



SRC 2020/2021 Term 2 Report

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Constitutional Responsibilities

Currently the Student Financial Access portfolio is not a compulsory portfolio per the constitution. Please find below an extract of the SU (Stellenbosch University) Student Constitution. I deem the below extract the most important section.

“The SRC is the highest representative and policy-making student body at the University and is under the authority of the University Council.

- (1) SRC members must comply with the provisions of this Constitution and policy and regulation of the SRC.*
- (2) If an SRC member contravenes subsection (1), or if reasonable grounds exist to believe that a member will contravene subsection (1), then – (a) the Student Court may grant an appropriate order at the request of any student, and if that order is not complied with, the member concerned can be discharged from office in terms section 25 (1)(h); and (b) the Evaluation Panel can take this into account in its decision whether or not to decrease the honorarium of the member in terms of section 47.”*

[Microsoft Word - SU Student Constitution 3.2 \(Final\).docx \(sun.ac.za\)](#) (Constitution Link)

It is particularly important to familiarise yourself with the content of the SU Student Constitution.

Portfolio Overview

Please find below a portfolio overview per the SRC website:

[SRC Portfolios \(sun.ac.za\)](#)

When challenging socio-economic conditions prevail in South Africa, especially as they are exacerbated by COVID-19, the Student Financial Access portfolio's vision is that no student will be financially excluded. The portfolio focuses on collaborative efforts to ensure students who are able, willing & deserving of a place at Stellenbosch University can secure it, despite their financial circumstances. This involves dealing with matters such as bursaries, loans, application fees, tuition fees, student debt, and other monetary challenges.

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The creation of this portfolio was advocated for by the Chair of the Student Representative Council due to the high volume of student finance queries. The most responsible measure to ensure that these queries were attended to was to appoint a dedicated individual to the Student Financial Access portfolio.

Please note that due to the lack of resources the Student Financial Access portfolio can only refer students to the relevant departments.

Prior to 2020 the Student Representative Council has not had a Student Financial Access portfolio the SRC has however had a Student Access and Student Success Portfolio. I struggled a lot to get these reports so here is the link for all the reports of previous years so that you can get the bigger picture of this portfolio https://stellenbosch-my.sharepoint.com/:f/g/personal/gina23_sun_ac_za/EuDZHIgjU9lBhOSdzCFGc74BvN7ttl-Ce_u57ebUcKHFxA?e=bBjDTD .

It is no secret that the demographics of Stellenbosch University are changing. Over the past few years and for many more years to come, many students who are in the lower socio-economic bracket are being admitted. Many of these students do not have the means to pay for their own tertiary education. These students will make use of funding from NSFAS (National Students Financial Aid Scheme), SU and private institutions to complete their studies.

Most of the time students will not have problems with regards to their funding. Their fees will be paid in time, they will receive their allowances monthly and when they graduate, they will receive their academic transcript like all the other students.

Unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world. More often than I would like to admit students' fees are not paid in time which leads to them not being able to see their exam marks. Sometimes a students' funder decides to defund them in the middle of the year. Due to a technological or human error some students go for months without receiving a food allowance. Students with the abovementioned issues usually approach the Undergraduate Department for Bursaries and Loans or the Postgraduate Office for help.

Bear in mind that the number of students that need help usually exceed the human capital of these departments. This means that some students queries go unanswered for months. That is where the Student Financial Access portfolio comes in.

This portfolio then follows up on all these unanswered queries to ensure that students get the answers that they so desperately need. This portfolio is thus a body that keeps the SU Bursaries and Loans department accountable.

If you are still a bit confused this portfolio helps students with any matter that is related to finances.

Committees / Task Teams

Currently this portfolio has no committee. I am however planning to get an individual to help me with social media. Due to the sensitivity of information that is being dealt with I would highly advise against having a huge committee, one or two individuals to help you with all the admin. I however prefer to do everything on my own.

