



**UFS Brand Narrative Toolkit**  
**Centre for Graduate Support**







# Application of the brand narrative: Centre for Graduate Support

Align your message with the brand narrative and include the following elements:

## A. Craft your message and tell your story

### Step 1:

Find your core message, your sub-messages, and your stories

### Step 2:

Compile a consistent, clear, and relevant message, using the message map

### Step 3:

Use the correct tone of voice

### Step 4:

Find proof points of the brand narrative

### Step 5:

Be clear about who you're talking to – define your audience

## B. The best visuals to grab your audience's attention ... and keep it

### Step 1:

Decide on the best visual style

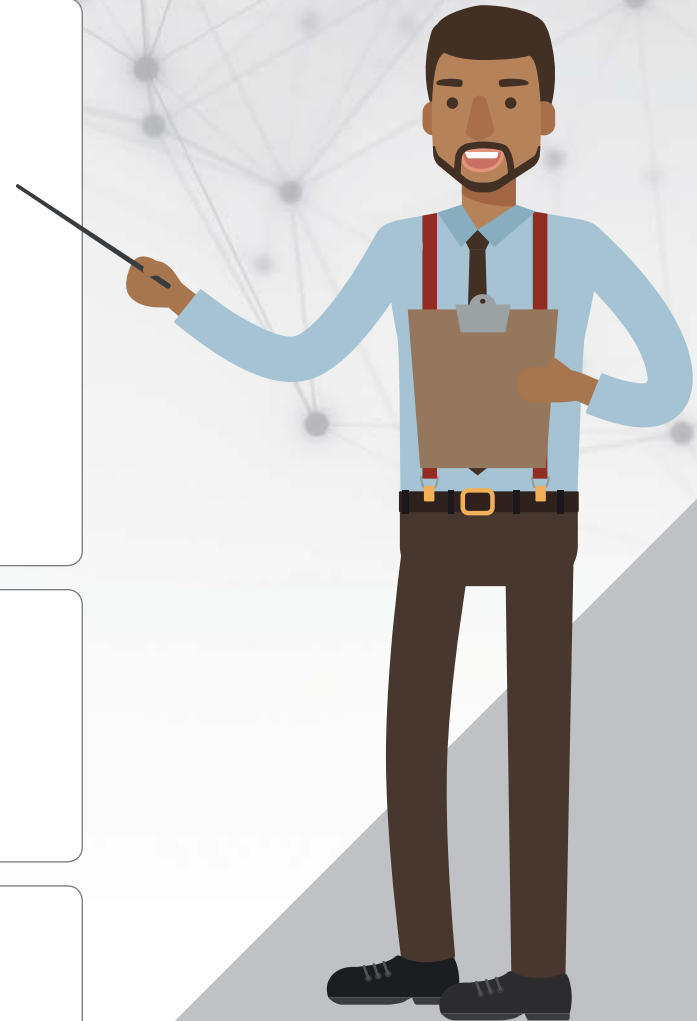
### Step 2:

See designs, visuals, and mood board for inspiration

## C. Making it real

### Step 1:

Apply the brand narrative



# A. Craft your message and tell your story

## Step 1

### Find your core message, your sub-messages, and your stories

The **core message** – this is the leading message that will build the full brand narrative or story for this project/plan/strategy. It is the main message, i.e., an **elevator pitch**, a one-liner that sums up what is required and why this is important.

#### Abridged version (the elevator pitch)

The University of the Free State (UFS) creates opportunities and growth through leading, learning and teaching, focused research, and impactful engagement with society. Situated in the heart of South Africa, our character of caring and diversity translates into an outstanding university experience.

**Sub-messages** – these are supporting messages (three to five) that will unpack the key concepts in the main message with more details.



Words	Quality	Care	Impact	Leading success rate	Highly employable graduates
Key messages	An outstanding university experience	Invested in Ubuntu	Research with industry and social impact	Growth through leading, learning, and teaching	Global best practices in research, theory, and teaching
Sub-messages	Real excellence in education	Invested in success and human happiness	We identify, realise, and unleash potential	National, institutional, and individual achievements	Graduates, thinkers, problem-solvers, and leaders

**Stories** – for each of the messages (core and sub-messages), list two or three stories that could be told to support the message (qualitative in nature).

