



NWU

STRATEGIC PLAN

Taking the NWU forward
- 2024 and beyond -





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Foreward - message from the chancellor of the NWU

Let us support the NWU in the successful implementation of the new strategy.

The North-West University (NWU) has made huge strides since its establishment in 2004. None of this would have been possible without a proper and relevant strategy. A sound strategy is crucial for the success and growth of any organisation in both the private and public sectors.

The complexity and dynamism of the higher-education landscape in South Africa necessitate universities such as the NWU to have solid strategies that take the internal and external environmental factors extremely seriously.

We are proud of the achievements that we have recorded due to the aspirations and commitments we made in the 2015–2025 strategy. The NWU stakeholders, including the Council, senior management, staff, donors and collaborators, made this possible. However, the economic landscape and demands faced by the higher-education sector in South Africa and beyond dictate that we review our strategy and respond to the changing environment.

The new strategy must set us apart from our competitors for us to be a university of choice. It must focus on taking advantage of new opportunities and provide a roadmap to success.

I am pleased that the NWU stakeholders, including staff, students, alumni and donors, made significant contributions towards the development of this strategy. This inclusive approach will ensure shared ownership, responsibility and accountability, which are paramount for the successful implementation and success of the strategy.

The clearly defined objectives and targets in this strategy and plans provide a sound basis for regular evaluation and performance measurement.

Since my inauguration as chancellor of the NWU, I have been astounded at the achievements and success of the university in many areas of its operations, and I am sure that the new strategy will enhance our successes and take us to new heights nationally and internationally.

I wish the NWU Council and senior management under the leadership of Prof Bismark Tyobeka all the best in the implementation of the new strategy. I have full confidence in the NWU Council under the chairpersonship of Mr Bert Sorgdrager, that it will continue to perform its oversight role diligently and support management to achieve the goals and objectives as set out in this strategy.

I look forward to being part of this new and exciting journey.

Kind regards
Dr Anna Mokgokong
Chancellor



Message from the chairperson of the Council

The reviewed strategy of the NWU actively builds on the gains that have been achieved over the past 20 years.

In looking back it is clear that the previous two decades have paved the way for the NWU to proclaim its readiness to discover new frontiers. Let us briefly look back at where we came from:

The merger objectives set in 2004 for the newly formed NWU focused, among other things, on overcoming the apartheid-induced divide between the historically white Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and the historically black University of the North-West, and promoting a more equitable staff and student body.

The vision that underpinned the early and difficult years of the university as a unitary multi-campus institution was to be a pre-eminent university in Africa, driven by the pursuit of knowledge and innovation. Ten years later, in 2014, a new strategy was developed with an emphasis on achieving greater unity across the university as a whole and on developing a unique university culture aimed at making students recognisable as NWU students, ensuring equity of provision and focusing on academic excellence.

The statement undergirding the implementation of this strategy was to transform and position the NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice. And here we are on the brink of 2024 with a strategy speaking of *Taking the NWU forward – 2024 and beyond*, with a vision indicating that the NWU is spreading its wings *to discover new frontiers and opportunities that benefit society, highlighting our relevance and impact*.

The NWU's Council is encouraged by the thorough and inclusive process of consultation that the vice-chancellor and his team conducted to review the strategy in such clear terms and to agree on the guiding principles and set the priorities for the implementation of the strategy.

We acknowledge the importance of and support the guiding principles relevant to the implementation of the strategy and know that the notions of sustainability, transformation, digitalisation, student-centricity and an overt application of the ethic of care all imply effective and efficient business processes.

As Council we are eager to witness the implementation of the strategy!

In this regard, we look forward seeing the academic and social impact of the growth path in relation to the scope, quality, reach and relevance of our academic offerings that are innovative and forward-looking. We have high expectations of the focus of discovery of new frontiers at levels of internationalisation, while not neglecting our position as a knowledge hub at provincial level.

It all starts here!

Bert Sorgdrager
Chairperson of the Council



Message from the principal and vice-chancellor of the NWU

Since assuming the role of principal and vice-chancellor in June 2022, my strategy team, the extended senior management, and I have diligently crafted a new five-year roadmap for the NWU.

Thus far, we have managed to navigate the substantial and intricate challenges that face the NWU and the higher-education sector in general.

From the outset, we actively sought input and insights from a wide array of university stakeholders, recognising the importance of a comprehensive and forward-looking strategy that extends beyond the borders of our campuses and contributes to global issues, including the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

I am convinced that this approach was necessary and has laid the foundation for collective ownership and direction.

This strategy is a culmination of a rigorous and extensive process that involved robust discussions and input by internal and external stakeholders. Our past achievements, experiences and potential opportunities at local and international level have shaped the way we view our role in creating value for our stakeholders through beneficial partnerships, collaborations and cooperation.

This strategy will ensure that we harness our strengths, leverage our rich diversity, and position ourselves to discover new frontiers and take advantage of opportunities in an increasingly competitive higher-education landscape. Notwithstanding the difficulties and challenges under which we operate, we are poised for success. All we need is all hands on deck to ensure that our shared vision and mission are realised.

The transformative changes in the higher-education sector in South Africa and internationally, and the need for solutions to societal problems, require us to forge new and innovative frontiers to remain sustainable and relevant to the needs of our stakeholders.

Our success and sustainability hinge on our ability to continuously adapt and reposition ourselves to be responsive to current and future environmental factors. To this end, the endorsement of the strategy by the Council marks a pivotal moment in our 20 years of history.

I wish to thank all our stakeholders – students, staff, alumni and the Convocation, board and donors, and other partners – for the robust engagements that resulted in this strategy. I urge all of you to join us as we embark on this exciting journey to discover new frontiers and opportunities that benefit society, highlighting our relevance and impact.

Enkosi | Baie dankie | Ke a leboga

Prof Bismark Tyobeka
Principal and vice-chancellor

Abbreviations

NWU	North-West University
SWOT	Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats
HEMIS	Higher Education Management Information System
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training

Definitions

Item	Span of time	Definition in strategy speak
Strategy pillars		Foundational expressions on various aspects that point to the direction that the entity intends to take, such as vision, mission, values, priorities, principles and goals.
Vision	Enduring	Long-term future-focused goal of the organisation that, when achieved, will translate to a significant positive betterment of the organisation (and its stakeholders).
Mission/purpose	Enduring	The reason for the organisation's being.
Principles	Enduring	They dictate how we want the organisation to behave as it implements the strategy . They must be interwoven into every policy, plan, programme and activity.
Values	Enduring	Key behavioural attributes and attitudes that the organisation would like to see manifested in every employee as they do their work on a daily basis.
Strategic goals/objectives	Time-bound	Specific areas of intended results that will collectively achieve the vision. Building blocks of the strategy.
Priorities	Time-bound	Broader areas of focus that will move the university forward/change the game for us. They are the added values that enable the organisation to achieve its vision .

Executive summary

Who we are

The North-West University (NWU) is an institution of higher learning currently operating on three main campuses: Mahikeng, Potchefstroom and Vanderbijlpark. We are one of the 26 public higher-education institutions in South Africa.

As inscribed in our Statute, the NWU is driven by the values underlying the Constitution, in particular relating to human dignity, equality and freedom.

