



NWU®

NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY  
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT  
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE BOPHIRIMA

INTEGRATED ANNUAL REPORT | 2020



*Explore | Expand | Evolve*



## ○ Front page image ○

The image on the front page symbolises our theme, namely to adapt to the new circumstances brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, and to **explore, expand and evolve**. We started this journey in 2020 – not only to keep up with changing circumstances, but to be constantly one step ahead.

In our front page image, the background (left), resembling a computer motherboard, symbolises our commitment to embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Already steadily on our way towards finalising a digital strategy to keep pace with technological developments, we accelerated our digital journey as a result of the lockdown and resulting shift to online learning.

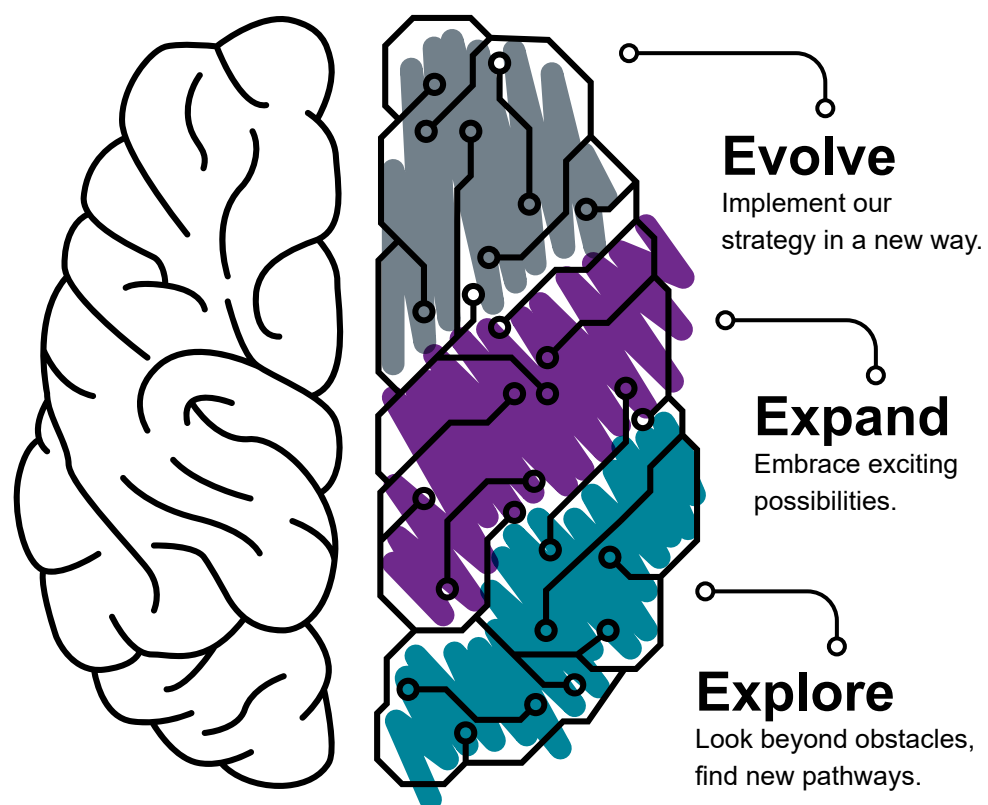
The brain in the front page image (centre) symbolises how we had to reimagine the way we think and act, and see the future. The colours bursting forth (right) portray our innovative and creative discovery of new pathways that **expand** our thinking and allow us to evolve to fully embrace the exciting opportunities the future may bring.

## ○ Covering our theme ○

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed more than just our day-to-day life. It has also had a profound impact on education.

In making sure that the NWU's core business of teaching-learning, research and community engagement could continue, we had to adapt to the new normal, **explore** new ways of doing things, **expand** our horizons and **evolve** to become even more than we were before.

Adapt, **explore, expand and evolve** was the theme running through our activities in 2021 and now also through our story as told in this integrated report.



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This is a more concise version of the integrated annual report which the NWU Council approved on 17 June 2021 and was submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) at the end of June.

The **full report** is available on the NWU website. We welcome feedback on our reporting approach – please send your comments or suggestions to our registrar, **Prof Marlene Verhoef**.

Throughout this concise version of the report, you will **find links** to related information. Some of this is in other sections in this report and some is hosted on our NWU website or posted elsewhere on the internet. Certain links will also take you to the relevant information included in the full integrated report that was submitted to the DHET. Look out for these bold, turquoise links – they will look like this: **link**.

After reading the linked information, click on the relevant button at the bottom of the page to return to where you were reading.



The NWU is a place where everyone should feel at home. The languages used have a lot to do with that sense of belonging.

In line with our functional multilingual language plan, you will be able to click on "**language choice buttons**" that will enable you to read certain sections or topics in this integrated report in Setswana, Sesotho or Afrikaans.

# About this report

## Explore, expand and evolve

Owing to the Covid-19 pandemic, 2020 was a year like no other. Instead of “business as usual”, we as the NWU had to **adapt** to the new circumstances and **explore, expand** and **evolve** to save the academic year in the short term, but also stay steadfast on our path towards realising our strategy in the long term.

In this integrated report we tell you, our stakeholders, how we achieved that balance by mobilising and effecting our resources, skills and relationships, known as our “capitals”.

There are six capitals: intellectual, human, social and relationship, manufactured, natural and financial. (Please click [here](#) to read more about our capitals.)

Although we aim to create value in all instances, our capitals can also undergo either a net decrease or experience no net change. In such cases, value is eroded or preserved.

Keeping this in mind, we are committed to interact responsibly with our capitals, as our resources and relationships are, after all, vital to our ability to create sustainable value.

## This story is for you

The story of how we **explore, expand** and **evolve** – during 2020 and beyond – is intended for you, our stakeholders.

## Navigating our story

We use different icons to show the connectivity between the various sections in our integrated report.

### Our capitals

#### INTELLECTUAL

These include our processes, procedures, policies, strategies, and knowledge-based intangibles emanating from our teaching and learning and research and innovation activities

#### HUMAN

Staff and students (internal stakeholders)

#### SOCIAL AND RELATIONSHIP

Relationships with external stakeholders

#### MANUFACTURING

Manufactured/manufacturing  
Tangible infrastructure and assets

#### NATURAL

Environmental/natural resources

#### FINANCIAL

Funds that we obtain and spend according to budget

Our stakeholders are those individuals or groups whom we affect through our activities and services, and whose actions can also affect our ability to successfully implement our strategy and achieve our goals.

This integrated report mainly talks to our primary stakeholders. They are our students, alumni, Council, staff, the Department of Higher Education and Training, our peers, our collaboration partners and our business communities (as future employers of our students).

