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Code 2040: SU's Integrated Ethics Code



forward together
sonke siya phambili
saam vorentoe

28 November 2022

Code 2040: SU's Integrated Ethics Code

Type of document:	Code
Purpose:	To provide a mechanism to guide and manage organizational integrity and ethical culture at Stellenbosch University, and to promote and maintain ethical behaviour in the conduct of SU's business with its stakeholders.
Approved by:	Council
Date of approval:	28/12/2022
Date of implementation:	28/11/2022
Date of next revision/frequency of revision:	5 years or sooner as may be required
Previous revisions:	None
Owner¹:	SU Council
Curator²:	Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Strategy, Global and Corporate Affairs; Registrar
Keywords:	Organisational Integrity; Ethical Conduct; Ethical Culture; Integrated Ethics; Ethical Behaviour
Validity:	The English version of this regulation is the operative version, and the Afrikaans version is the translation.

SU Governance and Management Documents are available at www.sun.ac.za/policies

¹ Owner: Head(s) of Responsibility Centre(s) in which the rules functions.

² Curator: Administrative head of the division responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the rules

CODE 2040 - STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY'S INTEGRATED ETHICS CODE

Approved: 28 November 2022

A. CONTEXT

1. Code 2040 is the property of Council, and thereby of Stellenbosch University (SU) as a whole.
2. Code 2040 was developed with reference to the governance principles set out in SU's Statute, and in recognition of the fact that good governance does not stem primarily from legal imperatives but from an ethical commitment (underpinned by SU's strong institutional values of excellence, respect, equity, compassion, and accountability). SU is a public tertiary institution that utilises public funds and is accountable for doing so in an ethical and accountable manner. Code 2040 gives expression to our unique institutional legacy as the unfinished and ongoing task of ethically advancing knowledge in service of society.
3. Code 2040 can best be described as an *integrated ethics code*, which seeks to translate SU's institutional values into a set of high-level regulative guidelines that govern conduct at SU. Code 2040 is thus aspirational and directional. However, its primary focus is on our values - rather than legalistic compliance - as the basis for behaviour that we aspire to.
4. Code 2040 is aligned with Vision 2040 and SU's strategic framework. Our vision states that '*Stellenbosch University will be Africa's leading research-intensive university, globally recognised as excellent, inclusive and innovative, where we advance knowledge in service of society*'. Attaining Vision 2040 depends on the ethical conduct of our activities and of our stakeholder engagements. Our institutional values support Vision 2040, our mission,¹ and our core strategic themes and provide the foundation for

¹ Our mission reads as follows: 'Stellenbosch University is a research-intensive university where we attract outstanding students, employ talented staff and provide a world-class environment; a place connected to the world, while enriching and transforming local, continental and global communities'.

the enhancement of our ethical institutional culture.

5. Other governance documents within specific SU environments are, in turn, aligned with Code 2040. Code 2040 thus provides the ethical and values framework that should be embraced in all other documents. These documents supplement Code 2040, giving more concrete directives regarding specific conduct that is required or prohibited as a condition of ongoing employment at, or affiliation with, SU; as well as the disciplinary processes and sanctions that apply in the event of non-adherence. References to these policies are embedded as hyperlinks within Code 2040.²
6. In practice, ethical conduct cannot be assured by a written code. Code 2040 therefore does not replace the ‘golden rule’ - treat other people as you would like them to treat you. In addition to adhering to Code 2040 and SU governance documents, we must also be guided by our conscience as to what constitutes ethically appropriate behaviour.
7. The present document sets out the purpose and scope of Code 2040, SU’s Integrated Values Framework, the SU pledge (aspirational dimension), and the broad behavioural implications of our pledge (directional dimension). It also briefly touches on aspects regarding reporting unethical behaviour, implementation, assessment, and review.

