



Stellenbosch

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SRC

Students' Representative Council
Ibhunga elimele abafundi
Studenteraad



SRC TERM I REPORT

SRC Women and Queer Empowerment Manager



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Foreword

Greetings,

This past term a student leader has indeed not been an easy one. Through every Obstacle and challenge I faced I learnt a great deal, and am proud to say that every lesson has given me a deeper understanding of what is needed to support and protect the students who fall within the WAQE communities.

One of the major concerns I discovered within this term in office has been the manner in which harassment cases are dealt with by the university through their various policies and procedures. I found that these policies were inadequate in providing the protection and justice that our students are seeking, something that I felt should become a priority in the remainder of my term.

On a brighter note, this term has definitely been one for collaboration and integration for the WAQE communities. WAQE established a group chat for communication within the community, allowing us to disseminate event information easily. WAQE also began planning a Round Table Talk to engage with the Critical Engagement Forum, which is set to take place in the next week.

WAQE had the pleasure of hosting our first event last term in which we introduced ourselves and our theme for the year. We engaged with many members of our community, were able to hear many of their concerns and gain insight onto issues that we would need to tackle.

The past term also saw us kicking off the second season of the Stay WAQE podcast. We released three episodes which have gained much attention from the student community and student media, we are keen to see this project grow and continue educating the student community.

saam vorentoe · masiye phambili · forward together

Constitutional Responsibilities

According to the student constitution by constitutional responsibilities are the following:

- 1) The portfolio has a responsibility to students who fall within the women and queer communities to create a safe environment in which they can express themselves.
- 2) The portfolio has the responsibility to liaise with the university to ensure that their protocols and structures comply with the expectations and needs of the WAQE communities.
- 3) WAQE has a responsibility to hold the university and its underlying departments and structures to represent and advocate for the safety and inclusion of the WAQE communities.
- 4) Attend regular SRC meetings.
- 5) Attend office duty as requested by the SRC Vice-Chairperson.
- 6) Fulfil the mandate promised by the mission statement.

Portfolio Overview

- 1) The WAQE portfolio essentially encompasses two separate portfolios: Women Empowerment and Queer Empowerment. The decision to create this portfolio stemmed from the following reasons:
 - It is common knowledge that members of the Stellenbosch Queer community feel as though they have a lack of representation on campus in terms of events and institutional decisions made by the university.
 - Societies and spaces that did represent Queer bodies on campus expressed that they felt burdened by critical change and transformation expectations without any institutional backing, WAQE stands to bridge that gap.
- 2) These examples show the overview and reasoning for the Queer empowerment portfolio, but it is important to note that women and queer bodies experience different trials and setbacks.
 - Women on campus have experienced GBV and toxic masculinity at the hands of Stellenbosch culture for many years now. The WAQE portfolio stands to create events to raise awareness on this toxic culture and develop critical engagements to combat its existence.

- Specifically, we look at men's residences and the culture that they breed within their walls. We would like to address the way male residences perpetuate an unsafe environment for all femme bodies on campus.
- 3) WAQE therefore also consists of sub-committee of non-SRC members, known as co-ordinators and general members who ensure that all these portfolio visions are overseen.
 - 4) This year the theme for WAQE will be **"Breaking the Binary"**. Which will mean many of our events will be aimed at breaking down binary structures and policies within the university. Specifically, residences being unable to cater for non-binary students or PSO activities being based off of gender.

Committees/Task Teams

I serve on the following Committees and or Task Teams:

- 1) At the moment I sit on the WAQE sub-committee as the WAQE Manager.
 - a. This committee is aimed at organizing the events of the WAQE portfolio such as our opening events, Pride month and Women's month events.
 - b. Sourcing quotes from vendors for equipment and catering
 - c. Social media and marketing
 - d. Event set-up
 - e. Creating a contact list for our WAQE community
 - f. We also have individual responsibilities for some members.
 - i. The social media co-ordinator:
 - ii. Co-hosts the WAQE podcast with me.
 - g. The critical engagement co-ordinator:
 - i. Plans and writes up our engagements with various student communities.
- 2) I have also been invited to the anti-GBV monitoring committee with the equality unit. This committee will have its first sitting on April 21st
 - The committee had been established to encapsulate a more broadened scope than its predecessor, the Rape Culture Monitoring Committee (RCMC), as a commitment to address

gender-based violence, utilising an integrated framework to ensure a sustainable institutional approach.