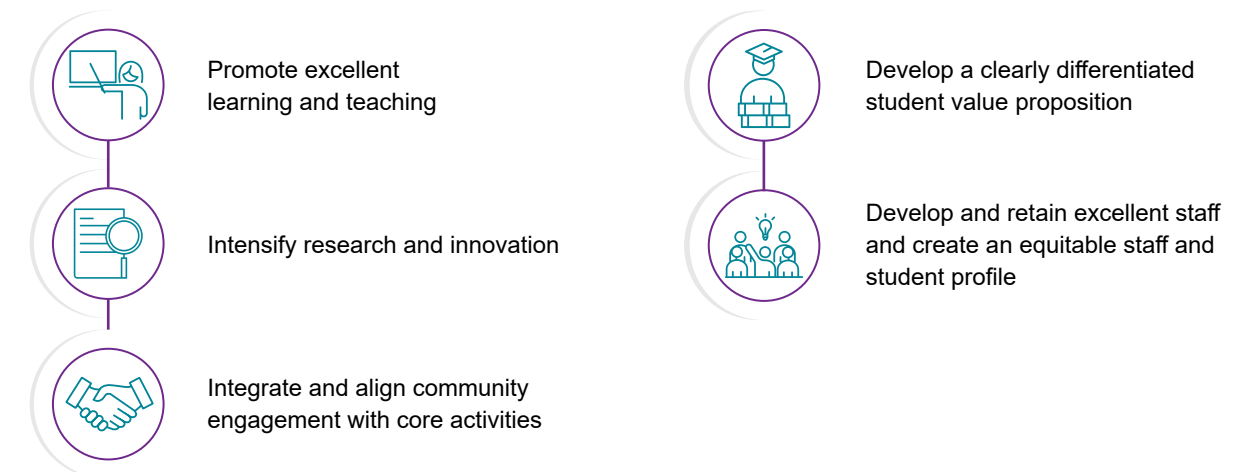
However, we believe that our story will also be of value to the **other stakeholders** we engage with at the NWU.

## How our story expands

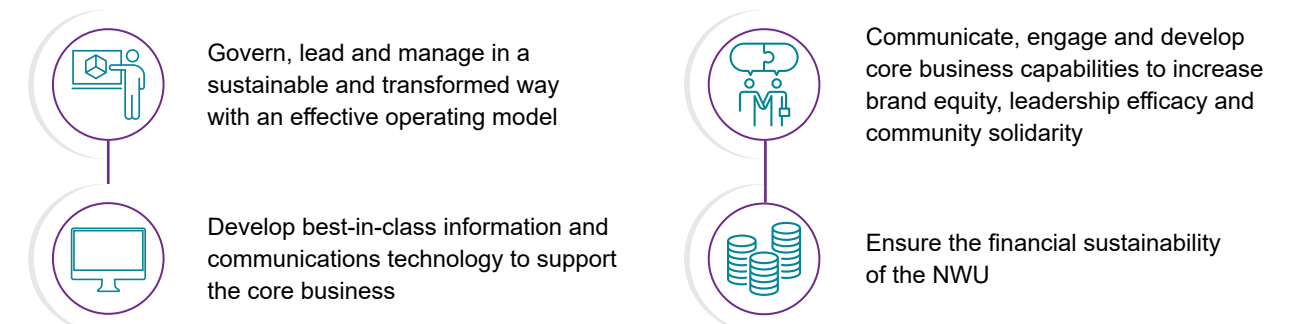
As the pandemic swept across the globe, we had to adapt the way we look at education and execute our core business. Our story in this integrated report is to a great extent shaped by the new challenges we had to overcome.

At the beginning of our story, we give an **overview** of the NWU and explain how we interacted with our **external environment** and specifically how we experienced and responded to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Also in this report is a graphic of our **business model**, which is about creating value for the NWU and our stakeholders.

### Our strategic goals



### Our enablers



## Materiality of the report content

We use the concept of “materiality” to decide what information to include in this report. As set out in the International Integrated Reporting Council’s (IIRC) Integrated Reporting Framework, we see material matters as:

- Issues that substantively affect the university’s ability to create value over the short, medium and long term; and
- Issues that are important to any stakeholder wishing to make an informed assessment of the NWU’s ability to generate value.

### How we identify relevant matters

We, as the integrated reporting task team, led by the NWU’s registrar and including the deputy vice-chancellor for planning and the chief strategy officer in the office

of the vice-chancellor, identified those matters with the highest potential to impact our ability to create value.

In the process, we took the following frameworks into account:

- The NWU’s \*Annual Performance Plan (APP) that puts the strategic plan into action;
- The common strategic assumptions that underpin our strategy;
- The \*\*risk register;
- The IIRC’s Integrated Reporting Framework; and
- The DHET’s reporting regulations.

We also considered those factors in our external environment that substantially affect our ability to create value.

In addition, materiality was informed by the issues our stakeholders raise during their interaction with the university. These are described in the section on **how we engage with our stakeholders**, in the table under the subheading: Issues raised.

\* The goals, enablers and strategic assumptions, as included in the APP, resulted from the process the University Management Committee members use to identify material matters to be included when drawing up or revising the APP.

\*\* Our key risks and opportunities are the result of an institution-wide identification and prioritising process.

## Reporting period and scope, and suite of reports

### Reporting period

Our integrated report reflects the performance of the NWU across its three campuses for the period

1 January to 31 December 2020.

In addition to the **financial information**, the report also includes non-financial information. This includes facts about our non-financial performance, risks and opportunities and the internal and external factors that substantially influence our business. Where material, we discuss the real and potential impact of these matters on our ability to create value.

### Reporting cycle

Annually in December

### Contact point for questions:

marlene.verhoef@nwu.ac.za

### Suite of reports

Our integrated report is the primary vehicle for reporting to our stakeholders. It is supplemented by the following:

- **Annual financial statements for the year ending 31 December 2020**, which can be found on the NWU website.
- Documents for various stakeholders, which can also be accessed on the NWU website.

*"No material matters have been omitted from the report due to confidentiality, legal or information reliability constraints."*

## Our reporting framework

This integrated report has been prepared in accordance with the IIRC's International Integrated Reporting Framework and the DHET's Regulations for Annual Reporting by Higher Education Institutions (published in June 2014 and incorporating principles from the King III Report).

### Assurance

Internal and external assurance providers provide assurance about the effectiveness of the internal controls at the NWU. Their input has been incorporated into this report.

We also made sure that our reporting is accurate, by taking the following steps:

- After compiling the integrated report, we submitted it to the University Management Committee. The committee considered the completeness and accuracy of the

content and provided feedback where necessary, which was then incorporated into the integrated report. Only then did we submit the report first to the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee and then to Council for approval.

- The student and staff data in this report was obtained from our Institutional Planning and Strategic Intelligence Department, which is also responsible for submitting NWU data to the Higher Education Information Management System (HEMIS).

PricewaterhouseCoopers also independently audited the information in our **performance assessment report**. The **annual financial statements**, including the auditors' report, can be obtained from the NWU website.

More information about combined assurance can be found in the **governance section** of this report.

## Council approval

Council and its subcommittees are responsible for overseeing the integrity and completeness of this integrated report.

Council confirms that it has reviewed the contents of the report and applied its collective mind to the preparation and presentation of this report.

Furthermore, Council believes that it has appropriately considered the accuracy and completeness of the material matters, as well as the reliability of the information presented in this report.

Council has sufficiently considered and materially presented these matters in accordance with the Integrated Reporting Framework of the IIRC.

