming lives  
through quality, impact, and care.*

UNIVERSITY OF THE  
FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE  
VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA  
FREISTATA



**UFS**  
STUDENT AFFAIRS  
STUDENTESAKE  
DITABA TSA BATHUTI