B. PURPOSE

1. Code 2040 is a mechanism to guide and manage the organisational integrity and ethical culture of SU, and to promote and maintain ethical behaviour in the conduct of SU’s business with its internal and external stakeholders. It guides the daily work of SU staff and those stakeholders who are affiliated with SU’s activities (see section C, Scope). It is a statement on how SU’s ethical values direct its culture, strategies, business, and relationships (with both direct and indirect stakeholders).
2. The overall purpose of Code 2040 is to support the ethical realisation of Vision 2040 by promoting professional and responsible behaviour that, *inter alia*, contributes towards:
 - a) a systemically sustainable and flourishing institution;
 - b) adherence to legislation and regulations (including the Constitution, the Higher Education Act, the SU Statute, ‘Guidelines for good governance practice and governance indicators for councils of South African public higher education institutions’³, and King IV⁴);

² For an updated list of SU governance documents, kindly visit <http://www.sun.ac.za/english/policy>

³ The ‘Guidelines for good governance practice and governance indicators for councils of South African public higher education institutions’ define the societal function of HEIs as follows: ‘First, universities educate and provide people with high-level skills for the labour market. Second, they are the main producers of new knowledge; they assess and find new applications for existing knowledge; and they validate knowledge and values through their curricula. Third, they provide opportunities for social mobility and strengthen social justice and democracy, thus helping to overcome the inequities inherited from our apartheid past’ (DHET, Republic of South Africa, p. 9).

⁴ Although the ‘Guidelines for good governance practice and governance indicators for councils of South African public higher education institutions’ notes that King IV advocates very good governance principles, they are not deemed by the DHET to be an appropriate governance instrument for HEIs. This said, SU has

- c) an ethical organisational culture built on shared values;
- d) consistent stakeholder trust and accountability;
- e) responsiveness to stakeholder expectations; and
- f) educating well-rounded, responsible, and ethical citizens.

C. SCOPE

1. Code 2040 applies to the following direct stakeholders:
 - a) members of statutory bodies that govern SU or that can be associated with SU (including SU's Council⁵ and its committees and all other SU institutional bodies);
 - b) SU staff (permanent, temporary, visiting) and academic affiliates;
 - c) SU students (present; residential and hybrid learning; full-time and part-time);
 - d) appointed contractors and service providers, as well as their employees, and representatives who do business with SU.

All direct stakeholders are bound to Code 2040. Whilst the code should be interpreted for the different operating environments of SU, these interpretations (and all policy documents guiding these environments) must be consistent with the code. It is not enough to merely note the contents of Code 2040; direct stakeholders must commit and adhere to the principles of the code.

2. SU recognises that its activities impact not only on those stakeholders who are directly affiliated with the activities of the University, but also on indirect stakeholders. Whilst Code 2040 does not direct the behaviour and activities of these indirect stakeholder groups, we recognise the stakes of the following groups, to the extent that SU's activities impact on them:
 - a) parents and sponsors of students;
 - b) government;
 - c) industry;
 - d) donors;
 - e) alumni;
 - f) research foundations (local and international);
 - g) the community (civil society, non-governmental organisations, other universities, schools, advisory councils, service providers, and the media);
 - h) the environment.

expressed a commitment to the King IV principles to the extent that these principles are relevant to the University's context.

⁵ SU's Council, as well as the Institutional Forum, also have separate codes specifying their specific governance duties.

D. INTEGRATED VALUES FRAMEWORK

1. The institutional values of SU, as set out in Vision 2040, pertain to our work (excellence), our engagement with our direct and indirect stakeholders (respect, equity, compassion), and the execution of our conduct (accountability). Together, these values promote ethical behaviour at SU. All stakeholders contribute to the attainment of Vision 2040 through the consistent application of our values. These values also support the realisation of SU's strategic themes, as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Stellenbosch University's Integrated Values Framework



E. THE STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY PLEDGE

1. While certain values may come more prominently to the fore in certain contexts, our values ultimately work together and should be reflected in all our actions and decisions.
2. *As stakeholders of Stellenbosch University we commit ourselves to ethical behaviour; specifically, we pledge:*
 - a) *to conduct our work in a manner that demonstrates excellence,*
 - b) *to always treat our stakeholders equitably, and with respect and compassion, and*
 - c) *to be accountable for the execution and consequences of all our actions.*
3. Our values are strong, yet following our values at SU requires ongoing debate and guidance. In the next section, the behavioural standards that support our values are discussed.

F. PUTTING OUR VALUES INTO ACTION

We pledge to conduct our work in a manner that demonstrates excellence

1. SU defines excellence as the pursuit of knowledge that adheres to the highest

standards of integrity, renewal, and relevance - as judged by the appropriate stakeholders. Excellence characterises quality work practices that are outstanding, ethical and effective. Excellence is key to realising Vision 2040.