*Council approved the 2020 integrated report on 17 June 2021.*



**DR BISMARK TYOBEKA**  
CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL




**MR THABO MOKGATLHA**  
CHAIRPERSON: AUDIT, RISK AND  
COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE


# Overview of the NWU

## Performance highlights

In 2020 we continued to create value for the NWU and for our stakeholders. The following achievements – and in many instances also improvements – are noteworthy:

**231**   
postdoctoral fellows in \* 2019  
(2018: 215)

**1 541,15**  
article equivalents  
approved in \*2019  
(2018: 1 438,28)

**R2,4 billion**  
financial aid  
administered by the  
offices on the  
three campuses  
(2019: R1,6 billion) 

**11 640**  
distance students enrolled  
(2019: 19 024)

**15 454**  
qualifications awarded in 2020  
(2019: 14 961)

**251** PhDs  
awarded  
in 2020  
(2019: 314)

**5** **NWU**  
centres  
of  
excellence  
(2019: 5)

**7** hosted  
research  
entities  
(centres,  
platforms,  
institutes)  
(2019: 7)

**248** in \*2019  
NRF-rated researchers  
(2018: 232) 



**90,5%**  
undergraduate success rate  
in 2020  
(2019: 83,8%)

**Over R163 million**

spent on infrastructure  
and facilities  
(2019: R273 million)

Position **922**  
out of **20 000**  
universities globally

ranked by Center for World  
University Rankings  
(nationally: among the top seven)  
(2019: ranked 869 out of 8 000 universities)

\* Please note that the research figures lag two years behind



## Who we are

The North-West University is one of the 26 public higher education institutions in South Africa. We have three campuses: two in the North West province and another in Gauteng.

We have a single set of policies, systems and standards, and are driven by a set of constitutionally based values, among others ethics in all our endeavours.

We wish to foster engaged and caring staff and students, ensuring a suitable environment in which we can reach our purpose and realise our dream.



### What we do

Our core business is teaching-learning and research, with community engagement and innovation intertwined in these activities.

Ultimately, though, our core business is about creating value in the form of outputs and outcomes, while pursuing an ethic of care.

### Where we operate

We operate mainly in South Africa, but collaborate extensively with institutions and people all over the world. In 2020, the NWU had slightly more than 1 950 active agreements and memoranda of understanding.

### What sets us apart

No academic time lost in the past few years, despite national student unrest and the Covid-19 pandemic

Second-largest number of distance students in South Africa

Rural setting and safety of our campuses (During 2020, students were allowed to return to campuses and residences according to the regulations under Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 1 of the pandemic.)

## Harnessing the Covid-19 storm

“The Covid-19 pandemic had a far-reaching social and economic impact on how institutions conduct their business and people live their lives. It also had a huge transformative impact on the higher education sector, triggering new innovations and what might be described as a revolution in how universities teach and students learn.

The NWU was no exception. Although not discussed as a separate influencing factor in our external environment, the impact of the pandemic has been extensive.

Like a golden thread running through this integrated report, you will see how adapting to the new normal was intertwined with all our activities, influencing our value-creation story and taking us on a journey to **explore, expand and evolve**.



## Our external environment

Various factors in our external environment affect our capitals and consequently our ability to create value for ourselves and our stakeholders. The event that took the world by storm during 2020 and severely influenced life as we knew it, was undoubtedly the Covid-19 pandemic.

In the text below, we discuss other material factors in our external environment that affect us directly or indirectly. We also indicate how these are linked to our strategic goals and risks, and how these impact our value-creation ability.

Click [here](#) to learn more about our eight risk clusters.

### Rapidly changing societal roles/views/perceptions

Changing societal perspectives have a direct impact on the university environment as a microcosm of the larger South African and global society. Evolving views on gender norms and roles, cultural perceptions, sexuality and the role of religion have a major influence on how students engage with each other and the university.

This is clear from the level of support among students for current social movements focusing on gender-based violence and Black Lives Matter, as well as discussions on sexual fluidity and calls for cultural reforms on gender roles and norms. As an institution made up of people from many socio-economic, cultural, religious, racial and other backgrounds, we still have to do much more to ensure that we achieve the envisaged diversity at the NWU.

Similarly, the expansion of university online offerings and services, brought about by the global Covid-19 pandemic, exposed the stark inequalities in students' access to technology and the basic infrastructure they need to use such technology efficiently.

**Strategic matter affected:** development of a clearly differentiated student value proposition (goal no 4)  
**Capitals affected:** human, social and relationship, financial  
**Risks involved:** 2 and 5

### Effect on value creation

Conflict often arises when an institution cannot timeously recognise and effectively address changing societal perspectives and needs. This inability poses a risk as it can be seen to further exclude and marginalise the people impacted by such changes. The student value proposition we promote can subsequently be regarded as partially or wholly irrelevant. We therefore have to ensure that our value proposition is not based on a student culture that no longer takes societal norms and values into account.

### Our strategic response

We have to keep on refining our student governance model and feedback mechanisms to ensure effective consultation processes. This will allow us to engage and respond to projected changes proactively, and consequently maintain a relevant and valuable student experience. Sporadic and once-off engagements in reaction to changing perceptions do little to create a valuable student proposition.

Our strategic response must therefore consist of structured feedback and purpose-driven engagements, which ultimately inform decision-making processes.

The feedback we receive allows the university to clearly understand the real needs of our students. We can then adjust our existing procedures, processes, systems and structures and come up with new initiatives that support and include changing perspectives.

### Possible social instability in the higher education sector

Social instability within the higher education sector could influence our students and may result in messages and decisions within the university being received with scepticism and unwarranted resistance. This could be exacerbated by a lack of understanding of how the higher education sphere functions at a national and institutional level.

**Strategic matter affected:** development of a clearly differentiated student value proposition (goal no 4)  
**Capitals affected:** human, social and relationship, financial  
**Risks involved:** 2 and 5

### Effect on value creation

Stakeholders may resist NWU messages, which could delay and frustrate the development and eventual implementation of sustainable resolutions that advance the business of the university.

### Our strategic response

We continually refine our communication and consultation strategy, involving a wide variety of staff, students and community stakeholders. This is further buttressed by improvements in stakeholders' understanding of the functions, roles, and responsibilities of the university, further strengthening symbiotic relationships between critical stakeholders and what our response is.

## The Fourth Industrial Revolution

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), marked by rapid technological advances in all fields, has significant implications for higher education and will fundamentally reshape how universities operate.

The impact of 4IR requires not only the learning of new skills, but also the unlearning of outdated modes of operation (in terms of teaching, academic administration and student support).

Higher education is undergoing a technological revolution that will lead to agile, integrated systems,

ICT innovation will play an increasingly important role in the provision of teaching and learning and support throughout the student life cycle.

**Strategic matter affected:** teaching and learning (goal no 1), financial sustainability (enabler 4)

**Capitals affected:** All capitals

**Risks involved:** 2,3,5 6 and 8

### Effect on value creation

We need to keep pace with the 4IR and seize the opportunities that it offers to create value. These opportunities include implementing ICT innovation to support our core business, broaden access to tertiary studies as the move to online teaching and learning gains momentum and being part of worldwide phenomena such as the multiversity, the unbundled university and the blockchain university.

### Our strategic response

The development of a digital business strategy to embrace the 4IR was already well under way at the NWU when the Covid-19 pandemic changed the world as we knew it. The consequent lockdown and resulting shift to online learning forced us to accelerate our digital journey.

The result was a digital transformation in teaching and learning and the development of support systems such as a digital workplace management system, an automated work-integrated and service-learning management system and an online platform for student assessment.

We also have a team of education technologists who assist staff with the integration of technology into their teaching strategies.

## Shortage of academic staff

An ongoing constraint is the limited pool of academic staff in South Africa, especially from designated groups at senior levels.

**Strategic matter affected:** teaching and learning (goal no 1)

**Capitals affected:** intellectual, human, social and relationship, financial

**Risks involved:** 2 and 3

### Effect on value creation

High-calibre academic staff are central to our ability to add value to students and the community. Failing to attract sufficient staff with the requisite demographic diversity, skills and experience may detract from our reputation for excellent teaching and learning, innovative research and community engagement with impact. It may also limit our capacity to implement functional multilingualism. Another risk associated with the recruitment challenges we are experiencing is an overreliance on temporary staff, which further constrains our core business capacity.