Uniquely defined by a robust identity, institutional culture and ethos, we steadfastly anchor ourselves in the principles of unity and values, dedicated to nurturing a community of involved and caring staff and students through unwavering commitment to ethical conduct in all pursuits.

This commitment encompasses upholding academic integrity, preserving academic freedom and the unfettered pursuit of scientific inquiry, assuming responsibility, ensuring accountability, upholding equity, and maintaining transparency. Furthermore, we ardently embrace diversity as a core tenet of our philosophy.

The NWU promotes unity in diversity by inculcating tolerance of and respect for all perspectives and belief systems, thereby ensuring a suitable environment for teaching and learning, research and engagement with the community.

What we do

As an internationally recognised university in Africa, the NWU is distinguished for engaged scholarship, academic excellence, social responsiveness, and an ethic of care.

In this strategy cycle, we clearly define our goals, priorities and the principles that characterise our institution. These are aimed at ensuring that we continue to do what we do best:

- Excel in innovative teaching and pioneering research, thereby benefitting society through knowledge.
- Promote engaged learning through the adoption of digital transformation strategies and techniques.
- Show commitment to the development of a comprehensive range of academic, professional and general programmes addressing the needs in our communities.
- Demonstrate our responsiveness to students, the well-being of its staff and our stakeholders through optimal interaction, capacity building and sound management practices.

How we do it

This document aims to illustrate and discuss the NWU's strategic outlook and how we intend to achieve our objectives. In this strategy cycle, we have introduced a number of dimensions to the strategy, namely growth, impact and operational excellence. These are in addition to the already existing ideals of diversity, partnerships and internationalisation.





We have further pronounced our unwavering commitment to specific principles, these being Sustainability, Transformation, Student centricity, Valuing our people and Digital

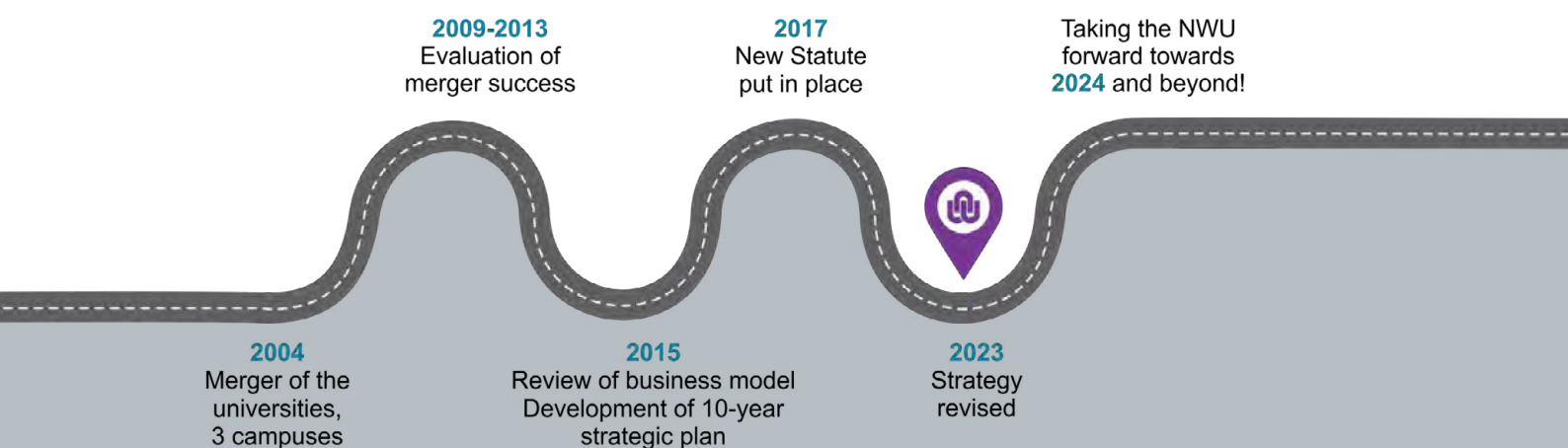
transformation. These are to be weaved throughout our policies and practices as we endeavour to pursue our vision.



1. Introduction

The aim of this introduction is to provide a brief historical perspective on the establishment of the NWU and how it evolved from 2004 to 2019 to become an integrated, unitary institution.

2. Recap: a summary of our journey



The early years of the merger

The North-West University was officially established on 1 January 2004 through a merger of the former Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education, with its main campus in Potchefstroom and satellite Vanderbijlpark Campus located in Vanderbijlpark, and the University of North-West (formerly the University of Bophuthatswana), with its main campus located in Mafikeng (currently Mahikeng) and its satellite Mankwe Campus, located near Rustenburg.

On 2 January 2004, the staff and students of the Sebokeng Campus of Vista University were also incorporated into the newly established NWU.

Shortly after the merger, in 2005, the Council of the NWU resolved that the Mankwe Campus (the land and buildings of which belonged to the provincial government) be handed over to the Orbit Further Education and Training College.

Federal structure

The structure of the newly formed NWU was quasi-federal in nature, with each of the three campuses headed by a campus rector and having its own faculties (a total of 15 faculties) – which in many instances led to a duplication of faculties and deans. Campuses could create niche strategies and niche markets.

Furthermore, an Institutional Office was established in Potchefstroom as a result of the

geographical distribution of the campuses.

The purpose of the Institutional Office was to ensure university-wide consistency in policies, systems and procedures, while the three campuses operated as decentralised and coordinated business units spread across two provinces.

Unity in diversity

The NWU followed a popular mergers and acquisitions strategy often used in commercial environments, in which the aim is to maintain and improve the core business of the new institution on the one hand, while pursuing sustainable transformation on the other.

Furthermore, the idea was to maintain a balance between the essential unity of the new university and the necessary diversity of its campuses, programmes and campus cultures.

The role of the Institutional Office, on the other hand, would be to serve the NWU through the three campuses with regard to strategic planning, institutional policy development, institutional process design, overall institutional quality, budget apportioning to the four business units (the campuses and the Institutional Office), and overall institutional branding and positioning.

As far as its business culture was concerned, the NWU would develop a unique institutional culture and ethos, while leaving room for variety in campus cultures and ethos, based on the unity and value system of the institution.

Room for improvement 2009-2013

The Higher Education Quality Committee Audit Feedback report of 2009 pointed to the successes in the core business of the university but expressed concern about programme alignment and the lack of diversity at the different campuses.

The report regarded the crucial hallmark of an integrated institution to be comparable levels and quality of programmes on all three campuses.

In 2013, the institutional management of the NWU commissioned an internationally led panel to evaluate the extent to which the initial merger objectives had been accomplished since 2004, and to evaluate the extent to which the NWU's mission elements had been achieved.

The motivation for the review was to provide a retrospective evaluation of the merger after ten years and thereby provide input into the process of establishing a fresh vision, mission, and strategic agenda for the NWU.



Refinement, realignment and recalibration 2015-2023

In 2015 a process commenced to review the university's business model. The restructuring process commenced in earnest in 2015 with the development of a new strategy for 2015-2025 in which the goal of achieving an integrated, unitary university with equitable provision of resources and aligned quality standards was set. At a special meeting in August 2016 the university's Council accepted the proposal for a new structure in principle.