2. In the academic environment, excellence commits us to the following directives:

a) *We support academic freedom⁶*

We promote academic and intellectual freedom, including the freedom to discuss, to decide on teaching content, and to explore avenues of research and creative expression. We understand that academic freedom is interpreted and qualified with reference to our other institutional values (respect, equity, compassion, and accountability). We seek a commitment to truth, show respect towards those with differing views, and do not allow the undue influence of funders or other stakeholders to compromise our teaching and research.

b) *We undertake our teaching and research with academic integrity⁷*

Academic integrity means that we foster and defend intellectual honesty by not committing plagiarism, self-plagiarism, or any other form of academic fraud; that we demonstrate openness to critique and fairness when critiquing the work of other scholars; and that we acknowledge our ethical obligation to SU and to the local, regional, continental, and global communities as we seek knowledge and understanding.

We ensure the originality of our research, obtain ethical approval for our research, conduct and report research accurately and transparently with due regard for how data are used in our research, correctly archive our research, protect all involved in research or teaching and learning, ensure the fair distribution of benefits and burdens of research (particularly research concerning human subjects), treat animals ethically, and protect SU's intellectual property.

We recognise our duty to report violations or suspected violations of academic integrity.⁸

c) *We observe ethical conduct in teaching and learning, transformation, and social impact*

As educators, we provide responsible leadership to young scholars and

⁶ Refer to: [Policy for Responsible Research Conduct](#)

⁷ Refer to: [Policy on Plagiarism in Support of Academic Integrity](#); [Policy for Responsible Research Conduct](#); [Use and Licensing of SU Trademarks](#) (update with new policy, once approved); [Mandatory Self-Archiving of Research Output](#)

⁸ See: [Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Breach of Research Norms and Standards](#)

professionals and uphold high standards of education, supervision, mentorship, and assessment.

We demonstrate a concern not only with how we teach, but also what we teach. We commit to renewal in teaching to ensure that our content is current, transformative, and relevant to our students.

As educators and students, we show due regard for differing views and treat one another with respect and civility within the learning environment and the networks and communities within which we operate.

3. In a complex world, defined by, *inter alia*, uncertainty and fast-paced technological innovation,⁹ excellence (defined in terms of integrity, renewal, and relevance) is required in all spheres of work within the University - not just in the academic sphere.¹⁰

The value of excellence applies universally to all members of the SU community as we seek to deliver quality services to all our stakeholders and exercise stewardship of SU's assets, infrastructure, and terrain.

We pledge to always treat our stakeholders equitably, and with respect and compassion

4. At SU, we recognise that our stakeholders (as defined under section C, Scope) are our most important resource and we undertake to treat one another with compassion and respect.
5. We recognise SU's status as an institutional citizen of South Africa, which implies the twin responsibilities of addressing socio-economic inequality and promoting sustainable development to secure the planet's survival for future generations. We take responsibility for the impact of our activities on stakeholders that are not directly affiliated with SU (see section C, Scope), including the environment and the community.
6. We commit ourselves to intra- and intergenerational equity, which SU defines in terms of restitution in respect to our divided legacy and fairness and parity in our aspirations (which also implies due regard for the freedom, equality, and dignity of everyone with whom we associate, and respect for one another and for the environment - as per our values).

⁹ See [Vision 2040 and Strategic Framework 2019 - 2024](#), Section 5, for a fuller discussion of the context in which SU operates.

¹⁰ As an example, SU's multi-levelled, agile, and adaptive response to the Covid-19 pandemic proved just how valuable these attributes of excellence are in securing a systematically sustainable and flourishing institution.