Covid-19 has added to the financial pressures on the university and necessitated stringent measures to optimise employment costs. Apart from freezing positions and transferring the associated funds to the central budget, we put special cost containment measures in place in line with the Staff Cost Risk Mitigation Plan.

### Our strategic response

Improving the representation of employees from designated groups is a priority for the NWU. Our line managers are pursuing strategies that include identifying and fast-tracking professionally qualified academics from these groups.

Through our talent management strategy, we offer staff at all levels opportunities to build successful and satisfying career paths, and provide incentives and professional development to attract and retain scarce skills, particularly black academics.

The individual remuneration review process, which is ordinarily used to ensure fair, market-related pay had to be put on hold in 2020 as a result of the uncertainties brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. Instead of conducting such reviews, we focused on cultivating a supportive and caring working environment through our strategic initiatives to construct a welcoming and unified culture.

## Fee-free higher education affects financing model

There has been a marked increase in students qualifying for funding from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). This, coupled with the evolving administrative system of NSFAS, has necessitated changes to our financing model and presented challenges in how we administer financial aid. These challenges have gained momentum since the announcement of fee-free higher education for households whose income is below a minimum threshold of R350 000, and are expected to increase significantly due to the impact of Covid-19 on the economy. Any potential that NSFAS might not be sustainable in its current form would therefore pose a significant financial risk for NWU and our students.

The increase in the number of NSFAS-qualifying students has placed pressure on all the relevant internal business processes as the number of students assisted has increased by over 370%. Where there were 4 837 approved NSFAS students in 2015, the number climbed to 22 758 in 2020.

**Strategic matter affected:** teaching and learning (goal no 1), financial sustainability (enabler 4)

**Capitals affected:** financial, human, intellectual

**Risks involved:** 1,3,5 and 8

## Fee regulation by the DHET

Each year since October 2015, the DHET has made recommendations on tuition-fee increases, which the NWU Council then takes into consideration in its decision-making. During December 2019, the department requested a sector-wide tuition-fee increase of 5,4% for 2020, followed in 2020 by a tuition-fee increase of 4,7% for 2021. While the DHET task team working on a suggested fee regulation model had to postpone its work to focus on addressing the impact of Covid-19 on the sector, we expect to participate in this process again in 2021.

**Strategic matter affected:** financial sustainability (enabler no 4)

**Capitals affected:** financial, intellectual, human

**Risks involved:** 1

### Effect on value creation

Fee regulation could put our financial stability at risk if the permitted increases do not reflect our cost structure and internal inflation rate. This may ultimately affect the quality of the services we provide. Adding to the risk of quality erosion is the still-unquantified impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Another issue is that regulations such as these have the potential to erode the autonomy of universities.

### Our strategic response

Maintaining financial stability and the quality of our services is a complex task that calls for a multipronged strategy. This entails identifying opportunities to increase our income, for instance extending our continuing education offering and focusing on fund-raising activities, and diversifying our income streams, such as by implementing new third-stream income projects in our faculties. Our strategy further includes managing our budget process and improving operating cost efficiency. We also aim to make a positive contribution to the modelling of the future funding design for higher education.

## Effect on value creation

Although the current higher education financing model has the potential to disrupt our systems, we also recognise that the model might hold financial value for the NWU and our students. Fee-free higher education has opened up access to higher education opportunities to students who would previously not have been able to afford it, while also bringing temporary financial stability to the sector.

At the same time, the fee-free model has precipitated dramatic changes in our enrolment patterns, resulting in a more complex process for managing enrolment targets and affecting the administration of registrations. The greatest risk to value creation, though, remains the potential unsustainability of the NSFAS model and the financial impact that this could have on the NWU and our students.

### Our strategic response

In 2020, the challenges linked to the increased number of students qualifying for NSFAS, as well as related administrative demands, had the potential to lead to interruptions in the academic year. We averted any such interruptions by harnessing effective administrative processes and keeping staff and students informed of developments around financial aid under the unprecedented circumstances caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. We also continued to build our long-standing relationship with NSFAS and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) as valued stakeholders.

## State funding

The R-value of the block and earmarked grants allocated to universities increased by 6,5% and 1,2% respectively from 2019 to 2020 before adjustments were made to accommodate the Covid-19 responsiveness grants. However, these increases, coupled with the expected growth in funded units and the lower-than-required increase in tuition fees, do not fully cover higher education inflation in the long run, and in fact represent a decline in state funding in real terms.

**Strategic matter affected:** teaching and learning (goal no 1), research and innovation (goal 2), student value proposition (goal 4) staff profile (goal no 5), financial sustainability (enabler 4)

**Capitals affected:** human, financial, intellectual

**Risks involved:** 1, 3 and 8

### Effect on value creation

Funding shortfalls may compel us to make budget cuts, meaning that we would not be able to fund all operational and strategic activities. In the short and medium term, however, the funding provided by the state does contribute to financial stability, bearing in mind that the impact of Covid-19 on future state funding is still unknown.

### Our strategic response

We continue to follow the path of prudence: prioritise wisely when allocating the funds available while reviewing current activities and continuously investing in opportunities to increase efficiencies.



### External research funding declines

Owing to the pandemic, most government and industry funding agencies experienced budget cuts. This led to the reduction or even discontinuation of research funding and support.

Postgraduate funding declined following NSFAS cuts and the implementation of the new NRF funding instrument, which saw fewer students being funded, although the amount per student increased.

**Strategic matter affected:** research and innovation (goal no 2)

**Capitals affected:** financial, intellectual, human, social and relationship

**Risks involved:** 3 and 7

#### Effect on value creation

Less external research funding may adversely affect our research productivity and the standing of the university in national and international rankings. At this point, however, research journal outputs have not been negatively affected and even improved. On the other hand, as was to be expected given the international travel bans in 2020, international conference proceedings outputs were down.

#### Our strategic response

Cushioning the impact of external funding cuts, we provided support in the form of mobility grants (R1 404 500) and research mentorship (R842 700), including assistance with NRF rating applications. We also contributed R850 000 to the salary component of the research chairs.

### Low-growth economy inhibits commercialisation

Subdued economic conditions led to suppressed private sector interest in licensing our intellectual property (IP) and technology, and also reduced the flow of early-stage, seed and venture capital funding for NWU start-ups.

**Strategic matter affected:** research and innovation (goal no 2)

**Capitals affected:** financial, intellectual, human, social and relationship

**Risks involved:** 3

#### Effect on value creation

Loss of potential income and reduced licensing and spin-off activity are some of the possible consequences of low uptake of our IP and technologies.

#### Our strategic response

We take a long-term view on funding, taking steps to develop and maintain good relationships with funders across economic cycles. Our approach is to engage with industry to understand their needs and challenges so that we respond with relevant solutions and innovations.

We are also improving our marketing of NWU IP, technologies and innovative research so that we can continue attracting funding, collaborators, commercialisation partners or licensees. (For more information, see 'Create value through innovation and technology'.

### Challenges in recruiting international students

Students from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other African countries have traditionally been an important target market for our postgraduate programmes.

It is becoming more difficult to recruit such students, due to stricter visa requirements for international students and intensified competition among universities for good postgraduate candidates. The DHET requirement that the NWU should prioritise South African students for postgraduate studies could also be a contributing factor.