- A story told about the quality of a UFS education
- A story told about the impact that we make
- A story told about our caring nature

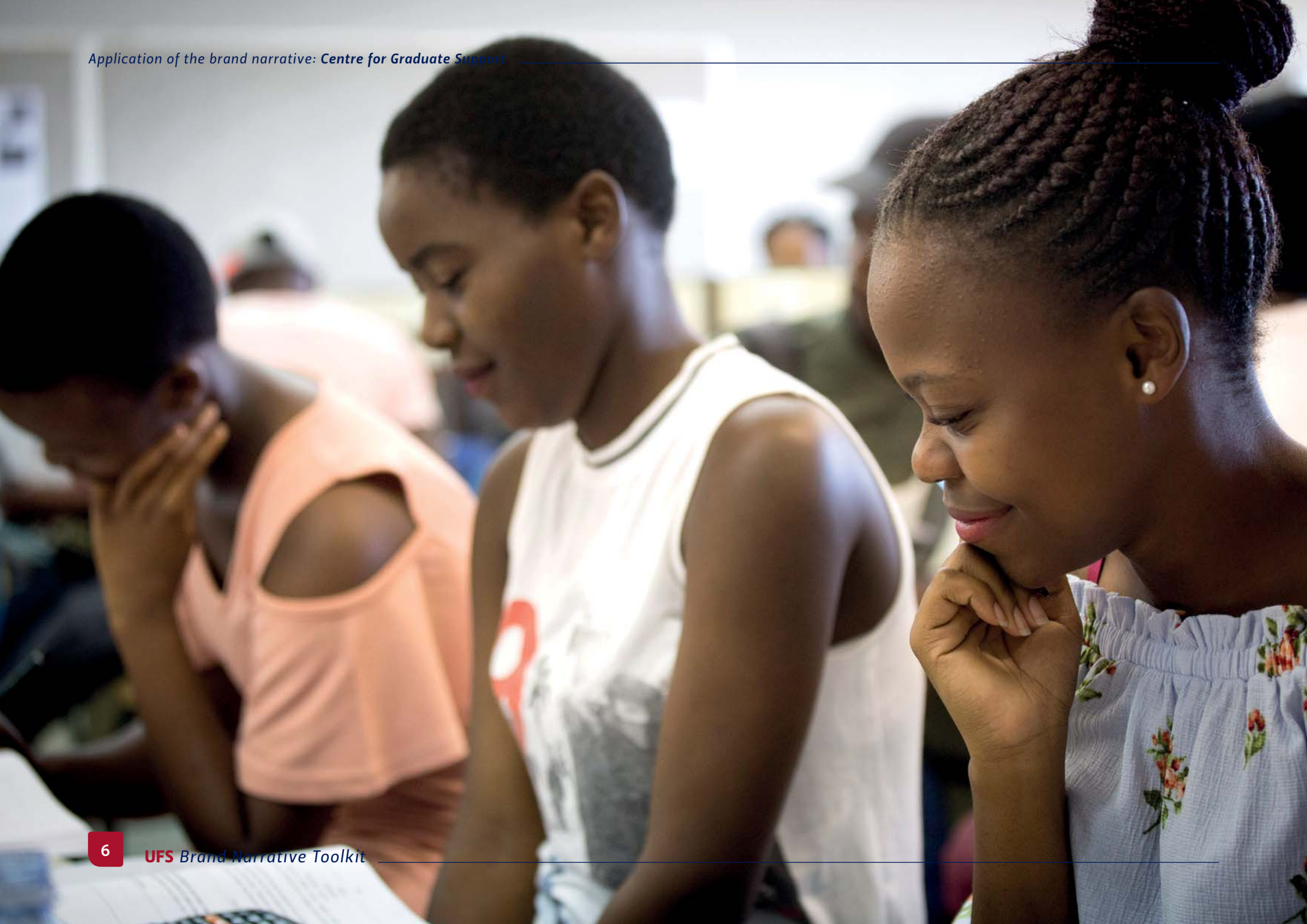
Each story should contain words from the long brand narrative and then explanations taken from the proof points.



