

SOCIAL SUPPORT PROTOCOL

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

This Social Support Protocol must be read together with the policies, protocols, guidelines, rules and regulations of the University of the Free State (the “UFS”), as amended, substituted or varied from time to time.

1. INTRODUCTION

The UFS recognises that a campus environment which is conducive to student success and well-being extends beyond the classroom. ‘Student well-being’ may be affected by the immediate and broader environment in which students function, as well as –

- a) social, cultural, economic and historic influences;
- b) the availability of support;
- c) lifestyle, attitudes and social inclusion; and
- d) people, processes and institutional systems in the environment.

2. DEFINITIONS

In order to facilitate ease of reference and reading of this Social Support Protocol, unless the context otherwise requires, the following capitalised terms shall have the meanings assigned to them below and cognate expressions shall have corresponding meanings:

“ Application Form ”	has the meaning ascribed thereto in paragraph 7.4.2 (<i>Application Procedure</i>);
“ Social Support ”	has the meaning ascribed thereto in paragraph 6.1 (<i>Scope and categories of Social Support</i>);
“ Social Support Protocol ”	means this protocol for social support as set out in this document;
“ Social Support Office ”	means the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs at the UFS;
“ Student(s) ”	means an undergraduate or post-graduate student registered full time or part time at the UFS for a study programme or qualification; and
“ UFS ”	the University of the Free State, including all employees, contractors and agents of the UFS.

3. PURPOSE AND AIM

This Social Support Protocol aims to –

- 3.1. provide guidance to Students and the broader UFS community regarding the available social support services provided by the Social Support Office and other existing support structures and avenues available at the UFS;
- 3.2. establish an institutional climate that encourages conditions which support Students to achieve academic success;
- 3.3. create an uplifting experience to Students, within a climate that is supportive of different learning, teaching and living environments; and
- 3.4. create a framework within which reasonable Social Support is provided to Students, who have exhausted all existing Social Support structures available to the Student as listed below in paragraph 9 (Confirmation of existing social support structures at the UFS) below and within the allocated budget and reasonable resources of the UFS as contemplated in this Social Support Protocol.

4. APPLICATION

- 4.1. This Social Support Protocol will only apply to Students who have exhausted all other existing Social Support structures as listed in paragraph 9 (*Confirmation of existing social support structures at the UFS*) below and provided that the existing Social Support structures was insufficient or not equipped to address the needs or problem of the Student effectively.
- 4.2. This Social Support Protocol must be read together with the policies, rules and regulations of the UFS, as amended, substituted or varied from time to time.

5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 5.1.1. All reasonable steps will be taken to create an uplifting Student experience by means of the reasonable provision of Social Support to Students as contemplated in this Social Support Protocol, within the limited resources and financial constraints of the UFS.
- 5.1.2. When implementing this Social Support Protocol the health and well-being of Students will be considered of paramount importance, subject to the terms and conditions set out herein .
- 5.1.3. The UFS will encourage the use of language in a manner that is affirming and empowering and enables Students to make informed decisions regarding academic, social support and financial matters.

- 5.1.4. The UFS will encourage the use of written and verbal language in academic, social and student life correspondence that is of a non-judgmental nature and does not unfairly discriminate.
- 5.2. The UFS recognises and upholds that Students may not be unfairly discriminated against and advocates for the provision of reasonable Social Support in a manner which is non-judgmental and in accordance with –
- 5.2.1. the Anti-Discrimination, Promotion of Equality and Social Justice Policy and Procedures, which states in paragraph 1.4 as follows:
- “...the UFS undertakes to protect all students and staff from direct and indirect unfair discrimination, whether such discrimination is based on listed, unlisted analogous or arbitrary grounds of Unfair Discrimination...”*
- 5.2.2. the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (“**PEPUDA**”).
- 5.3. During implementation of this Policy, staff members of the UFS are advised to -
- 5.3.1. be cognisant of the ethical consideration related to confidentiality;
- 5.3.2. respect a Student’s right to confidentiality; and
- 5.3.3. not disclose any information revealed to them by a Student in confidence in terms of this Social Support Protocol without the prior consent of the Student, except in cases of emergency or where the staff member is of the opinion that the Student or a third party’s life or health is imminent danger.

6. SCOPE AND CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

- 6.1. In the context of this Social Support Protocol, social support is understood as the institutional arrangements (including services, activities and campus environment) that the UFS provides to help Students cope with psycho-social and economic aspects of their lives (“Social Support”).
- 6.2. The Social Support Protocol thus directly addresses issues related to:
- 6.2.1. **Social Work services**
- These services aim to promote, restore, maintain and enhance Student well-being and academic success. This is achieved by planning and implementing appropriate Social Support intervention strategies and techniques, which may be targeted to address any of the following -
- 6.2.1.1. family-related matters (e.g. divorce, death, etc.);
- 6.2.1.2. sexual and gender-based violence interventions and referrals;

- 6.2.1.3. food support (referrals to the foodbank and NSH);
- 6.2.1.4. emergency Social Support needs assessment (e.g. accidents, evictions, etc.);
- 6.2.1.5. Financial Support, read with paragraph 7 (*Financial Support*) below; and
- 6.2.1.6. Critical support services, read with paragraph 6.2.3 below.