In 2020, the pandemic prevented many international students resuming or completing their studies, resulting in a decline in the number of international students registered with the NWU.

**Strategic matter affected:** research and innovation (goal no 2)

**Capitals affected:** financial, human, social and relationships

**Risks involved:** 3

#### Effect on value creation

The number of international students enrolled at the NWU decreased from 6% of the total cohort of postgraduate students in 2016 to about 3% in 2020, which may lead to lower global rankings. As already mentioned, the pandemic had a serious impact on international enrolments in 2020 compared to 2019.

#### Our strategic response

Having opened global engagement offices on two more campuses in 2020, we are able to offer higher levels of administrative assistance to international students, making it easier for them to study with the NWU. Previously, only the Potchefstroom Campus had a global engagement office.

### National call for curriculum change and transformation

National and global trends continue to influence the higher education sector. Most recently, we have experienced the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has driven massive change in the way we teach and the way students learn. The advent of the 4IR and decolonisation of the curriculum have further highlighted the need for curricular innovation designed to transform higher education.

The shifts taking place across multiple fronts - political, economic, societal and technological - are changing the requirements for excellence in university teaching and impelling the further evolution of the university curriculum. In response, the NWU has deliberately embraced internal and external scrutiny of our modules and programmes to **expand** on teaching and learning opportunities and enhance the relevance, responsiveness and transformational potential of our academic offering. (For more information, see 'Ensure high-quality academic programmes'.)

A number of new postgraduate programmes that satisfy these requirements have been registered on the NQF, including master's programmes in nursing science, occupational hygiene and mechatronic engineering, and postgraduate engineering diplomas in industrial engineering infrastructure management and construction project management, among others.

Programme and Qualifications Mix (PQM) clearance was received for five postgraduate diplomas in nursing, three higher certificates in health, palliative care and theology, and several other qualifications in early childhood care and education, agriculture and theology.

**Strategic matter affected:** teaching and learning (goal no 1)

**Capitals affected:** intellectual, human, social and relationship, manufactured, financial

**Risks involved:** 2 and 3

#### Effect on value creation

Our Strategy Statement is "To transform and position the NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence with a commitment to social justice". 2020 had the effect of making this commitment real in ways not anticipated. The sudden dispatch of students and staff to their homes during Covid-19 lockdown levels 5 and 4 had the dramatic effect of transitioning the university to support the functioning of its core business away from the campuses.

#### Our strategic response

The NWU rose magnificently to this challenge as our academics and professional support staff took the academic offering online with great success. The university was able to procure a number of devices for students with limited resources, who also received data packages to ensure they could complete their modules online.

Faculties established call centres for additional student support, and the Centre for Teaching and Learning developed a "keep on teaching and learning" website with focused lecturer, contact and distance student support pages that were updated daily and whenever a need for support arose.

Despite the tremendous challenges of a disrupted academic year, the NWU did not lose sight of other important teaching and learning imperatives, such as improving the way we prepare our students for their various transitions: from first year to their final undergraduate years and onwards to postgraduate study, and then into entrepreneurship or the workplace.

With this in mind, we revised our teaching-learning strategy, focusing strongly on giving expression to graduate attributes such as self-direction and project and problem-based learning, which we as a university and prospective employers value. The revised strategy will impact the revision of the faculties' Integrated teaching-learning plans and the university's teaching-learning and assessment rules.

### National call for greater access to universities

Widening access to as many qualifying students as possible, is still a priority for the NWU.

Having taken the strategic decision to develop higher certificates for access purposes, we are following through with action. Three higher certificates received PQM clearance in 2020 and submission for accreditation will follow. These certificates, in health promotion, pastoral and palliative care and theology, are entry-level qualifications that will offer enrolled students additional vocational pathways and, most importantly, enable them to progress to bachelor's degree studies.

**Strategic matter affected:** teaching and learning (goal no 1)

**Capitals affected:** intellectual, human, social and relation-ship, financial

**Risks involved:** 2, 3 and 5

#### Effect on value creation

These entry-level access qualifications epitomise our commitment to higher education for the public good. The target market for the three higher certificates are people who are already active in their respective fields, meaning that the additional skills and knowledge they gain will add immediate value to their communities. Acquiring these qualifications will enable the student to progress to enrolment in further studies, with additional benefits to the student and community – and to the NWU in that we increase our intellectual and human capital, and our capacity to create value.

#### Our strategic response

Still on the subject of wider access, the NWU continues to offer 49 extended curriculum programmes (ECPs): 31 in the BSc, 14 in the BCom, four in the BAdmin degrees, as well as an extended LLB programme. We are looking forward to reviewing the ECPs in the Faculty of Economic and management sciences in 2021.