Touch points from the brand narrative	Key messages	Supporting the key message
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creates opportunities.</li> <li>• Growth through leading, learning, and teaching.</li> <li>• Growth through focused research.</li> <li>• Growth through impactful engagement with society.</li> <li>• Research with real-world application.</li> <li>• Culture that promotes equity, Ubuntu, and accountability.</li> <li>• Character of caring and diversity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality. Impact. Care.</li> <li>• Known for some of the highest success rates in the country.</li> <li>• National, institutional, and individual achievements.</li> <li>• Known to identify, realise, and unleash potential.</li> <li>• Invested in success and human happiness.</li> <li>• Known for global best practices in research, theory, teaching, and application.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Visuals</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Real-life images of people in a work context vs people in a classroom/study context.</li> </ul> <p><b>Stories</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Testimonials from current and former postgraduate students.</li> <li>• If possible, include a story with a timeline of the Postgraduate Office and how it has grown.</li> </ul>





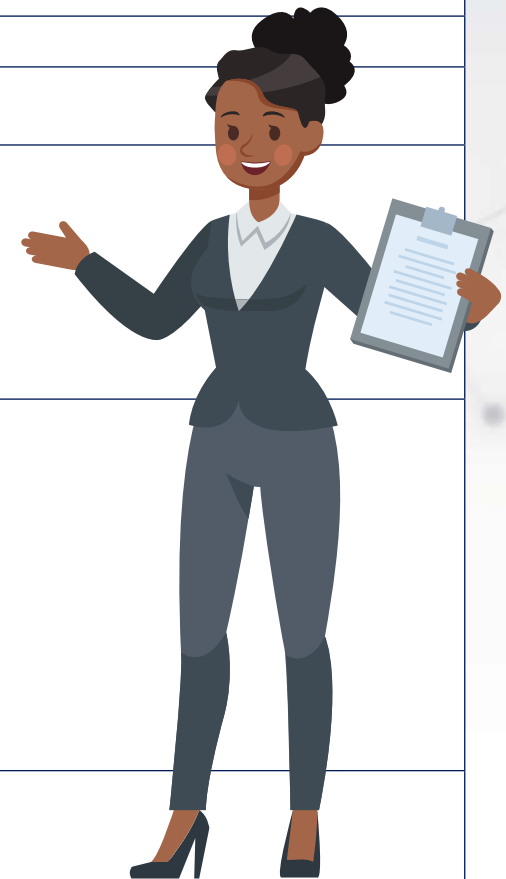


## Step 2

### Message map

To help the UFS to deliver consistent messaging, a message map is provided.  
Consistent, clear, and relevant messaging is key to authenticity and builds brand trust.

<b>Our brand promise</b>	The University of the Free State (UFS) creates opportunities and growth through leading, learning and teaching, focused research, and impactful engagement with society. Situated in the heart of South Africa, our character of caring and diversity translates into an outstanding university experience.
<b>Our purpose</b>	Quality. Impact. Care.
<b>Vision (dream)</b>	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.
<b>Mission (how do we achieve this)</b>	<p>The university will pursue this vision through its goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve student success and well-being.</li> <li>• Renew and transform the curriculum.</li> <li>• Increase UFS contribution to local, regional, and global knowledge.</li> <li>• Support development and social justice through engaged scholarship.</li> <li>• Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of governance and support systems.</li> <li>• Achieve financial sustainability.</li> <li>• Advance an institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS.</li> </ul>
<b>Values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Caring.</li> <li>• Diverse.</li> <li>• Excellent.</li> <li>• Human.</li> <li>• Impactful.</li> <li>• Opportunity-driven.</li> <li>• Optimistic.</li> <li>• Known to realise potential.</li> <li>• Proactive.</li> <li>• High-quality.</li> <li>• Success-centric.</li> <li>• Knowledge-driven.</li> </ul>
<b>Elevator pitch (our reason for being)</b>	The University of the Free State (UFS) creates opportunities and growth through leading, learning and teaching, focused research, and impactful engagement with society. Situated in the heart of South Africa, our character of caring and diversity translates into an outstanding university experience.