7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

7.1. General

The Social Support Office has the authority to provide limited financial support to Students, subject to the terms and conditions contained in this Social Support Protocol and provided that –

- 7.1.1. the applicant is a registered Student and that he/she comply with the funding criteria set out in paragraph 7.3 below;
- 7.1.2. the Student complete the application in the manner set out in paragraph 7.4 below;
- 7.1.3. the request fall within the ambit of this Social Support Protocol and that he/she has exhausted all other existing Social Support structures as listed in paragraph 9 (*Confirmation of existing social support structures at the UFS*) below; and
- 7.1.4. it falls within the allocated budget of the Social Support Office and limitations set out in paragraph 7.5 below.

7.2. Critical Support Services

Critical support services aim to provide an uplifting, agile service to Students in emergency cases that may include any of the following, without limitation:

- 7.2.1.1. Death of a Student on campus.
- 7.2.1.2. Student suicides.
- 7.2.1.3. Car accidents involving Students.
- 7.2.1.4. Missing Students.
- 7.2.1.5. Cases of gender-based violence against Students.
- 7.2.1.6. Other emergency cases relating to Students.

7.3. Types of Financial Support

The Social Support Office has the authority to provide the following different types of financial support to Students, subject to the terms and conditions set out in this Social Support Protocol:

7.3.1. *Co-curricular sponsorships*

A Student can apply for a co-curricular sponsorship to attend -

- 7.3.1.1. recognised academic conferences and seminars;
- 7.3.1.2. leadership-development conferences and seminars; and
- 7.3.1.3. community-engagement programmes.

7.3.2. *Social well-being financial assistance*

A Student can apply for financial assistance relating to financial well-being, which may include (without limitation):

- 7.3.2.1. Bereavement support (memorial services and Student transportation).
- 7.3.2.2. Hardship medications.

7.4. Funding Criteria

- 7.4.1. For a Student to be eligible for financial support as contemplated in this paragraph 7.3, the individual concerned must be registered as a fulltime or part time Student at the UFS for the current academic year.
- 7.4.2. In the case of an organisation and/or association, the organisation and/or association concerned must be registered with the Student Representative Council (“**SRC**”) at the time of applying for the financial support as contemplated herein.

7.5. Application Procedure

- 7.5.1. Students who are in need of financial support as contemplated in this Social Support Protocol may apply for limited and reasonable financial assistance as contemplated herein, by following the procedure as set out in this paragraph 7.4.
- 7.5.2. To start the application process, a Student must complete a Social Support Financial Assistance application form (“**Application Form**”). The aforementioned Application Form may be obtained upon request from MothibiMJ@ufs.ac.za or at the Social Support Office.

- 7.5.3. Once the Student has completed the Application Form, the Social Support Office will receive and evaluate the application.
- 7.5.4. The Student's application will be assessed according to the funding criteria (set out in paragraph 7.3 above). Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is in the sole discretion of the Social Support Office to determine –
- 7.5.4.1. whether a Student's application is successful or not; and
- 7.5.4.2. how much (if any) to allocate to a Student for the purposes as contemplated herein.
- 7.5.5. The Student will be informed in writing of the outcome of his/her application within a reasonable period.
- 7.5.6. Should the application be approved by the Social Support Office, the approved funds will be disbursed to the Student or the relevant service provider within approximately 5 (FIVE) to 10 (TEN) working days following the decision, subject to the funding criteria as set out in paragraph 7.3 and the limitations of funding in paragraph 7.5 below.

7.6. **Limitations**

The following limitations will apply to co-curricular sponsorships as contemplated in paragraph 7.2.1 above:

- 7.6.1. The Student should raise at least 40% (FORTY PERCENT) of the total cost of the expenses before his/her request can be considered by the Social Support Office.
- 7.6.2. The requested amount may not exceed R15,000.00 (FIFTEEN THOUSAND RAND) per annum. This amount will increase annually in accordance with the UFS's general annual budget increase.
- 7.6.3. The R15,000.00 (FIFTEEN THOUSAND RAND) maximum limit may be sponsored once off per individual and/or group per year (in case of organisation and/or association) or be reached in tranches, should the individual Student or group financial assistance for multiple occasions or activities.
- 7.6.4. Other limitation may be applicable from time to time and will be guided by the general rules and/or relevant existing policies of the UFS.