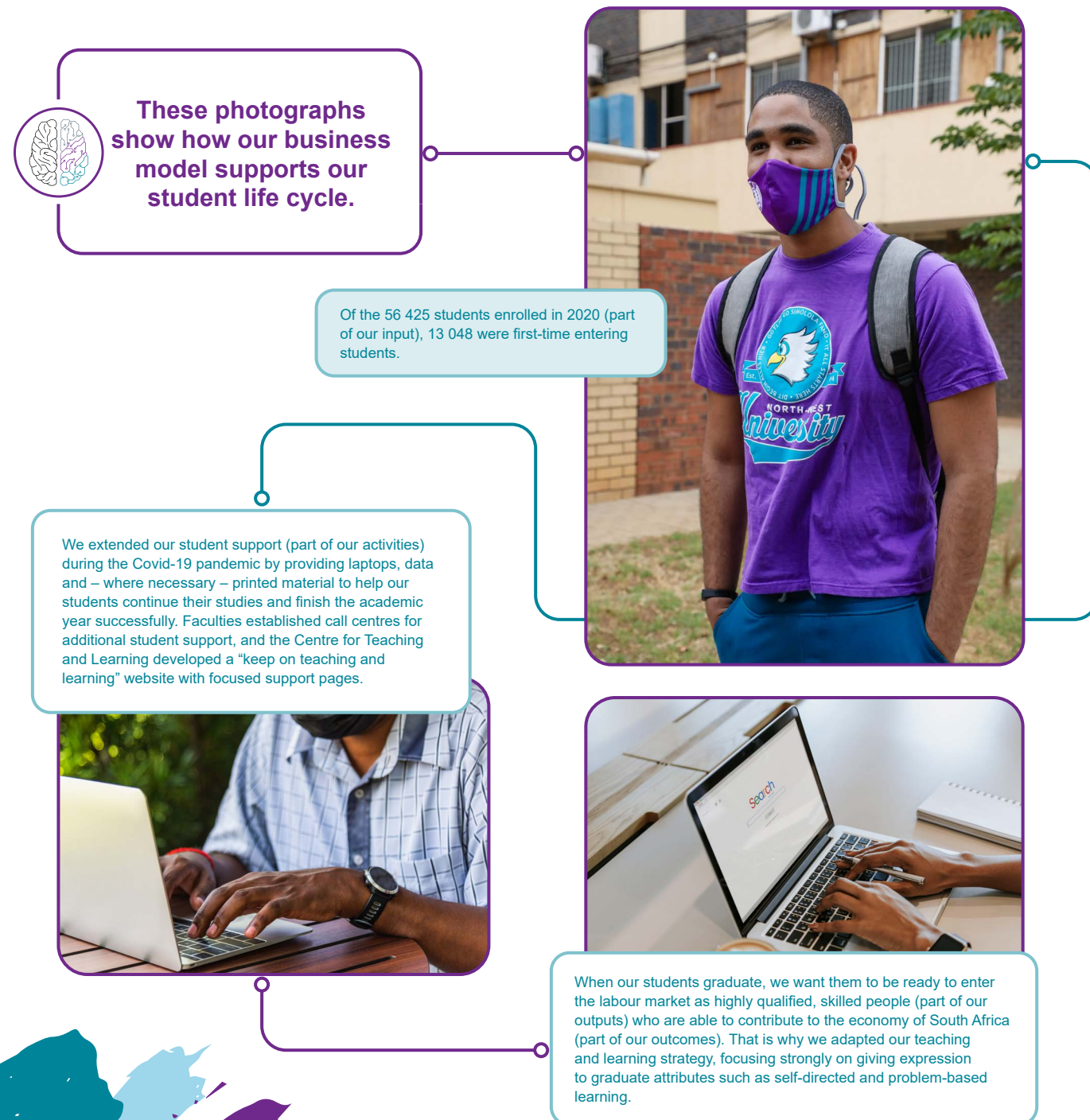


# Our business model and value chain

## Business model

In this section, you can read how we use and transform our capitals to create value for ourselves and our stakeholders through the input, activities, outputs and outcomes in our value chain – all regulated by Senate.

The functions of the NWU Senate are related to our core academic business, which in turn comprises important aspects of our value chain. That is why we present the Senate report in the format of our business model diagram, followed by a discussion of our value chain.



NWU Business model



INPUT

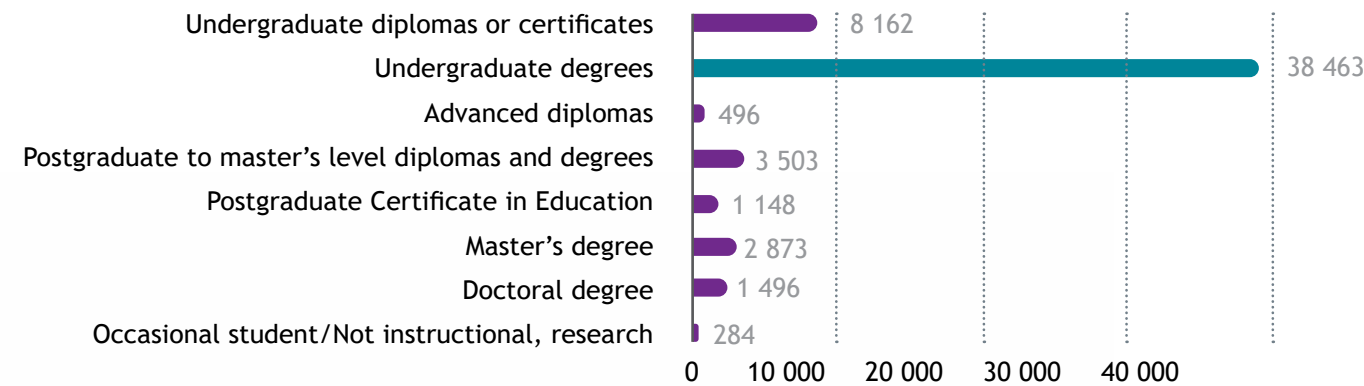
7 850 300

People reached through our online student recruitment interventions (social and relationship capital)

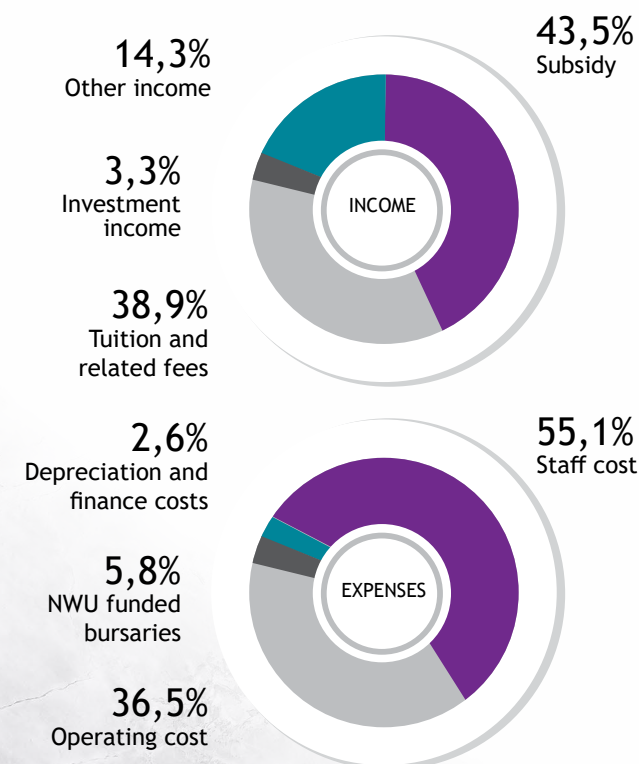
13 048

First-time entering undergraduate students (human capital)

Number of students per qualification type (human capital) TOTAL: 56 425



Budget (financial capital)



R163 million

Spent on infrastructure (manufactured capital)

23,0% increase in total assets

445 945 square metres

The total usable floor area of the NWU

1 110 hectares

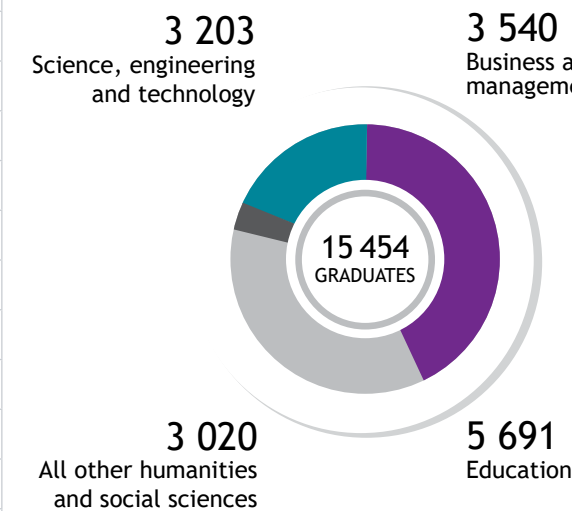
The total area occupied by the university's campuses (natural capital)

OUTPUT

Academic and support staff (human capital)