## Step 3

### Tone of voice

Explaining the difference between the brand narrative and the tone of voice:

The difference	
<b>The brand narrative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A story</li> <li>• The story being told (noun)</li> <li>• Story-telling process</li> </ul>
<b>Tone of voice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personality of the storyteller</li> <li>• How we speak</li> <li>• How we sound on all channels (social media, packaging, visual, etc.)</li> </ul>
<b>Pointers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good way to tell if there is distinctive tone of voice is to consider whether your audience would be able to recognise your brand based on just your content, even if your logo didn't appear alongside it.</li> <li>• Or, whether two pieces of content on two different channels sound like they are coming from the same organisation.</li> </ul>

### Quality

We come across as:	What does 'high-quality' mean in practice?	How do you show QUALITY in writing?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledgeable</li> <li>• Insightful</li> <li>• Wise</li> <li>• Committed</li> <li>• Relentless</li> <li>• Uncompromising</li> <li>• Pioneering</li> </ul>	<p>The UFS is known to offer superior benefits to all individuals, yielding some of the highest success rates in the country and producing highly employable graduates who have benefited from an outstanding university experience.</p> <p>Our research has industry and social impact, as well as profound real-world application. We work hard to remain on top of the leading – often shifting – global benchmarks of tertiary education and we are proud of our remarkable achievements: global, national, institutional, and individual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accuracy</li> <li>• Believability</li> <li>• Clean, clear text</li> <li>• Attention to detail</li> <li>• Writing best practices</li> <li>• Value</li> <li>• Enlightenment/sharing</li> <li>• Education</li> </ul>







## Impact

We come across as:	What does 'impactful' mean in practice?	How do you show IMPACT in writing?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Powerful</li> <li>• Successful</li> <li>• Motivated</li> <li>• Meaningful</li> <li>• Invested</li> <li>• Effective</li> <li>• Proactive</li> <li>• Dynamic</li> </ul>	<p>The UFS exists to create opportunities and growth through leading, learning and teaching, focused research, and impactful engagement with society.</p> <p>We are outcome-driven, producing graduates, thinkers, problem-solvers, and leaders across all industries who are equipped and committed to changing our world for the better.</p> <p>Beyond offering real excellence in education, the UFS is active and proactive, optimistic and transformative. Inspired, driven and ambitious, we are well known for identifying, realising, and unleashing potential.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cause and effect</li> <li>• Real people</li> <li>• Micro-stories</li> <li>• Strong nouns and verbs</li> <li>• Transition phrases</li> <li>• Powerful sentences</li> <li>• Optimism</li> </ul>

## Care

We come across as:	What does 'caring' mean in practice?	How do you show CARE in writing?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human</li> <li>• Accessible</li> <li>• Approachable</li> <li>• Curious</li> <li>• Honest</li> <li>• Open</li> <li>• Proud</li> <li>• Engaging</li> <li>• Uplifting</li> </ul>	<p>At the UFS, we are invested in success, but also in human happiness. Through this approach, our care extends as much to the individual as it does to the quality of their educational experience and to global best practices in research, theory, teaching and application. We're accountable: we say what we mean, and we do what we say. We keep our promises.</p> <p>We're attentive and student-centric. We're invested in Ubuntu and we work hard to promote social justice and achieve equity, equality, and diversity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanity</li> <li>• Honesty</li> <li>• Authenticity</li> <li>• Respect</li> <li>• Journalistic best practices</li> <li>• Attentiveness</li> <li>• Generosity</li> </ul>







## Step 4

### Proof points of the brand narrative



Below is a breakdown of the brand narrative and where to find the information to support the statements in the brand narrative. Use the 2021 UFS Annual Report to assist with proof points in writing.