A major consideration was that the core business of the university should not be affected adversely by structural changes. The teaching-learning strategy that had been approved by the Council in June 2016 and the research strategy as approved by the Council were used as a guiding principle to mitigate this risk.

The restructuring process meant a radical departure from the previous position of campus rector. There were now deputy vice-chancellors to manage each campus and a deputy vice-chancellor for teaching and learning, and one for research and innovation.

In November 2015, the Council adopted a new strategy and structure with the main feature being the establishment of eight faculties across the campuses, each headed by a single executive dean.

The fifteen faculties, across three campuses, were restructured into eight faculties at the university: Economic and Management Sciences, Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law, Natural and Agricultural Sciences, and Theology.

The new faculties provide for the integrated coordination of teaching and learning, as

well as for research. Each faculty is headed by an executive dean, with deputy deans for (a) Teaching and Learning (b) Research and Innovation and (c) Community Engagement in all the faculties, appointed to function across all three campuses (except for Law, Theology and Engineering).

Academic management and rebranding

Following the approval of the revised Statute in March 2017, the implementation of the new structure commenced. A new Senate and new faculty boards had to be established. Our self-evaluation report should be viewed against the backdrop that the university has embarked on a new journey in 2017, and although a lot has been achieved, the journey for reimagining the North-West University has only started.

The NWU embarked on an ambitious journey to reimagine the multi-campus institution as a unitary university known for equity of experience and a commitment to social justice. To strengthen the unitary structure, a rebranding process followed, with a new look and feel.

Taking the nwu forward 2024 and beyond

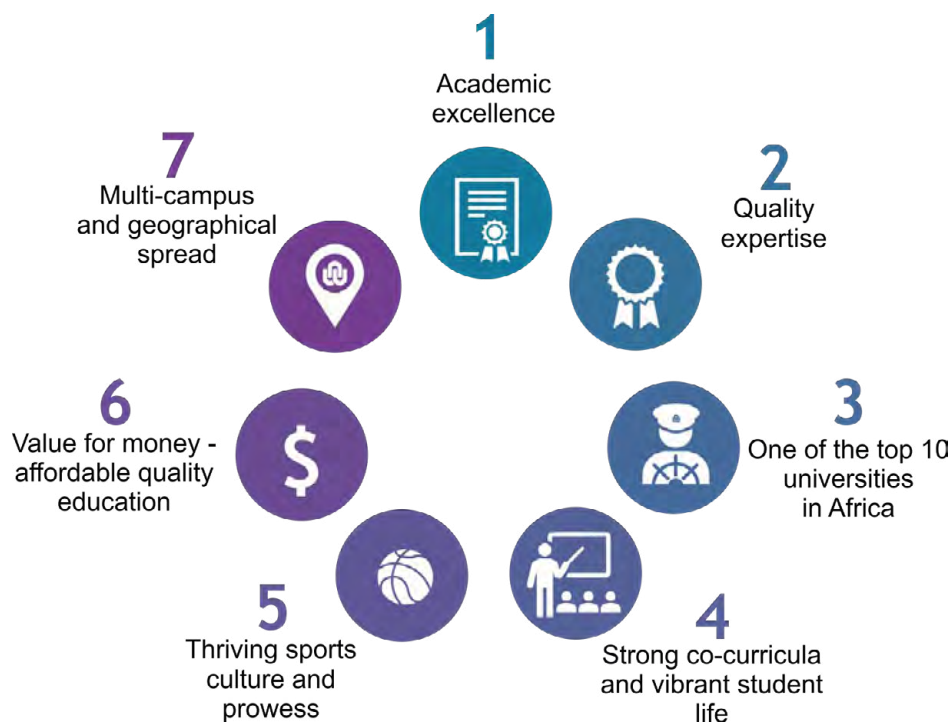
The NWU is well on its way and the discussions about our unitary status are now behind us, we are firmly unitary and thriving as a result.

The time for the outgoing strategy is coming to an end in 2025, and the NWU consequently needed to have fresh conversations about the future. After an interesting journey, the university is proud to have achieved what it has to date. We are proud to state the following as our competitive advantages:

- Academic excellence:
 - » Top performer in Engineering nationally.



- » Top performer in accounting sciences nationally.
 - » Listed in the top 200 universities globally.
 - Quality expertise with nationally and internationally rated academics and world-class research facilities.
 - We have consistently ranked as one of the top 10 universities in Africa.
 - Strong co-curricular and vibrant student life:
 - » High rating of employability as a result of our co-curricular offerings.
 - » One of the top university choirs in South Africa.
 - Thriving sports prowess – it is no longer a secret that the NWU boasts a great sports culture with achievements putting us as ranking champions for successive years (rugby cup 2022, 2023).
 - Value for money offering – we still offer affordable, quality higher education.
 - Multi-campus and geographical spread – footprint (our research shows that students prefer to be closer to their homes due to the cost of accommodation and the need for emotional support and family structure). Our geographical spread allows or should enable us to have more impact in communities.
- Having achieved all this, we need to earnestly look forward not only to retaining our strengths and capabilities, **but also to developing new areas of competitiveness and excellence in an ever-changing landscape**, hence the strategy revision.



3. Situational analysis

Internal analysis

We conducted an internal analysis using the SWOT framework as described below.



S – We identified our **strengths** with the aim of ensuring that we capitalise on them to propel us to greater heights.



W – We recognised our areas of **weakness** and took the bold step of highlighting operational effectiveness as an ideal that will help us prioritise efficiency and effectiveness in our operations.



O – There are clear **opportunities** that will be assessed for value and harnessed. Those that qualify will be pursued with enthusiasm.



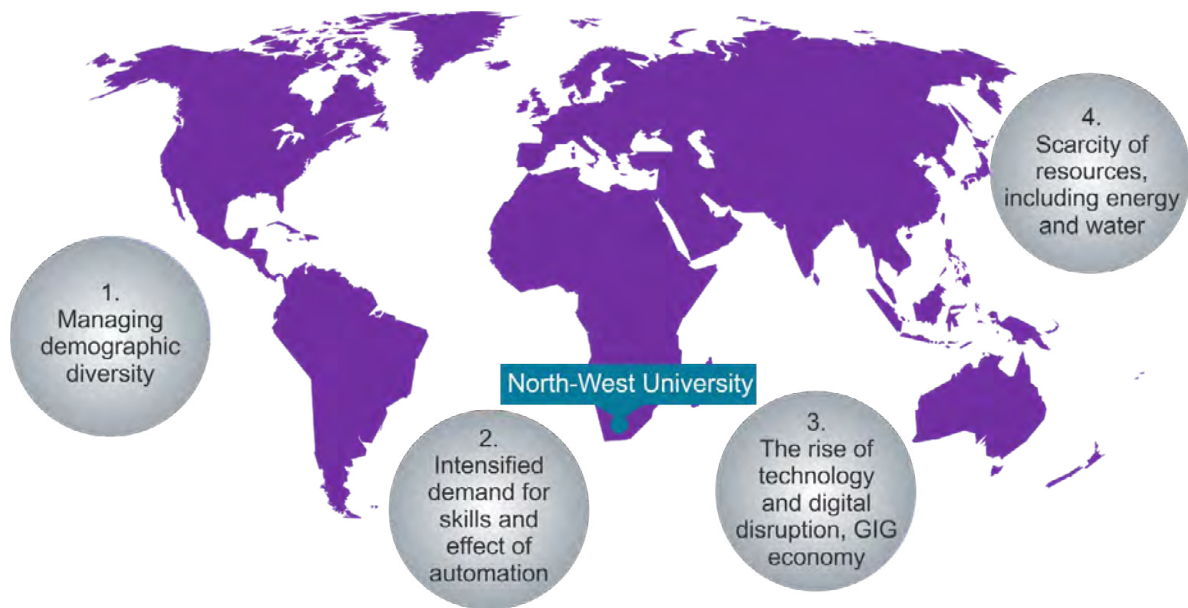
T – That which **threatens** us as a university was also identified and risk mitigation strategies put in place to ensure that we are able to address that which is within our remit while also attempting to diffuse the negative impact of that which is out of our sphere of control.