7. To ensure that we meet our responsibilities towards our stakeholders, we commit ourselves to the following directives:

a) *We respect the environment and promote environmental sustainability*¹¹

We accept our duty to mitigate any negative impact that our research, teaching, and operational activities may have on the environment, as well as our duty to contribute positively to environmental sustainability through our activities. Specifically, and as per the Environmental Sustainability Plan 2020 - 2025, we aim to:

- reduce SU's carbon dioxide emissions and dependence on fossil-fuelled energy through continuous energy management programmes;
- take proactive steps to mitigate the effects of water scarcity and ensure a sustainable supply of water to all SU campuses;
- actively manage and reduce waste generated on campus through prevention, reduction, reuse, recycling, beneficiation, and responsible disposal;
- maintain and design all landscapes to be resilient to environmental change and improve biodiversity and the sustainability of open spaces;
- purchase goods and services from organisations where chain-of-custody credentials are available and evaluated;
- include sustainable design principles aimed at reducing the environmental impact of SU construction, refurbishment, and operations;
- minimise the environmental impact of travel and encourage the use of efficient modes of transport; and
- engage the campus community to accept responsibility for the environment.

Additionally, we recognise the importance of addressing challenges such as climate change and public health through investing in research and teaching in these fields.¹²

b) *We prioritise the health and safety of our stakeholders on all our campuses*¹³

In addition to disposing of harmful waste products in a lawful manner, we support a healthy and safe environment by not engaging in our University work activities when under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

¹¹ Refer to: [Management of Hazardous Waste Products](#); [Environmental Sustainability Plan](#).

¹² An important initiative in this regard concerns the School for Climate Change that launched in 2021.

¹³ Refer to: [Promotion of Weapon-Free Campuses](#); [Risk Management Policy](#).

We understand that SU is a weapons-free¹⁴ campus and carrying a weapon will lead to disciplinary and/or legal action.

- c) *We promote the human dignity of, and mutual respect for, all SU stakeholders¹⁵*

We commit to promoting all fundamental rights and freedoms, as defined in the Constitution and related legislation, of all our direct and indirect stakeholders.

We respect one another as individuals and reject discrimination on the basis of one another's class, race, ethnicity, nationality, language, beliefs, culture, gender, and sexual orientation.

We value the diversity of our working environment, whilst sharing a strong ethical culture that binds us to SU's commitment to equity, inclusivity, and diversity.

We also respect one another in public discourse by demonstrating tolerance and civility. We recognise respect as an important value in countering social polarisation, a societal trust deficit, and the undermining of democratic institutions.

- d) *We promote the equitable treatment of our stakeholders, as well as the just and fair inclusion of all stakeholders affiliated with the University's activities¹⁶*

We have a zero-tolerance approach to racism, gender-based violence, or any other form of harassment, including discrimination, intimidation, humiliation, bullying, threats of violence, abusive language and gestures, and the distribution of insulting material.

We commit to positive measures for mitigating against these behaviours via institutional mechanisms such as the Equality Unit and the dedicated platform for reporting incidences of racial discrimination, and by actively creating a safe and inclusive environment (especially student accommodation) wherein all our students, staff, and other direct stakeholders can thrive.

We follow fair procedures to deal with complaints and support and show compassion towards those who have suffered discrimination of any form.

¹⁴ The Policy on the Promotion of Weapon-Free Campuses defines 'dangerous weapons' as: 'all categories of firearms, as defined in the Firearms Control Act (Act 60 of 2000), as well as explosive devices and sharp objects such as knives, swords or sharpened tools with the intent to threaten or injure someone'.

¹⁵ Include reference to the new communication policy, when approved.

¹⁶ Refer to: [Unfair Discrimination and Harassment; Disability Access Policy; Visual Redress Policy; Employment Equity Policy; Prevention of Nepotism Policy.](#)

We recognise that inclusion is not only an important dimension of the equitable and fair treatment of our stakeholders, but also of social justice.

We recognise our contribution to the injustices of the past and commit ourselves fully to restitution and to the ideal of creating an inclusive world-class university in and for Africa.¹⁷

We strive to provide universal access for people with disabilities, by making our physical and non-physical environments as accessible as is reasonably possible.

We commit to an ongoing process of redress in relation to SU's local, regional, continental, and global contexts, which includes (but is not limited to) the visual redress of buildings, venues, and other facilities and premises of SU.

In alignment with the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995, we commit to labour practices that support equal opportunity, fair treatment, and employment equity.

e) *At SU, our stakeholders are our passion*¹⁸

We recognise our mutual interdependence, and we commit to treating one another with respect, compassion, and care.

We work to empower our staff and students to realise their full potential through prioritising their development and well-being.