Brand narrative	What we need evidence for	Evidence
<b>The University of the Free State (UFS) creates opportunities and growth through leading, learning and teaching, focused research, and impactful engagement with society.</b>	We need to know where we are leading, learning and teaching, what our flagship programmes in teaching and learning are, and what their measurable outcomes are.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.1.2. Learning and teaching strategy</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.1.4. Engaged scholarship strategy</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 2: Map of the UFS Learning and Teaching Strategy 2019 to 2024</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Table 9: Impact of COVID-19 on the business continuity of the UFS</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.1. Overview of progress during 2021 with regards to the implementation of the UFS Learning and Teaching Strategy 2019-2024</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Improve student success and well-being (Goal 1)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.2.1. Increase student success and throughput rates and reduce the achievement gap (KJPA 1.1)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Develop graduate attributes in curricular and co-curricular interventions (KPA 1.2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.2.4 Towards a world-class digital state-of-the-art library (VSP 2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.3. Renew and transform the curriculum (Goal 2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.3.1. Develop curricula that are locally relevant and globally competitive (KPA 2.1)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.3.2. Revise the structure of the curricula in terms of pathways and graduate employability (KPA 2.2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.3.3. Transform the pedagogic relationship between students and lecturers (KPA 2.3)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.3.1.2. Optimise the cost drivers in academic programmes and support service departments (KPA 6.2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.3.2.8 Income from contracts for research and other activities</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.1. Teaching and learning</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.8. Universal access</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.2. Advance an institutional culture that demonstrates the values of the UFS (Goal 7)</li> </ul>
<b>We offer world-class benefits to all individuals.</b>	What are these world-class benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2021 AR: Table 1: Key performance indicators, 2021</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Table 2: Key performance indicators and enrolment targets, 2017 to 2021</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.1.1. Institutional strategy</li> </ul>





Brand narrative	What we need evidence for	Evidence
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.2.4 Towards a world-class digital state-of-the-art library (VSP 2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 2: Map of the UFS Learning and Teaching Strategy 2019 to 2024</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 3: Map of the UFS Research Strategy 2015 to 2022</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.4. Overview of progress during 2021 with regard to the implementation of the UFS Research Strategy 2015 to 2022</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.8. Universal access</li> </ul>
<p><b>What makes us special is that our students are holistically supported to achieve some of the highest success rates in the country, and they are highly employable.</b></p>	<p>How are they supported?</p> <p>What is the success rate in numbers?</p> <p>How do we know they are highly employable?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities Access Programme (UAP)</li> <li>• 2021: Figure 6: Student success rates, 2017 to 2021 (KPA 1.1)</li> <li>• 2021: Table 2: Key performance indicators and enrolment targets, 2017 to 2021</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 2: Map of the UFS Learning and Teaching Strategy 2019 to 2024</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.2.7. Data governance and management</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.1. Overview of progress during 2021 with regard to the implementation of the UFS Learning and Teaching Strategy 2019-2024</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.2.1 Increase student success and throughput rates and reduce the achievement gap (KPA 1.1)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.2.2. Develop graduate attributes in curricular and co-curricular interventions (KPA 1.2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.2.3. Improve student safety and health issues (KPA 1.3)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.3.2.2 Overview of indicators</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.4. Student experience</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.12. Multi-campus model: Qwaqwa Campus and South Campus</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.8. Universal access</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.6. Staff experience and composition</li> </ul>
<p><b>What's more, we produce research that has industry and social impact and real-world application.</b></p>	<p>We need to know what our research niche areas are and what our research output would be in those areas across all faculties.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.1.3. Research strategy</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.1.4. Engaged scholarship strategy</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 1: Map of the UFS Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 3: Map of the UFS Research Strategy 2015 to 2022</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.2.2. UFS Council</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.2.4. UFS Senate</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.1. Overview of progress during 2021 with regard to the implementation of the UFS Learning and Teaching Strategy 2019-2024</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.2.4 Towards a world-class digital state-of-the-art library (VSP 2)</li> </ul>