Our action plan ensuing from the SWOT analysis will find its way to the operational strategies and plans of various portfolios.

Global impacts

The world is what it has always been, and yet somehow in this generation it appears even more unpredictable and fast-paced.

There is a myriad of issues to contend with. While these are global in nature, they have a real impact on South Africa and on the higher-education trajectory. These political, economic, social and environmental realities can be summarised as follows:



Managing demographic diversity

Demographic diversity can be further broken down into the following subcategories:

- Ethnicity – cultural differences and/or tribal or national affiliations.
- Later retirement – the extension of retirement age, impacting how many new young entrants can be accommodated in workspaces.
- Diverse generations – age demographics in the workplace resulting in experience disparity and work-culture differences.
- Gender identity – this has become a topical issue in recent years, impacting on social dynamics and cultures around the world.
- Mass economic-induced migrations – the more affluent countries are experiencing a mass influx of economic migrants into their economies. This has resulted in a myriad of effects manifesting in the social and political orders.
- Impacts of geopolitical tensions and wars – in recent times, the Russia-Ukraine war has had ripple effects in other parts of the world and has affected diplomatic relations, strengthening some and weakening other ties.
- Population growth – this, coupled with climate change, has brought firmly into the conversation the need for sustainable living. This is an all-encompassing issue – environmental, social and economic.

Intensified demand for skills and effect of automation

- The emergence of new roles in the place of work has been precipitated by rapid technological advancement.
- Different skills are needed in emerging industries. Some examples of such positions include: artificial intelligence specialist; robotics engineer; data scientist; full stack engineer; site reliability engineer; customer success specialist; data engineer; behavioural health technician; cybersecurity specialist; cloud engineer; chief revenue officer, to mention just a few.
- Demand for experience. Though there are a lot of new entrants in the skills category, nothing can really replace experience. Competent and experienced workers are more sought after and are paid premium rates. This is also the result of the growing trend of creating mentors in the workplace, who tap into their wealth of experience to add value.
- Hybrid work, a gift to the world as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Though industry-specific, this has totally transformed the world of work. Recent studies have also proposed that productivity has risen in many organisations because of this flexibility, as hybrid work models provide workers with better control over their timetables, enabling them to work during their most productive hours.

The rise of technology and digital disruption

- The digital revolution has no boundaries – it brings opportunities and threats because of the gig economy.
- This has implications for cybersecurity, making that a big area of investment for organisations, and indeed for governments. As was stated earlier, cybersecurity specialists have some of the professional skills that are the highest in demand in the world today.
- Artificial intelligence is the newest disruptor everywhere, including in the higher-education sphere. It is developing rapidly, with more questions than answers.

Scarcity of resources

- The sustainability of natural resources is a reality all over the world.
- An increasing demand for energy, food and water.
- A finite supply of minerals and fossil fuels, making energy scarcity even more of a devastating reality. The need for a circular economy would ensure more sustainable practices and may improve the overall scarcity of resources.

4. Trends in higher education – globally

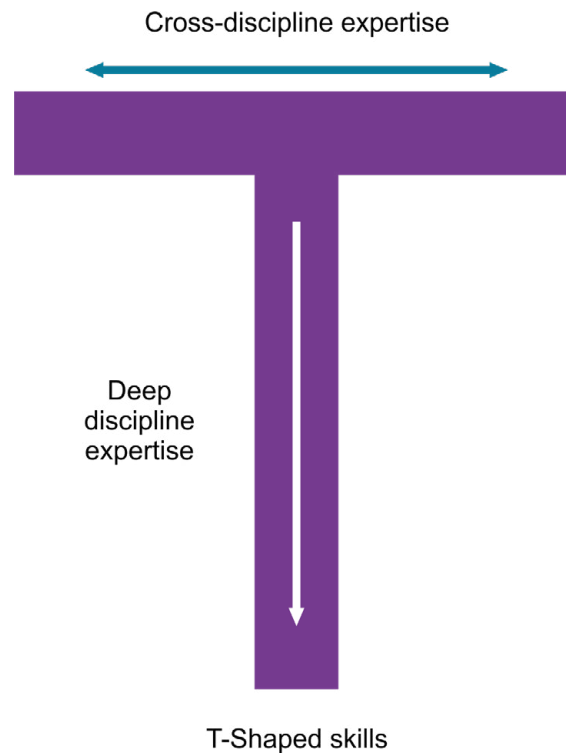
The focus in higher education globally is primarily in two areas:

Future student needs

Future student needs have been identified as characterised by the following:

- An increasing need for life-long learning in a non-linear world.
- Flexible, seamless higher education.
- Multi-institutional, multi-disciplinary study experience.
- Encompassing of emerging technologies and business models.
- Labour market-relevant skills.
- The interest in a “skills over degrees” model in teaching and learning.
- Increase in demand for specific areas of study, uncoupled from complete programmes and degrees.
- Education as a Service (EaaS) is appearing on the radar, along with unbundling qualifications for micro-credentialling.

New approach to teaching and learning



This approach of the “T” model is meant to equip students with expert skills in their chosen areas of study, symbolised by the vertical plunge in the “T”. While on the horizontal line, students will also be equipped with basic knowledge in a manner that allows them the opportunity to learn generalist skills in related fields. The advantage of this approach is that it provides students with options. Should there be market saturation in their chosen fields, they can ply their trade as entrepreneurs or employees in related fields.

The approach consequently proves to involve:

- Student-focused curricula
- Investment in personalised, technology-enhanced learning
- Embracing the T-shaped approach to knowledge
- Focus on graduate attributes



5. Realities of the higher-education sector in South Africa

There are some significant achievements to speak of, such as the endeavour by the government to establish a university for crime detection in Hammanskraal and the planned establishment of a university for science and innovation in Ekurhuleni, all by 2025.

According to the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) database (data extracted in November 2020), the higher-education sector (DHET strategic plan 2020–2025) stipulates among its achievements over time the growth of student enrolment numbers at public universities, as follows:

1994	2019
495 356	1 074 912

Despite these achievements and plans, the higher-education sector in South Africa has seen some challenges in recent years.

- University subsidies are no longer as stable as before, for example, NSFAS, NRF.
- Load-shedding of electricity and its impact on operations and student life have become a disrupter of note, forcing a diversion of funds and energies to try and mitigate this impact.
- Student protests are on the rise, causing instability in the rolling out of the learning programme and calendar.
- Governance issues in the higher-education sector have seen some universities going under administration in recent times.