- The purpose of the committee is to meet with the Chairpersons of Committees from all environments in the university, on a quarterly basis, for reporting, discussion of initiatives taking place, share ideas and information, and provide support as a way of monitoring progress.
- Progress will be monitored against the goals described in the GBV strategic plan (*currently under review*), a mechanism which will systemically integrate our response to clearly address GBV by delineating processes and procedures, as well as proposed approaches for awareness, education, and advocacy.
- The reporting function of the Anti-GBV Monitoring Committee includes meeting with the DVC of Learning and Teaching, the DVC HR, and Transformation and Social Impact, to report on progress and refine plans further.
- The committee itself will meet once a term.

3) This term WAQE established a WAQE forum, this is made up of the various Critical Engagement and WAQE HC's from both residences and PSO's.

- a. This Forum will sit for the first time April 20th.
- b. The immediate agenda points for this first sitting will be:
 - i. The 60/40 residence policy
 - ii. The handling of GBV and harassment cases on campus
- c. The goal of this forum is to create collaboration and integration, it was noted in the Khampepe report that there was a disconnect between the SRC and student communities such as Residence and PSO leadership. WAQE therefore seeks to break down these divisions in order to allow for efficient advocacy and leadership.

4) I will also be sitting on a task team in collaboration with the Equality Unit in order to review the Policy on Unfair Discrimination and Harassment.

- a. WAQE reached out to the unit as it was noted, during the handling of a few GBV cases over the past term, that there is a mismanagement and lack of justice experienced.
- b. The policy was created in 2017 and has not yet been updated. We find that this creates a situation in which the victims do not receive adequate justice or their cases are

mishandled. It also creates an environment which should not be considered safe for students at our university.

- c. The task team will therefore include members of the Equality Unit as well as myself and the Policy Officer in order to review this policy and potentially updated it.

Term 2 Overview

For this term WAQE has a multitude of events planned.

- 1) Our podcast episodes have continued at a bi-weekly rate, we also hosted our first guests in the most recent episode, being the case co-ordinators from the Equality Unit.
- 2) Our next event will be a panel discussion which will hopefully feature Prof. D Francis who is a lecturer in Sociology at Stellenbosch University. The discussion is meant to be an academic background on the sociology of gender and why it is a social construct. The panel will also be titled Breaking the Binary as the main aim of the event is to showcase why gender-nonconforming or non-binary students needs to be better represented within and by the institution.
- 3) We are also intending on having an event in April regarding period sustainability or reproductive health and safety. This will hopefully be in conjunction with campus health and other interest holders.
- 4) This term we began working with residences such as Irene, Sonop and PSO Aristeia on critical engagements. This was to improve collaboration and integration between the SRC and general student leadership,
- 5) WAQE also had the pleasure of attending an event hosted by Gender Dynamix where I engaged on the following topic as a panellist.
 - a. institutionalizing inclusive policy frameworks, guidelines and protocols to effectively address transphobia, homophobia, queerphobia, stigma, discrimination and violence in all its forms which aims to promote (cis) heteronormativity, cissexism and patriarchy, maintaining social and gender norms, standards, cultures and practices in institutions of higher learning, as a result of exclusionary practices

- b. the absence of policy frameworks, protocols, guidelines and codes of conduct which explicitly challenge discrimination on the basis of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC)
- 6) This term will also include Pride Month. Therefore WAQE has a variety of events and plans it would like to execute, such as:
- a. A Pride Walk
 - b. An information evening in which each letter of LGBTQIA is discussed.
 - c. A culture night.
 - d. A hand over of Pride flags to the relevant HC leaders at the Residences and PSO's.

Plans for Next Term

- 1) For the following term events will be had for Mental Health Awareness Month which will include a social media campaign and a sip and paint event either at the Botanical Gardens or Jan Marais Park.
- 2) The following term will also include Women's month which is a major month for WAQE.
 - a. WAQE plans to have a week's worth of events which should include:
 - i. A cultural night
 - ii. An information evening
 - iii. A critical engagement on feminism and contemporary feminist issues