Brand narrative	What we need evidence for	Evidence
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.4. Overview of progress during 2021 with regard to the implementation of the UFS Research Strategy 2015 to 2022</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.5. Increase UFS contribution to local, regional, and global knowledge (Goal 3)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.5.1. Focus resource allocation for research and innovation on UFS areas of strength and distinctiveness (KPA 3.1)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.5.3. Increase research impact and uptake (KPA 3.3)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 16: Research outputs, 2017 to 2021 (KPA 3.3)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.3.1.1. Increase non-government-derived sources of income (KPA 6.1)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.2. Research, internationalisation, and innovation</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.2.1 Increase student success and throughput rates and reduce the achievement gap (KPA 1.1)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Table 1: Key performance indicators, 2021</li> </ul>
<p><b>Our culture promotes equity, Ubuntu, and accountability.</b></p>	<p>How does it promote equity, Ubuntu, and accountability?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.1. Overview of progress during 2021 with regard to the implementation of the UFS Learning and Teaching Strategy 2019–2024</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.6. Overview of progress during 2021 with regard to the implementation of the UFS Engaged Scholarship Strategy 2018 to 2022</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.1.7.1 Increase academic staff involvement in engaged scholarship and opportunities for students to engage in community-based education (KPA 4.1 and 4.2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.1.4. Engaged scholarship strategy</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 4: Map of the UFS Engaged Scholarship Strategy 2018 to 2022</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.2.1.2. Increase student participation in university governance structures (KPA 5.2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 22: Student participation in governance structures, 2017 to 2021 (KPA 5.2)</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 1: Map of the UFS Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.2.1.1. Statement on code of ethics</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.2.5. Student Representative Council</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 2.3.2 Report of Council on risk assessment and management of risk</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.3.3 Statement from the financial executive on the financial results</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 3.3.3.2 Overview of indicators</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 34: Overview of UFS Integrated Transformation Plan progress, 2021</li> <li>• 2021 AR: Figure 34: Overview of UFS Integrated Transformation Plan progress, 2021</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.4. Student experience</li> <li>• 2021 AR: 4.1.1.8. Universal access</li> </ul>







## Step 5

### Audience analysis

The section below focuses on the various UFS stakeholders that have information that can be strategically applied in messaging. It will guide you on how to formulate messages using the brand narrative, along with relevant visual elements through effective channels.

Audience (all levels)	Characteristics	Communication issues identified	Preferred communication methods	What they should think, feel, and do as identified in Part 1, the qualitative section of the brand narrative-building research
<p><b>Current students</b> Positioned from research as 1/14 importance from stakeholder list.</p>	<p><b>Sum of registered students (2022)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 050 postgraduate students</li> <li>• 34 833 undergraduate students</li> <li>• 217 occasional staff</li> </ul> <p><b>Location of students</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bloemfontein Campus (74%)</li> <li>• South Campus (8%)</li> <li>• Qwaqwa Campus (18%)</li> </ul> <p><b>Faculties with most enrolment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• The Humanities</li> <li>• Economic and Management Sciences</li> </ul> <p><b>Home language (Bloemfontein)</b> Sesotho (10%), Afrikaans(8%), English (59%), and isiZulu (6%).</p> <p><b>Home language (Qwaqwa Campus)</b> English (53%), isiZulu (26%), and Sesotho (17%).</p> <p><b>Home language (South Campus)</b> English (70%), other languages with a smaller component of speakers include isiZulu, Sesotho, and isiXhosa.</p>	<p>Gaps between the university's reputation promise (what it wants to be known for), its culture (behaviour), and its image (self-presentation), which collectively build its identity (character).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generation Y (50%) prefers fast and clear communication with a definite purpose, delivered visually through the latest technology.</li> <li>• Generation X (30%) also prefers communication to be to-the-point, and responds well to technology.</li> <li>• Baby Boomers (19%) and Traditionalists (1%) are more comfortable with traditional communication channels.</li> </ul> <p><b>Blackboard communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 84% of students use Blackboard to access course material.</li> <li>• 78% use Blackboard to access important information.</li> <li>• 54% use Blackboard to collaborate with other students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students should think that the UFS is a really good university. They should see the university and think that the UFS is transforming, responding to changes in society, and trying to meet the needs of society.</li> <li>• Students should feel that they belong at the UFS and that they want to be part of the UFS. They should feel proud to be at the UFS and be associated with the UFS.</li> <li>• Students should apply to the UFS and want to be a part of the UFS as postgraduates as well.</li> <li>• They should be proud and relate that to others to get them to be part of the UFS (word-of-mouth). Students that are here should partake in all the activities and make a difference.</li> </ul>