6. Funding and finances

Below are some of the financial considerations taken into account when this strategy was developed.

- Dependency on state funding: The state budget allocations to universities have increased, including additional funds allocated to NSFAS (indirect state funding to universities). Future uncertainty about NSFAS sustainability and subsidy cuts exists.
- As a long-term strategy, the NWU needs to become less dependent on state funding via its own income generation. For the short- and medium-term strategy the focus needs to be on cost-effectiveness and on building reserves as well (increased efficiencies; disciplined cost management; viability of academic programmes and support cost reduction).
- Launching of an income-optimising initiative to identify opportunities to increase revenues (for example, introduce more short courses, optimise on-campus and off-campus student mix, market-related student fees, optimal use of blended learning and infrastructure).

7. Strategic people assumptions

Below are some of the talent management considerations taken into consideration in developing this strategy.

- Upskilling is part of the future. However, companies also need to rethink their jobs: redesign the workflow, combine some positions, add others, and probably eliminate some.
- Fostering of emotional commitment and building alignment between employees' personal and the organisations' values for better purpose-driven work.
- The human experience (HX) will replace the employee experience (EX). The work environment must be re-humanised to integrate employees' physical, mental, financial and social health into the design of work itself.
- New collaboration tools and technologies support the development of super teams and teams, as they can optimise the productive interaction between people.
- Harnessing the efficacy of a multi-generational cohesion.

8. External stakeholders

Below are some of the external stakeholder considerations taken into consideration in developing this strategy.



- It is time to consider new models of engagement for the private sector and the government.
- The rapid pace of today's advances requires a more comprehensive workforce education strategy across a spectrum of measures, including policy, access, programmes and outreach.
- The private sector, government, educators and policymakers must work together to deliver multiple pathways to opportunities for young people looking for their first foothold in the job market, as well as to reskill and upskill workers striving to maintain their place in the workforce.
- There is recognition that community members want to play a meaningful role in the discussion, decision-making and implementation of projects affecting them.
- Community projects will have to draw on multi-disciplinary knowledge from the university and local knowledge from the community.
- The diversity and unpredictability of the new kind of prospective students – their information access and engagement preferences must be taken into consideration.

9. Evaluation of the previous strategy (2015–2025)

Nineteen key success factors were identified in the outgoing NWU strategy. An exercise to determine the extent to which these factors had been achieved was conducted in February 2023. The results indicated that some of success criteria had been partially achieved, while others were deemed to be fully engrained.

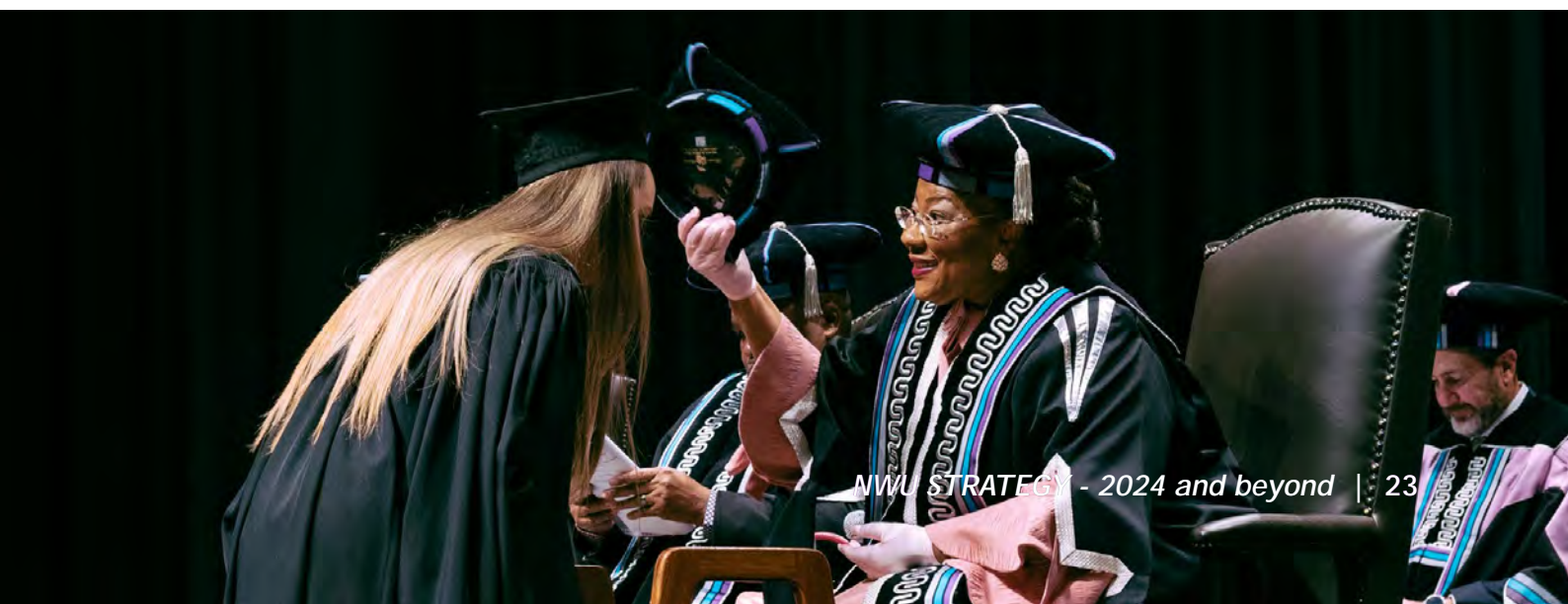
However, it should be noted that the landscape has changed since the inception of the outgoing strategy (2015), therefore some criteria shifted in terms of their criticality but not necessarily in terms of their value. For instance, major disruptors faced higher-education institutions, notably the introduction of free higher education and Covid-19.

The following is a list of the success criteria whose collective ethos still finds relevance in the NWU Strategy going forward. We will consolidate these and continue to pursue others.

- High-quality teaching and learning.
- Research and innovation intensity: notable international profile and impact, ranking among the top 500 globally.
- Community engagement: directly surrounding communities.
- Student value proposition: quality of core business; student equity of access.
- Size and shape.
- People profile (staff): must take cognisance of the principle that South African universities must be broadly representative of the demographics of the higher-education sector, with provision for measures to address the imbalances of the past.
- Employer of choice in higher education in South Africa for well-qualified staff and globally acknowledged academic staff and other knowledge workers, high staff retention, local/international employment mix for academic staff.
- Academics and support staff with an open mindset (nationally and internationally), critical in thinking, respectful of the right to freedom of expression, commitment to and respect for the full scope of diversity, scholarship, commitment to students, active citizenry, good work ethic, PhDs, high-performance individuals (wholeness, results-centred, appropriate conduct, enthusiastic, team-oriented, relationship competent, personal leaders, self-developing, effective followers, creative, change mindset).
- Staff productivity outlook (personal and external contexts).
- Innovative, coaching, leading commitment to diversity.
- Fully engaged and satisfied people: engagement survey results exceeding global benchmarks, climate survey results consistent at desired levels.
- Organisational culture enabled by leaders through policies, implementation strategies and deliberate actions. Culture evidenced by behaviours congruent with ethics, trust, care, value-based collective diversity, transformational.
- Core people practices at competitive edge-creating level: talent attraction and retention, performance development, people development (including leadership)