To this end, we provide opportunities for professional development and assist our staff and students to resolve personal and professional problems through engaging a holistic well-being approach aimed at promoting an organisational culture with an ethos of caring and task orientation.

We pledge to be accountable for the execution and consequences of all our actions

8. SU defines accountability in terms of high levels of responsibility for all our actions. Since our actions always impact stakeholders, responsibility further

¹⁷ SU has adopted a Restitution Statement (2018), which reads as follows: "Stellenbosch University (SU) acknowledges its inextricable connection with generations past, present and future. In the 2018 Centenary Year, SU celebrates its many successes and achievements. SU simultaneously acknowledges its contribution towards the injustices of the past. For this we have deep regret. We apologise unreservedly to the communities and individuals who were excluded from the historical privileges that SU enjoyed and we honour the critical Matie voices of the time who would not be silenced. In responsibility towards the present and future generations, SU commits itself unconditionally to the ideal of an inclusive world-class university in and for Africa.'

¹⁸ Refer to: [Staff Development Policy](#); [Staff Wellness Policy](#).

implies high levels of responsiveness towards all our stakeholders (undergirded by the values of excellence, respect, equity, and compassion). Together, these dimensions speak to accountability as ‘the obligation to answer for the execution of responsibilities’¹⁹. Otherwise put, accountability means that we are able to justify our activities and our interactions with one another.

9. At SU, we undertake the following commitments to ensure legal and ethical reporting and disclosure, sound risk and records management, as well as procedural fairness (in the event that ethical and governance requirements are transgressed):

a) *We commit to anti-corruption and anti-bribery*²⁰

We take a clear and unambiguous zero-tolerance approach to bribery, fraud, and corruption, and commit to acting professionally, fairly, and with integrity in all our business dealings and relationships, wherever we operate.

We accept our obligation to seek advice and report unethical and criminal activity - even if it is only a suspicion.

We recognise, and mitigate against, admission irregularities and unfair bursary allocations and strive to ensure inclusivity in access to education.

We maintain an anonymous ethics hotline,²¹ which supports the anonymity of whistleblower reports and the protection of whistleblowers.

b) *We commit to providing timeous and accurate financial information*

Our stakeholders rely on the accuracy, completeness, timeliness, transparency, and honesty of our transactions, records, reports, and disclosures. Sound financial management requires that all business records that we create, in whatever form (including the records relating to the activities of departments, research centres, and third-stream income streams), must reflect the true nature of transactions and events.

We implement effective, efficient, and transparent financial management and control systems that comply with Internal Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

Weaknesses in financial reporting that are identified by our internal and external auditors are reported to management, and where necessary, the Audit and Risk Committee of Council, and steps are taken to address these weaknesses.

¹⁹ IoD, 2016, Glossary of Terms

²⁰ Refer to: [Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy](#)

²¹ Ethics Hotline contact details: Tel: 0800 204 549; Email: sun@ethics-line.com; Web: www.tip-offs.com

We are open, honest, and transparent about our recording and reporting of information and clear about both positive and negative reports.

- c) *We commit to effective and ethical risk management and records management*²²

Risk management is an integral part of good governance and accountable conduct and is subject to several regulatory requirements.

We accept our duty to implement and maintain an effective and transparent risk management system to facilitate the review, identification, assessment, monitoring, management, and notification of risks to SU. We recognise that an effective and transparent risk management system helps to safeguard our systemic sustainability.

SU is privy to a large amount of personal and sensitive information (including staff and student records), which can pose a substantial institutional risk if we do not exercise our duty of care in the management, processing, and use of information, in accordance with the legislative requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act, Act 4 of 2013 (POPIA).

We accept this duty of care and commit to safeguarding the integrity and confidentiality of our information and records.

- d) *We mitigate against conflicts of interest and inappropriate gifting*²³

SU recognises that its direct stakeholders have diverse interests and are involved in activities that fall outside of the scope of their formal relationship with the University. SU further recognises that such interests and activities may give rise to conflicts of interest, in that they could unfairly or improperly benefit stakeholders, third parties, or the University.

We seek to avoid conflicts of interest, especially conflicts that result in the unfair preferential treatment of certain stakeholders.