Audience (all levels)	Characteristics	Communication issues identified	Preferred communication methods	What they should think, feel, and do as identified in Part 1, the qualitative section of the brand narrative–building research
	<p><b>Association with the UFS (2022 UNIVERSUM report)</b> The top three attributes students strongly associate the UFS with are a safe campus environment, educational excellence, and a friendly and open environment.</p>			
<p><b>Employees</b> Positioned from research as 7/14 importance from stakeholder list.</p>	<p><b>Employees consist of the following groups:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Academic staff</li> <li>• Support staff</li> </ul> <p><b>Overall, 67% workplace engagement was recorded:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bloemfontein: 64%</li> <li>• South: 69%</li> <li>• Qwaqwa: 66%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 60% of employees want to receive praise, appreciation, and recognition to enhance performance.</li> </ul> <p><b>Employee engagement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement with academic and support staff is needed in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy</li> <li>- Strategy</li> <li>- Remuneration and benefits</li> <li>- Employee wellbeing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generation Y (45%) prefers fast and clear communication with a definite purpose, delivered visually through the latest technology.</li> <li>• Generation X (28%) also prefers communication to be to-the-point, and responds well to technology.</li> <li>• Baby Boomers (25%) and Traditionalists (2%) are more comfortable with traditional communication channels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employees need to know that the effort and energy they put into UFS’s brand narrative is recognised and acknowledged.</li> <li>• Employees matter as much as students matter.</li> <li>• Employees should feel needed and appreciated, as they are the ones educating the students and creating a tomorrow for them.</li> <li>• They should feel valued. UFS wants their employees to take the promise and carry it out to the students.</li> </ul>

## B. The best visuals to grab your audience's attention ... and keep it

### Step 1

#### Visual styles

#### Examples

The examples below can be used to visually support your writing when using the brand narrative. Using more than one element can strengthen your messages and also keep your audience engaged with your content. Visual elements can further be used to link messages to specific campaigns.

#### Photography

Using photographic visuals for the brand narrative requires consistent application - a golden thread that runs through all visual applications. Images in the recommended styles should always appear as if they belong to the collective brand narrative photo bank. Visuals of students are the style to use for the brand narrative.





### Vector illustrations

Vector illustrations are unique, fun and can be used to communicate a specific message. Vectors can be developed as needed, especially if a photograph will not support your message accurately.



### Iconography

Icons are ideal for listing or communicating short points of information. They can save space while still visually supporting a message.



### Shapes

Using shapes can bring structure to designs. The shapes below are used to visually support UFS messages.



### Polygon graphics

These are very modern designs and can be implemented in various visuals to support content.



### Colours

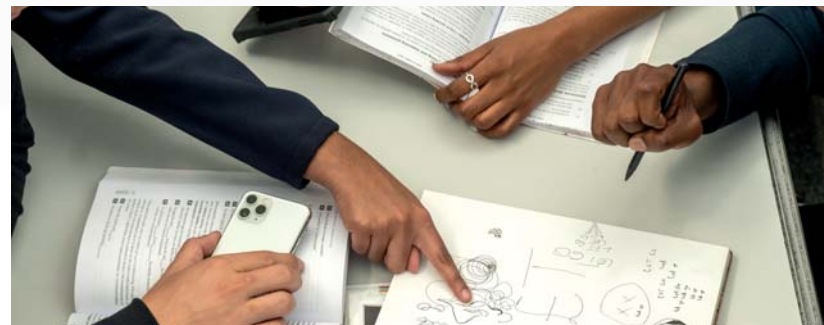
Using strips of colour to support the message brings a colourful element to your message. Strips of colour should always be within the UFS CI guidelines.





## Step 2 Design/Visual/Mood boards

### Centre for Graduate Support



## C. Making it real

### Step 1

#### Apply the brand narrative

#### How to apply the brand narrative to the Centre for Graduate Support:

1. Make use of the updated CI with Quality. Impact. Care. incorporated on all correspondence.
2. Do a postgraduate-specific infographic with proof points for how this office ensures Quality. Impact. Care.
3. Do a Postgraduate Orientation Toolbox (if not in existence already) with the brand narrative as main theme visually and through text.
4. Develop a range of short audio and video snippets explaining how a postgraduate qualification from the UFS will take you to the next level. Distribute these through existing identified channels. Focus scripts on the quality of further education at the UFS, your potential impact with a postgraduate degree, and why you should care.