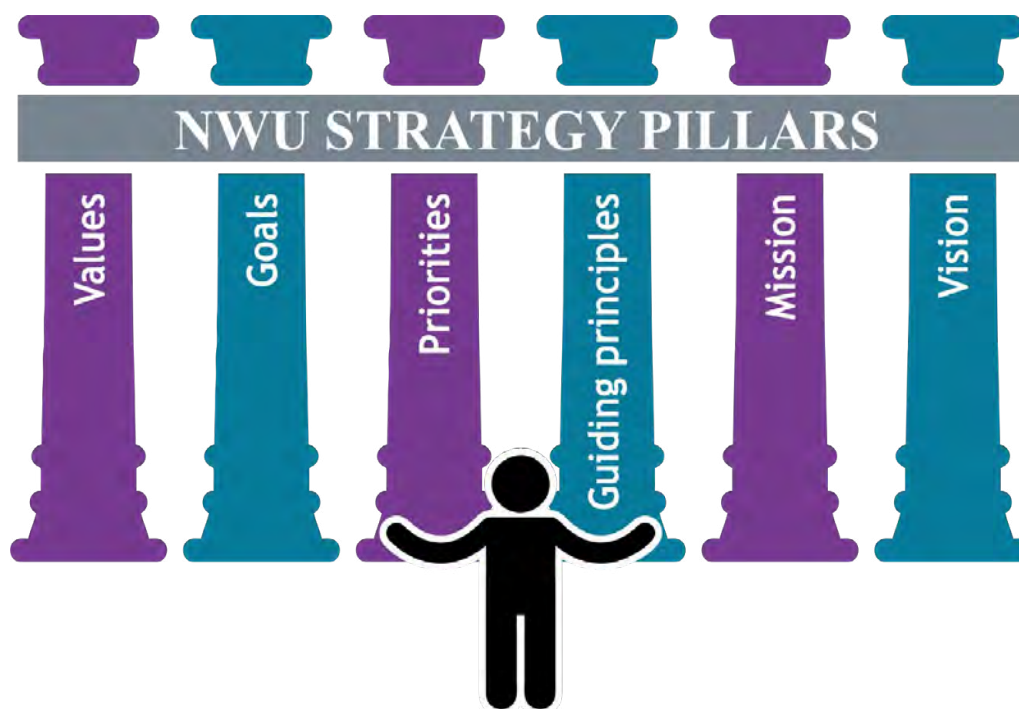


- Effective organisational and structure management model in context of a geographically dispersed multi-campus university: unitary university-based, discipline-strengthening and performance enabling, promoting and enabling interdisciplinary collaboration, efficient and value-contributing support services, cost-effective, organisational sustainability.
- Environmental practices and processes: promoting sustainability, best practices practised, year-on-year (YoY exceeding industry standard) reduction of carbon footprint, year-on-year (YoY exceeding industry standard) reduction in electricity and water usage, recycling effective, a culture of environmental stewardship in evidence among staff and students, integrated planned investments in green practices and infrastructure, green university in evidence, integration of principles of environmental sustainability in the curriculum.
- Governance, risk and compliance: compliant with general and higher-education sector-specific legislation, all regulatory rules and procedures, and institutional policies (100%).
- Holistic and integrated educational technology platform: IT will be a key partner in driving digital transformation in the Fourth Industrial Revolution by establishing an educational technology ecosystem that integrates students, partners, employees and things. This is done in order to connect people to contextualised information and services through modern digital delivery channels and a resilient integration platform sitting on top of stable, hybrid, responsive, manageable and secure infrastructure and enabling systems, in order to transform business and operating models, drive analytical insights and exceptional customer experience, in order to differentiate the NWU from others.
- Institutional research and business intelligence: strategic intelligence accessible for scenario development, trend analysis, strategic decision-making and integrated planning and reporting, best-in-class analytics, including intelligent systems capability, real-time reporting enabled, accurate and reliable information, integrated and single data set, qualitative analysis enabled, webometric position in top 800 globally and top five universities in South Africa.
- Communication infrastructure and capability: brand equity developing, enabling of effective leader communication, strategic, leading-edge channels, appropriate content, media risk and opportunity constantly managed, integrated, optimally participative, executive leadership owned. Higher-education survey performance in top five.



10. Our strategy pillars

The NWU has defined the key strategy pillars for its next cycle. It is acknowledged that the changes in the world mean changes in the higher-education sectors. Indeed, the idea is for our strategy to be not only inward-looking. While the one eye will be focusing on the university's interests, we are also keen to be outward-looking: focusing with the other eye on stakeholder and community interests.



Vision

To discover new frontiers and opportunities that benefit society, advancing our relevance and impact.

Mission

To benefit society through the provision of knowledge, excelling in innovative teaching, cutting-edge research and focused engagement with the community.

Values

Values describe the key behavioural attributes and attitudes that the organisation would like to see manifested and embraced by staff, students and other **stakeholders**. Our values ensure that we can hold each other accountable.

Value descriptors



Caring and inclusive – We consider the well-being of all our students and staff, and act in an inclusive and caring manner towards our NWU community.



Embracing diversity – We build an inclusive university community that embraces differences and respects the rights and dignity of its members.



Transparency – We conduct ourselves and our business in an open manner, communicating clearly and truthfully in co-creating our NWU vision.



Excellence in all our endeavours – We strive for the achievement of high-quality standards in everything we do to meet our personal, university, community and societal expectations.



Ethics in all endeavours – We display and maintain a commitment to integrity, being honest and treating all people in a fair and consistent manner.



Responsibility and accountability – We take ownership of our actions and their consequences and remain committed to solving challenges and harnessing opportunities.



Academic freedom and freedom of research – We promote and protect freedom of thought and expression through teaching and learning and research.



11. Our priorities

Our priorities define that which matters to us in this strategy cycle. They have been identified as follows:

- **Impact** – Realising academic and social impact through innovative and forward-looking approaches and programmes.
- **Growth** – Growing the NWU's trajectory and footprint in scope, quality, reach, postgraduate students and relevance of our products and offerings.
- **Diversity** – Embracing the diversity of NWU stakeholders through the application of inclusive practices.
- **Partnerships** – Delivery through value-adding partnerships.
- **Internationalisation** – Growing the NWU's international profile through collaborations with international counterparts at various levels.
- **Operational excellence** – Continuously enabling strategy execution through excellent operations.