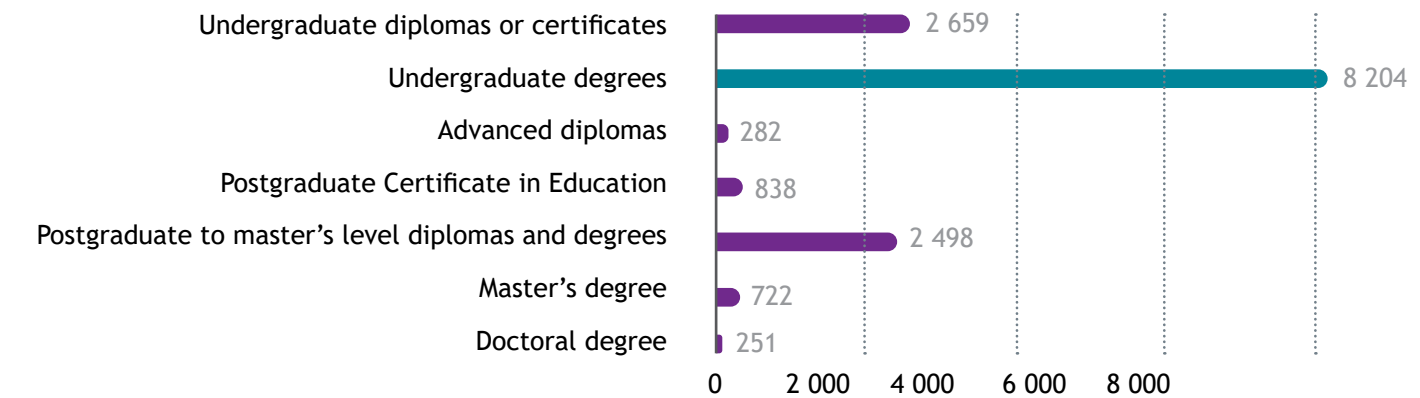
Personnel category	Permanent	Temporary	2019	2020
Crafts/trades	✓		23	26
		✓	0	0
Executive/administration/management professional	✓		90	82
		✓	5	3
Instructional/Research professional	✓		1 575	1 612
		✓	450	338
Non-professional administration	✓		1 289	1 294
		✓	3 755	3 388
Service	✓		327	325
		✓	40	59
Specialised/support professional	✓		522	503
		✓	229	160
Technical	✓		251	243
		✓	50	44
Grand total			8 606	8 077

Graduates: educational subject matter distribution (human capital)



Total number of graduates per qualification type (human capital)

TOTAL: 15 454



58%

Number of graduates who completed their studies in minimum time

R2,4 billion

The university, from its own resources, contributed R2,4 billion or 10% of the total funds allocated for financial aid.

Research output 2019 (intellectual capital)

Journal articles	1 233,18
Conference proceedings	118,75
Books and chapters	189,22
Total article equivalents published	1 541,15
Master's degrees conferred	798
Research master's	5 74,87
Research master's weighted	574,87
Doctoral degrees conferred	314
Doctoral degrees weighted	942
Total weighted research output	3 058,02
Postdoctoral fellows	231
Publication units per permanent academic staff member	0,98

Collaboration

(Social and relationship capital)

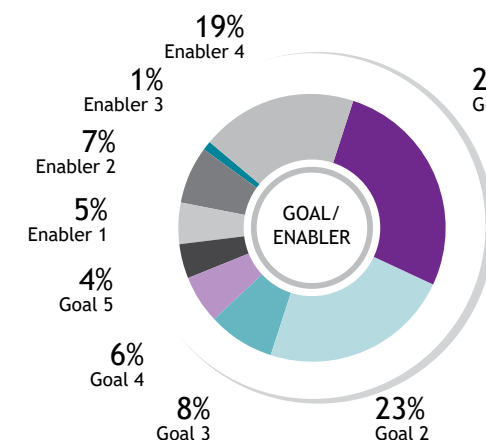
We had slightly more than 1 950 active agreements and memoranda of understanding

97,27%

Success rate of the NWU merit bursary holders

ACTIVITIES

Spending according to the Annual Performance Plan (financial capital)



Goal 1 (teaching and learning); Goal 2 (research and innovation); Goal 3 (community engagement and sustainability); Goal 4 (student value proposition); Goal 5 (staff and student equity); Enabler 1 (govern, lead and manage); Enabler 2 (develop best-in-class information and communication technology to support the core business); Enabler 3 (communication and stakeholder engagement); Enabler 4 (financial sustainability)

Student support activities:

academic support, health care, and cultural and sport activities

Staff development activities

(intellectual capital)

Conducting research

(intellectual capital)

Community engagement

(social and relationship capital)

Offering 842 academic programmes (intellectual capital)

OUTCOME

Financial sustainability (financial capital)

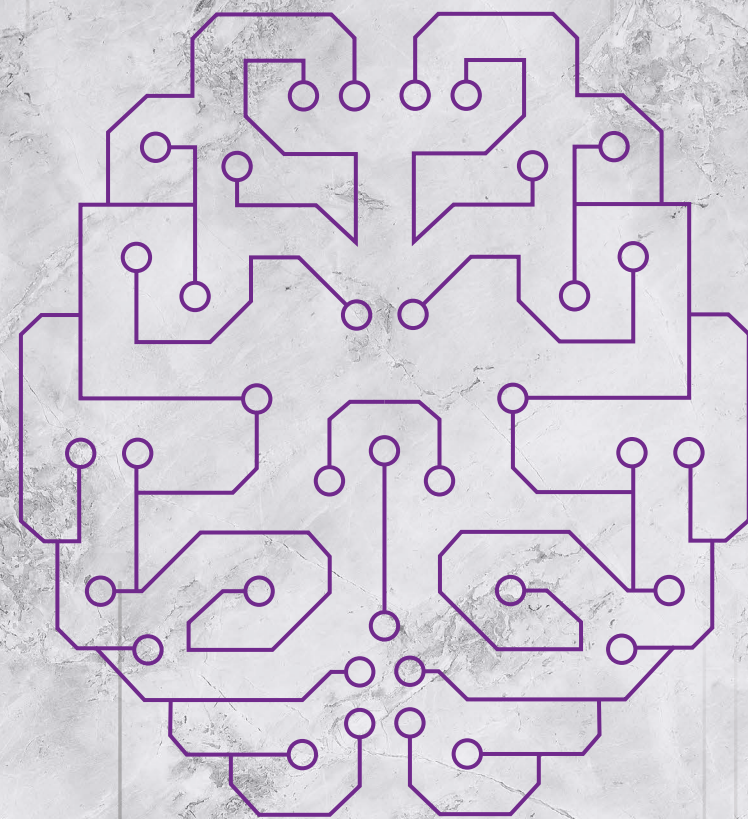
R1,2 billion

Net surplus for 2020 as reflected in the consolidated statement of comprehensive income

The Times Higher Education (THE) World Rankings announced on 28 October 2020 indicated that the NWU excelled in the clinical and health subjects, as well as in the law subject groups, and was placed globally in the 201 to 250 and the 201+ categories respectively. It also shone in psychology, where it was ranked in the 301 to 400 category.

The external environment sets the context in which we use our business model to create value.





## NWU Business model

# NWU value chain:

## Value creation through adapting, exploring, expanding and evolving

LANGUAGE BUTTONS

AFR

SES

SET

Our 2020 value-creation story was about empowering people to discover their strengths and harness their skills to thrive amidst the new normal brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In 2020, it was about setting the example for our stakeholders; taking them along on a challenging but exciting journey, we co-created value with them by **adapting**, **exploring**, **expanding** and **evolving** with us.

In other words: we invested in them because we believed in their potential (our input), we created value for them by **exploring** new possibilities and **expanding** our vision so that they could continue to grow and flourish (our activities), enabling them to **evolve** into critical thinkers (our output) and eventually enter the labour market and society as value creators themselves (our outcome).

Throughout our value chain, we access, use and transform our capitals. For instance, as part of our input, we use our sources of income (financial capital), our skilled staff members (human capital), buildings and equipment (manufactured capital) and our academic programmes (intellectual capital) to create value for our students (human capital). Faced with the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, however, we had to **explore** new ways of using these resources to save the academic year.

We also had to **expand** our vision and embrace exciting new possibilities in executing our daily activities. For instance, we had to find novel ways – mostly through online activities – to move forward with our community engagement initiatives. As a result, we continued to build and maintain good relationships with people and organisations in our environment, thereby increasing our social and relationship capital.