Sometimes, however, conflicts of interest cannot be avoided. In such cases, we disclose all actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest as soon as they arise and ensure that they are properly managed to mitigate these conflicts.

We further guard against undue influence when giving and receiving gifts and against creating the impression that an improper business benefit is

²² Refer to: [Risk Management Policy](#); [Information Security Regulation](#); [Records Management Policy](#); [Data Privacy Regulation](#)

²³ Refer to: [Conflict of Interest](#); [Prevention of Nepotism](#); [Anti-Corruption and Anti-Bribery Policy](#); [Gifts Policy](#)

created.

- e) *We observe procedural fairness when pursuing administrative justice*²⁴

Accountability is supported by policies and procedures that promote administrative justice. We can only obtain administrative justice when procedural fairness is followed.

We recognise that procedural fairness implies consistency, equity, justice, transparency, confidentiality, and impartiality. We further understand that impartiality requires that we avoid bias, discrimination, victimisation, and conflicts of interest.

We commit to prompt investigation and appropriate methods of resolution in seeking administrative justice.

If the normal procedures have been exhausted and a satisfactory outcome to a specific case has not been reached within a reasonable timeframe, complainants have the right to involve the Ombud.

G. REPORTING SUSPECTED VIOLATIONS

1. All stakeholders have the responsibility to seek guidance when faced with ethical dilemmas or uncertainties pertaining to the University's activities, and to report suspected violations of Code 2040, the University's policies and procedures, and laws and regulations.
2. If in doubt about the ethical nature of a situation²⁵, stakeholders should seek advice from the Compliance Officer, situated in the Office of the Registrar (for general matters) or the Office of Research Integrity and Ethics (for academic matters). If need be, the Compliance Officer or Research Integrity and Ethics Officer will refer the matter to the Social and Business Ethics Committee of Council for further input to ensure that the directives of Code 2040 are met.
3. Stakeholders are encouraged to report suspected violations to their immediate supervisors or via other appropriate SU channels. However, if, for any reason, a stakeholder feels uncomfortable to report a suspected violation through these channels, anonymous reporting through SU's independently administered ethics

²⁴ Refer to: [Disciplinary Code for Students of SU](#); [Disciplinary Code: Rules regarding Disciplinary Action against Staff Members](#); [Policy on Plagiarism in Support of Academic Integrity](#); [Unfair Discrimination and Harassment](#).

²⁵ The 'Guidelines for members of the Social and Business Ethics Committee' provides the following guidance when determining whether a given matter is of an ethical nature: the matter 'concerns a systemic ethical challenge to, or systemic ethical concern arising from non-compliance with, SU policy; originates from, or ethically impacts on, [SU's] operating areas; constitutes either a social or ethical matter posing a material threat or opportunity (or at the very least, the perception of a threat or opportunity); ethically impacts on the strategy of SU; and, has a potential legal implication, if left unattended'.

hotline at sun@ethics-line.com, www.tip-offs.com or 0800 204 549 is recommended. A dedicated number is also available for reporting incidents of racial discrimination.²⁶ SU commits to protecting any person who reports wrongdoing in good faith.

H. IMPLEMENTATION

1. The overall promotion (including awareness-raising, training, and the active dissemination of Code 2040 in all SU environments), implementation, and maintenance of Code 2040 are the responsibility of the institutional leadership. Leadership is assisted by the Social and Business Ethics Committee of Council, who monitors the outcomes of Code 2040.
2. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Strategy, Global and Corporate Affairs and Registrar are the co-curators of Code 2040 and are responsible for the communication and practical implementation of the Code.
3. A copy of the Code 2040 in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa is available on SU's website.

I. EVALUATION

The Social and Business Ethics Committee of Council will monitor that an annual assessment of institutional adherence to Code 2040 is undertaken, as well as monitor the degree of implementation of, and adherence to, Code 2040 and all required SU governance documents.

When material matters arise, the results of the annual assessment will be submitted for consideration to the Audit and Risk Committee of Council when it pertains to their mandate, and to Council itself, where necessary.

J. REVIEW

Code 2040 will be subject to periodic review, as and when necessary, to ensure that it stays aligned with SU's vision, mission, values, and strategic objectives.

Approved by Council on 28 November 2022

²⁶ The dedicated number will be available on the University's website from the beginning of 2023.