8. **PROVISION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT BY EXISTING SERVICE PROVIDERS**

- 8.1. By presenting development workshops which will be advertised to all students, the UFS aims to equip them with the soft skills necessary for both the academic and post-academic working environment.

- 8.2. By providing social services to Students, the UFS aims to promote, restore, maintain and enhance the well-being of Students, both socially and academically. The services further aim to prevent and alleviate Student distress and to enable Students to use resources effectively to create an academic climate that facilitates learning.

9. CONFIRMATION OF EXISTING SOCIAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES AT THE UFS

The existing Social Support structures as listed below are the first available options which a Student must exhaust. It is only in the event that a Student has exhausted all the existing Social Support structures that he/she will be eligible for reasonable assistance and accommodation from the Social Support Office.

9.1. UFS Student Counselling and Development Department

The Student counselling and Development Department is responsible for -

- 9.1.1. supporting Students in the resolution of individual challenges that may impede the fulfilment of their potential;
- 9.1.2. assisting Students with the creation of an environment that is conducive for the development and achievement of individual, academic and career goals;
- 9.1.3. offering individual, confidential counselling relating to various psychological, emotional and developmental issues;
- 9.1.4. creating and presenting a variety of developmental workshops which may assist Students or which promote Student wellbeing;
- 9.1.5. supporting academic development of Students in the form of study-skills training and time- management; and
- 9.1.6. offering career counselling to Students, which may comprise of psychometric evaluations and assistance with the decision-making process.

9.2. Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support

- 9.2.1. The Centre for Universal Access and Disability Support (“**CUADS**”) aims to ensure that the UFS increasingly becomes a universally accessible higher-education institution, which embraces and is welcoming to all Students, including Students with disabilities.
- 9.2.2. CUADS provides a support service for the following categories of Students:
- 9.2.2.1. Students with disabilities.
- 9.2.2.2. Students with specific learning difficulties.

- 9.2.2.3. Students with impaired mobility.
- 9.2.2.4. Visually-impaired Students.
- 9.2.2.5. Hearing-impaired Students.
- 9.2.2.6. Students with various psycho-social issues.
- 9.2.2.7. Students with chronic conditions or temporary impairments.
- 9.2.3. Such support may include any of the following (as applicable):
 - 9.2.3.1. Assisting with access to accessible study material and textbooks according to the format of choice, which includes braille, audio (material read on a digital recorder), enlarged material and E-text.
 - 9.2.3.2. Providing amanuensis during tests/exams.
 - 9.2.3.3. Assisting in the application for extra time during tests/exams according to specific impairments, including applying for an accessible test/exam venue.
 - 9.2.3.4. Seeking tutors for Students in cooperation with the A-step programme on campus, for individual tutor sessions for specific inaccessible module content.

9.3. **Academic Support**

9.3.1. **Academic advising -Centre for Teaching and Learning**

- 9.3.1.1. Academic advising is a high-impact practice directed at connecting, empowering and supporting Students to achieve academic success. This is achieved by attempting to align a Student's personal, academic and career aspirations.
- 9.3.1.2. The following services are available for all registered Students and groups only.
 - 9.3.1.2.1. Academic pathway planning (Educational planning -aligning your dream job with your degree).
 - 9.3.1.2.2. Credit count check.
 - 9.3.1.2.3. Learning /Study strategies.
 - 9.3.1.2.4. Time management.
 - 9.3.1.2.5. Revision Planning.

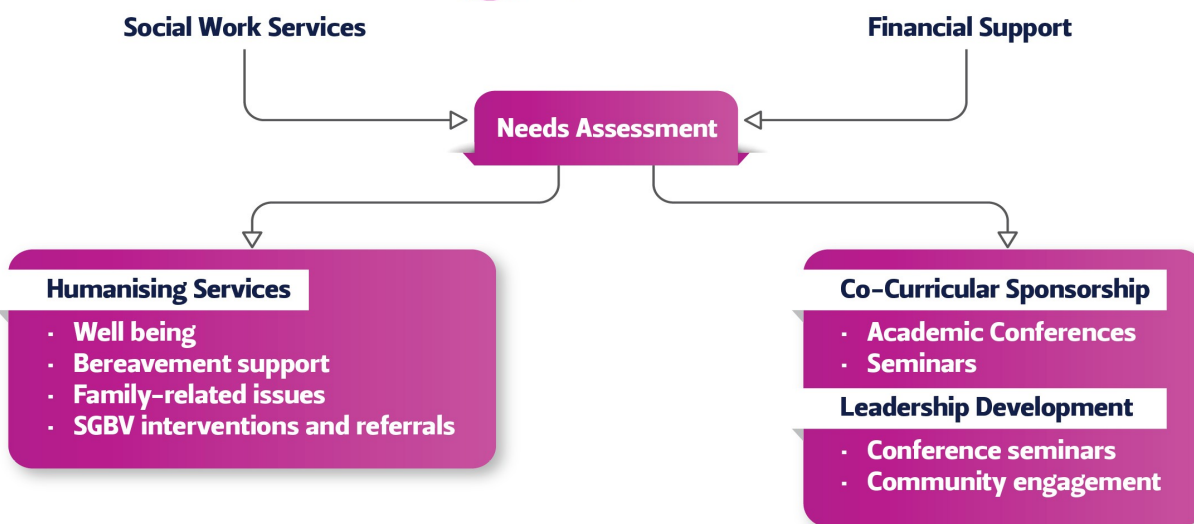
- 9.3.1.2.6. Exam preparations.
- 9.3.1.2.7. UFS Transition /Navigation.
- 9.3.1.2.8. Goal setting.