University Committees:
Committee for Bursaries and Loans
Student Debt Working Group
DSAf Transformation Sub-committee

Task Teams:

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Students' Representative Council
Third Floor, Neelsie Student Centre
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RegisterAll Tygerberg
RegisterAll Main Campus

Term Overview

Term two is arguably the busiest term for the Student Financial Access portfolio, as it is the registration period. Registration in 2021 was very unique as it was arguably the longest registration period. COVID-19 had a detrimental impact on an already dire South African economy. Many parents, guardians and sponsors experienced extreme financial strain due to retrenchment, salary cuts and profit shortfalls. This meant that many students accounts weren't settled at the end of the year.

During the middle of 2020 NSFAS unfunded many students which left them without funding and unpaid fees at the end of 2020.

Stellenbosch University like many other universities has a very strict policy when it comes to registering with student debt. This policy led to many students being unable to register for the 2021 academic year. Fortunately, the SRC managed to lay these concerns bare to rectorate who were then able to approve once-off bursaries to help student cover their debt and therefore enable them to register.

A detailed registration report will follow in my next term report.

This term I focused on the implementation of the Stationary Aid Project. I collaborated with the Wimbledon Cluster on this project. Like any other project there were some difficulties that were faced. Please find below the link for the goals and objectives of this project, https://stellenbosch-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/gina23_sun_ac_za/EQnwDK2J9NdFgZkGfDR4FogBejrUwSx9jFarTbBwkNvwaQ?e=Q2Rglf.

I finally managed to get the food security assistance project going. Please find an overview of the project below,

This pilot project aims to assist student communities assist students who require immediate food security relief. No student-facing food insecurity should suffer in silence. This food security assistance project aims to alleviate this crisis.

The student financial access portfolio has budgeted R 20 000 for this project. Funds will be earmarked according to the number of student communities participating in this project. Once student communities have confirmed their participation in this project, the exact amount that will be allocated to each community will be confirmed via email.

This project will work as follows:

Each student community will be responsible for identifying the food security need using their own discretion in their respective space.

Once the need has been identified there will be two options that the relevant community can select.

Option 1, Liaise with the kitchen manager of the residence to book meals for the student/s in need. The community will then have to request a quote from the respective kitchen manager.

Option 2, Students can receive food vouchers.

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I will give more feedback and recommendations once this project has been concluded.

Plans for next term

In the third term I would like to ensure that the Food Security Assistance Project is running smoothly.

I would like to resolve matters with the Centre for Undergraduate Bursaries and Loans with regards to credit refunds for students.

Recommendations to improve portfolio

I would recommend the following for the Student Financial Access Portfolio:

- I would advise that this portfolio holder attempts to sit on the Student Fees Committee.
- Many students are still not aware of this portfolio so marketing this portfolio is of the utmost of importance.
- Currently this portfolio can only refer students to the relevant departments, and it comes with the disadvantage that students cannot always be assisted by the relevant departments. Since most of the issues that cannot be resolved are financial in nature, the only way to be able to assist the students who get excluded by the system is to improve the financial resources of this portfolio. The above can be done by crowdfunding or properly motivating an increase in the portfolio budget to the SRC Executive.

Tips (for my successor)

- You are going to make many mistakes and that is fine, if you are open to growth and acknowledging when you are wrong.
- Please ensure that you set healthy boundaries between “personal and professional.”
- Please give yourself “me time,” this portfolio is very taxing both mentally and administratively as you are dealing with issues that are affecting students' futures. Do remember to take a break.
- I would highly advise that you set up a system that works for you with regards to dealing with queries.

Important Contacts

Issue	Name	Email
Food Security	Lizzie Witbooi	Lgwitbooi@sun.ac.za
Serious undergraduate bursaries matters'	Arrie Hanekom	Ahan@sun.ac.za
NSFAS matters	Kallie Sauls	Kallies@sun.ac.za
NSFAS matters	Lynette Williams	Lrw@sun.ac.za
Postgraduate funding serious matters	Nugent Lewis	Nugent@sun.ac.za
SU Bursaries matters - undergraduates	Tulia Geogre	Tulia@sun.ac.za
SU Bursaries matters – postgraduate	Tammy Abrahams	Tammya@sun.ac.za
Student Fees	Anri Engelbrecht	Anriengel@sun.ac.za
Registration	Ashmind Daniels	Bvdm2@sun.ac.za

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