12. Strategic projects

To give effect to our priorities, the NWU has identified strategic projects that further work towards the ideals and priorities as defined in the following table:

Strategic projects advancing impact

- Positioning of the NWU Business School
- Increasing the capacity of municipal and provincial government
- **Staff cost optimisation** (Phases 2 and 3)
- **Digital strategic projects** (SIS, LMS, P&C System, Hyflex Class-room, S.H.E system implementation, etc.)
- Green energy strategy (sustainability)
- Digital humanities project
- **HySA project**

Strategic projects advancing growth

- Establishment of the NWU enterprises
- **Establishment of the NWU medical school**
- Establishment of the NWU Centre for Sustainable Mining
- Establishment of the NWU veterinary school
- Integration of colleges of agriculture in North West
- Growing the number of postgraduate students

Strategic projects advancing internationalisation

- **Collaborations with other institutions on R&I**
- Combined degrees in T&L
- International partnerships, etc.
- Exchange programmes

Strategic projects advancing diversity

- Multi-generational strategy
- **Transformation journey implementation**
- Implementation of bespoke attraction and retention strategies on each of the campuses

Strategic projects advancing operational excellence

- Organisational effectiveness (business excellence)
- **Organisational risk maturity**
- Ensuring the effectiveness of the unitary operating model (process, structure, systems)
- Project management proficiency
- Monitoring the implementation of the SWOT action plan
- **Performance improvements based on data analysis**

There is a legitimate concern of project overload in any strategy implementation. The success of these projects will lie in a well-thought-out prioritisation approach. The NWU has opted to utilise the prioritisation framework of the three strategies in which the projects are spread out over the strategy cycle in three stages, as follows:

1. Extend and defend the core business of the university (take-off within two years of the strategy cycle)
2. Build emerging business opportunity (take-off within three years of the strategy cycle)

3. Future competitive advantage – viable options (take-off within four to five years of the strategy cycle)

Our strategic projects are therefore categorised into these three groups. This is, of course, highly informed by the budget and funds available. Therefore, the prioritisation matrix will be reviewed annually to align with budget imperatives.

It is important to note that not all strategic projects are new – those in the bold font are already underway.



13. Our guiding principles

Guiding principles define the character of the institution, how we conduct the business of the university. It is important for us to define this character because it is to permeate and be weaved into our policies, procedures, processes and practices. We have defined five characteristics, as follows.

Our institutional character

- Sustainability
- Transformation
- Digitisation
- Student centricity
- Valuing our people



Principle descriptors

- **Sustainability** – adhere to principles and practices that engender sustainability
- **Transformation** – embody the transformation journey as defined by the NWU
- **Digitisation** – embrace the opportunities brought about by digitisation for impactful delivery
- **Student centricity** – ensure that the student is at the core of all academic and co-curricular programmes by utilising education to facilitate learning and active student engagement
- **Valuing our people** – demonstrably applying the ethic of care and empathy in our interactions with our people – staff and students

14. Our goals



Teaching and learning:

Promote excellent student-centric learning and teaching at the NWU for relevance to market and knowledge generation.

Strategic objectives/sub-goals

- Ensure good governance of teaching and learning.
- Support qualification and programme planning, design and development.
- Support and enhance excellent and innovative teaching and learning in an enabling teaching-learning environment.
- Attract, develop and retain excellent teaching-learning staff.
- Improve and support student success.
- Transform our curriculum to ensure that students exit programmes with adequate knowledge and strategies to contribute to 21st-century problem-solving.



Research and innovation:

Conduct research and innovation with a strategic focus on global impact.

Strategic objectives/sub-goals

- Generate new knowledge through high-quality publications and scientific leadership.
- Inspire and nurture the next generation of researchers.
- Improve international stature and visibility of scholars and research outputs.
- Intensify research through international partnerships and collaborations.
- Support and sustain an ecosystem for conducive creation of IP and commercialisation.



Community engagement:

Integrate and align community engagement with teaching-learning and research to develop a culture of active citizenship.

Strategic objectives/sub-goals

- Support and collaborate with communities for mutual benefit.
- Develop graduate attributes through community engagement interventions.
- Empower, educate and equip staff regarding community engagement activities.
- Monitor, evaluate and report on the impact of the university's community engagement activities.
- Promote sustainability advocacy and awareness in community engagement projects.



Student life:

Develop a clearly differentiated student value proposition with a focus on creating an inclusive environment aimed at developing students holistically through structured and unstructured co-curricular programmes that are relevant and desirable and meet students' needs.

Strategic objectives/sub-goals

- Maintain and enhance student experiences through student life co-curricular programmes and efficient service delivery to students (access to/ effectiveness/reporting/feedback/ measurability).
- Maintain and enhance a student culture/environment that supports and improves diversity, multi-culturalism, and social cohesion.
- Develop and maintain students' social citizenship through effective and impactful community engagement programmes and peer support initiatives and networks.
- Increase external stakeholder (local community, business, alumni) collaboration and involvement in co-curricular programmes, services, and student experience.
- Enhance students' leadership skills and competencies.



People and culture:

Attract, develop, and retain excellent staff by creating an environment that is diverse, equitable and inclusive.

Strategic objectives/sub-goals

- Promote and enhance employment equity.
- Manage personnel cost-efficiency to increase institutional operational effectiveness.
- Attract and retain excellent staff.
- Cultivate and enhance an ethical, inclusive, welcoming and values-driven culture.
- Create an enabling and values-driven, transparent, and engaged leadership culture.
- Implement the P&C digital transformation strategy through effective automation and digitisation.
- Enhance stakeholder relationships.



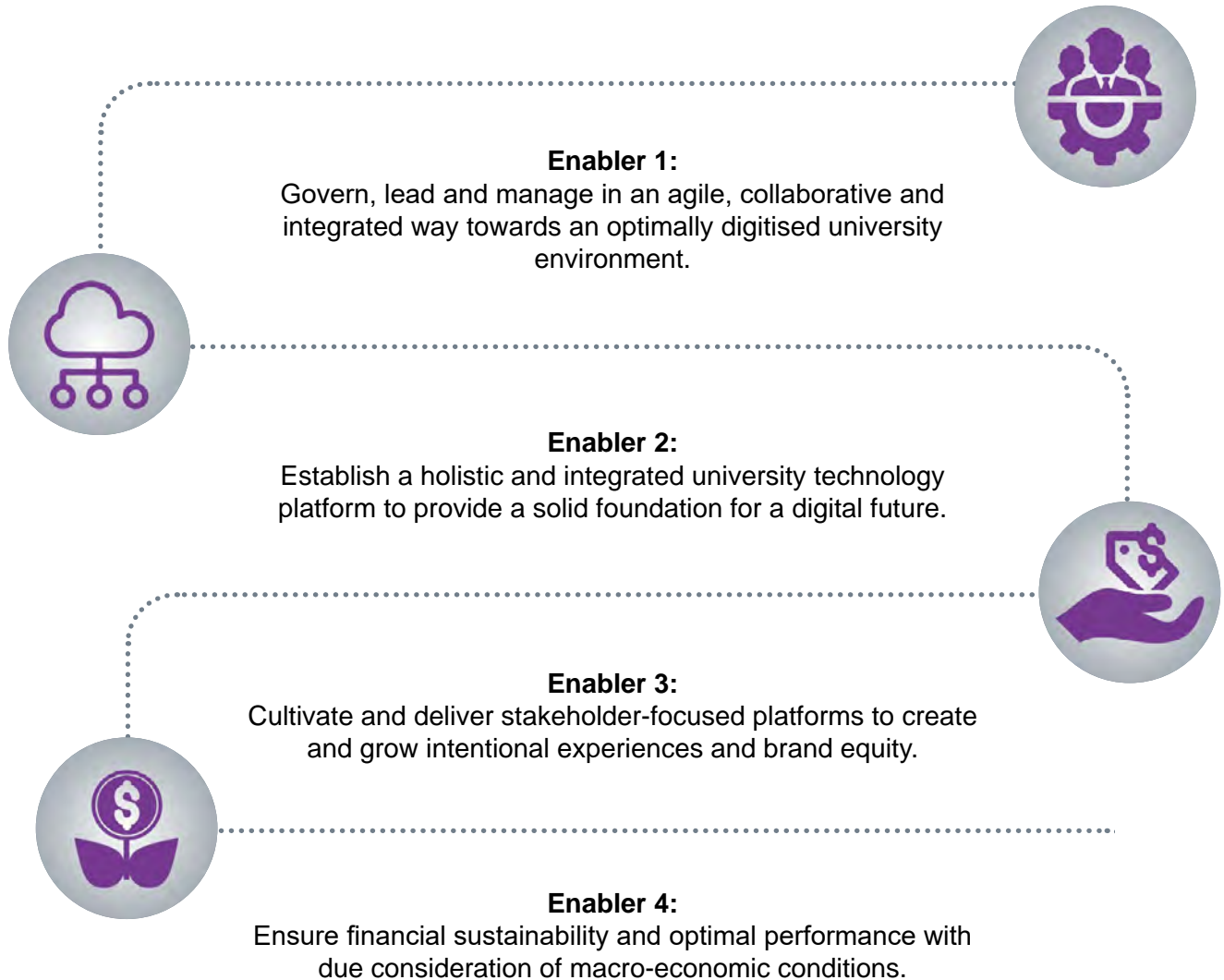
Digital transformation:

To advance and implement the digital business strategy to create a competitive advantage for the university and ultimately unlock alternative revenue streams.

Strategic objectives/sub-goals

- Revise the digital business strategy in line with changing NWU strategic goals.
- Develop data and analytics capability (DASOM) to support AI and decision-making.
- Build technical capability (Agility Hub) for AI and automation implementation.
- Support the successful implementation of enterprise digital solutions (SIS, HR, LMS).
- Implement a stable and secure IT and integration platform (NGDE) to provide a solid foundation for NWU digital transformation.
- Implement institution-wide digital transformation (DBS, Dx) awareness and change management programmes across campuses.
- Build cooperation and collaboration partnerships with local and international trailblazer institutions for Dx knowledge exchange.

Enablers



15. Linkages with DHET strategy and plans

The university strategy has a direct link with the DHET's own strategy and Programme 3: University Education as expressed in the APP 2023/24 and captured as follows:

Programme 3: University Education

Purpose: Develop and coordinate policy and regulatory frameworks for an effective and efficient university education system. Provide financial and other support to universities, the National Student Financial Aid Scheme and national higher-education institutions.

This programme has six budget sub-programmes:

- **Programme Management:** Manages delegated administrative and financial responsibilities and coordinates all monitoring and evaluation functions for the programme.
- **University Planning and Institutional Funding:** Manages planning and funding for the public higher-education sector.
- **Institutional Governance and Management Support:** Monitors and supports institutional governance management and provides sector liaison services.
- **Higher Education Policy Development and Research:** Develops higher-education policy, supports research and regulates the private higher-education system.
- **Teaching, Learning and Research Development:** Promotes, develops, monitors and evaluates the implementation of qualification policies, programmes and systems for the development of high-quality teaching across all education sectors, including pre-schooling, schooling and post-schooling, and supports effective teaching and learning and research development in university education, including through international scholarship opportunities.
- **University Subsidies:** Transfers payments to universities annually.



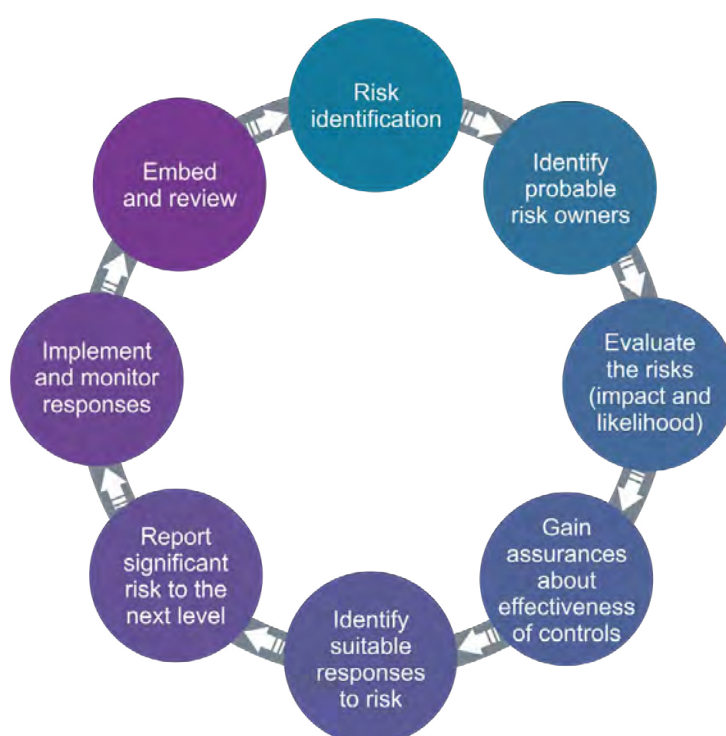
Furthermore, the DHET has specified certain stipulations regarding its targets for student enrolments, bursaries, completions and graduates in different disciplines. These will be addressed by our own APP 2024/24. Of relevance to the NWU as a university is their projected MTEF figures, expressed as follows:

	Outputs	Output indicators	Audited performance			Estimated performance	MTEF targets		
			2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
4.	Student enrolments at public universities	Number of students enrolled at public universities annually	1 085 568	1 074 912	1 094 808	1 098 000	1 110 360	1 131 000	1 113 864
5.	University students receiving funding through NSFAS bursaries	Number of university students receiving funding through NSFAS bursaries annually	393 781	393 767	507 343	431 412	439 659	450 000	559 884
OUTCOME: IMPROVED SUCCESS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE PSET SYSTEM									
6.	Students completing a university qualification	Number of students completing a university qualification annually	210 931	221 942	237 882	227 000	232 000	237 000	249 509
7.	Graduates in engineering	Number of graduates in engineering annually	13 891	13 714	12 652	14 750	14 477	14 800	14 735
8.	Graduates in natural and physical sciences	Number of graduates in natural and physical sciences annually	9 270	9 121	9 642	11 000	11 516	11 400	10 943
9.	Graduates in human health science	Number of graduates in human health science annually	10 747	9 960	9 646	10 000	10 200	10 660	9 950
10.	Graduates in animal health science	Number of graduates in animal health science annually		516	867	900	1 013	1 050	925
11.	Graduates in initial teacher education	Number of graduates in initial teacher education annually	28 408	28 335	30 809	29 000	29 500	30 000	33 094

16. Risk management

The NWU subscribes to the COSO 2017 risk management framework. Risk management is an integral part of the strategy development process and should therefore feature in any strategy document.

Our risk management methodology includes the following stages.



All identified risks and opportunities will be linked to the strategic goals and objectives of the university and the annual performance plan. The risk management plan encompasses the strategy all the way down to operational plans.

The NWU maintains a separate strategic risk register, which is monitored and updated annually in line with the annual performance plan.