10. POLICY RECORD

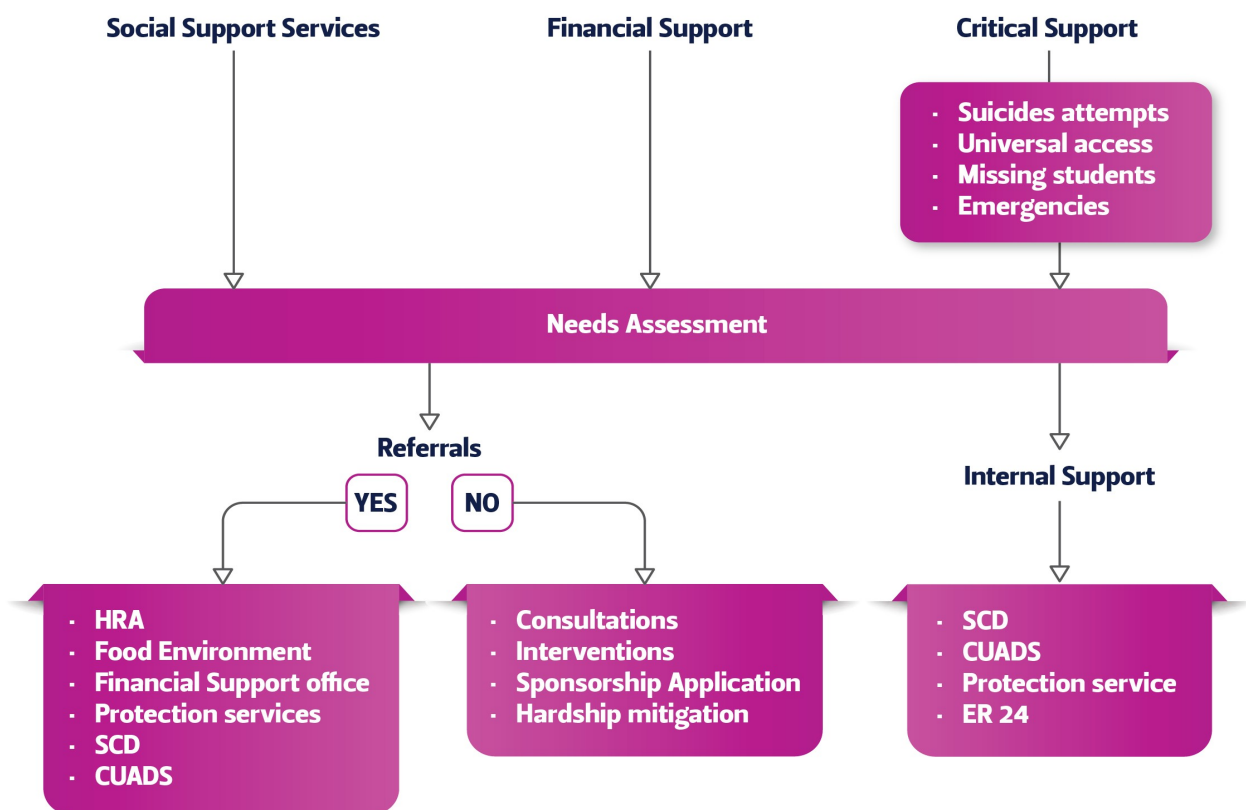
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**SOCIAL
SUPPORT
OFFICE**



SUPPORT





EXISTING POLICIES AND REGULATIONS OF RELEVANCE TO THE SOCIAL SUPPORT PROTOCOL
List to be supplemented during the policy draft consultation process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anti-Discrimination, Promotion of Equality and Social Justice Policy and Procedures (2018)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sexual Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Policy (2018)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Universal Access/Disability Policy (currently under development through the ITP processes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Student Code of Conduct (currently under development)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UFS Student Mental Health Policy (2019)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UFS Student Pregnancy Policy (2019)

END.