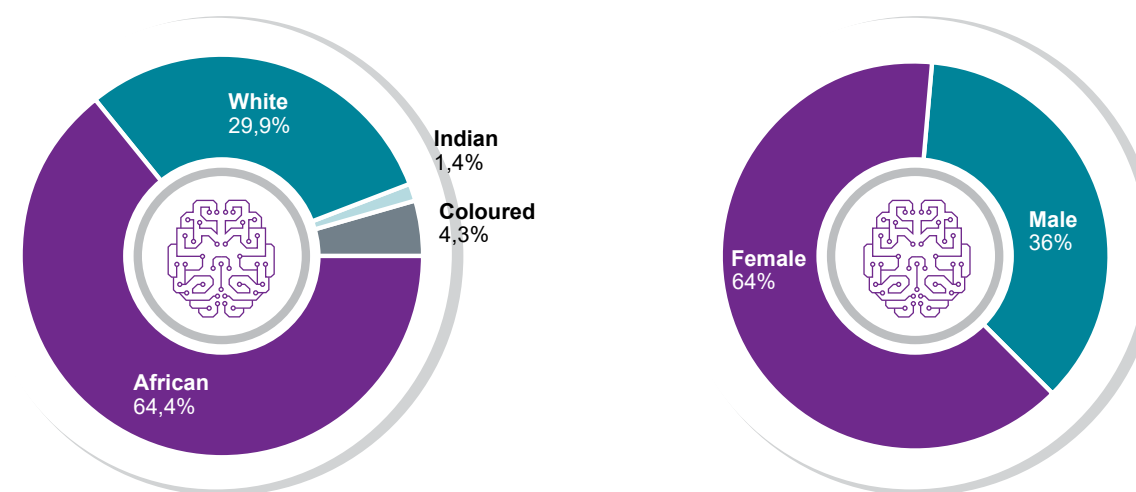
In 2020 we applied much of our research results (intellectual capital and part of our output) to find solutions to problems posed by the pandemic, thereby changing – and often saving – lives and creating a better future, which is part of our outcomes.

In the following discussion of our value chain, you will see how we draw on our various capitals as inputs and, through our activities, convert them to outputs and outcomes.

### Input: Invest in people's potential

#### Our students

Our student body is an invaluable input into our value chain. The image below shows the composition and size of the student body in 2020:



#### Student recruitment

We **adapted** our response to stakeholder needs and expectations in 2020 in order to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Owing to the pandemic and lockdown, we could not pay physical visits to schools or host other recruitment events such as open days and sport events. As a result, we had to **explore** and introduce new student recruitment interventions.

#### Student development and support

We continued to offer focused academic support, mainly online, enabling students to achieve academic success. (More information about how we increased student success is available [here](#).) Where the different lockdown levels during the pandemic allowed us to reach out with other forms of assistance, we also offered non-academic support services such as psychosocial, health, sport and arts and cultural services.

#### Broadening access to studies for students of the NWU

UnivPrep is a one-year programme offered as a Senate-approved short learning programme and enhances access to specific degree programmes at the NWU. Each year, approximately 45% of successful UnivPrep participants become eligible to apply for formal degree studies.

#### Our staff

Another important input into our value chain is our staff complement. In 2020, we had a total of 4 140 permanent staff members, compared to 4 077 in 2019.

The following table shows how our complement of permanent academic staff compares with that of other South African higher education institutions (based on 2019 audited HEMIS data):

Institution	Total
University of South Africa (Unisa)	1 866
<b>North-West University</b>	<b>1 575</b>
University of Johannesburg	1 330
University of KwaZulu-Natal	1 249
University of Pretoria	1 224
University of Cape Town (UCT)	1 184
University of the Witwatersrand (Wits)	1 204

#### Financial aid

In 2020, the NWU's financial aid offices administered R2,4 billion. This mostly comprised government funding (and a limited amount of other external funding), as well as a substantial amount from the university's own funds.

Government funding for bursaries amounted to R1,9 billion (81% of the total amount allocated for of bursaries, including Funza Lushaka bursaries administered by NSFAS). A sum of R107 million was outstanding from NSFAS at year end which, once received, will increase government's contribution to 85% of the total amount for bursaries.

We contributed R211 million to student bursaries, which is 8% of the total funds allocated for financial aid. By supporting academic performance and needy students, we increase our throughput rate and the value of our human capital and demonstrate our commitment to social justice and an ethic of care.

As an example of how we sought to **explore** ways to adapt to the 'new normal' during 2020, we had to **expand** our financial aid to students even further. We did this by providing 3 534 laptops with a value of R19,8 million and data worth R12,4 million so that students could continue their studies online and finish the academic year successfully.

#### Staff development and support

The NWU's permanent staff comprise 1 632 academics and 2 508 support employees. We consider them an invaluable part of our human capital and invest continually in providing the support and development they need to excel.

When we moved to online learning in 2020, we **explored** new ways of supporting our staff, for instance by **expanding** our suite of training courses. For example, we introduced several webinars to empower our academics to master techniques for successful online teaching.

Other important tools for developing our staff are academic promotions and awards programmes. We also place great emphasis on the holistic wellbeing of our employees. You will find more details about this aspect of **staff development** in the section on how we perform against our strategy.



## Academic promotions

The annual academic promotions process is a recognition programme that builds academics for the future, meaning academics who share the NWU's values and ethos as a unitary institution of superior excellence and, more broadly, contribute to the realisation of the National Development Plan and subscribe to the Pan-African ideal.

The principle underpinning academic promotions is the importance of creating mutual value both for the academic and the NWU.

Altogether, 102 academic promotions were approved in 2020, on par with the promotions approved in 2019.

From 2019 to 2020, black academics' share of promotions increased by 8,3% overall. This translated to increases of 2% in black promotions to associate professor, 2% to professor, 1,92% to senior lecturer and 3% to lecturer

## Caring for our staff

One of the greatest challenges we face in recruiting and retaining staff is the competition among South African universities for academic talent. Our response to this challenge, which relates to risk cluster 3 (academic matters) revolves around ensuring we keep our employees engaged by creating an environment that is underpinned by an ethic of care.

This encompasses the biopsychosocial and spiritual wellbeing of our employees. As many of them worked from home during 2020, we had to **expand** our thinking and **explore** innovative ways to support them through our Wellness programme. By conducting most interventions on virtual platforms, we proved our readiness to adapt and **evolve**.

These interventions centred on equipping line managers and their teams to adapt to remote working and remain resilient in the face of adversity. For instance, managers received online management coaching, empowering them to deal with difficult situations involving employees and to promote employee wellness as part of their management responsibilities.

## Funding

### Research funding

The limited external funding available in 2020 for research and innovation was put to good use:

	Awarded
Freestanding bursaries	R25 499 796.00
Freestanding bursaries for travel	R21 53
Block grant bursaries	R3 210 000.00
NRF postdoctoral awards	R2 887 500.00
Chairs awarded	R20 401 401.62
Research grants awarded	R17 919 833.16
TOTAL awarded received from NRF	R69 940 068.94
TOTAL unspent funds in 2020	R7 551 273.98

### Funding for technology transfer and innovation

Our Technology Transfer and Innovation Support Office established a R4 million pre-seed fund in a co-funding partnership model with the SA SME Fund, a collaboration between government, labour and business. The pre-seed fund provides grants of up to R500 000 for qualifying early-stage technology development projects and complements the Technology Innovation Agency's Seed Fund programme.

As traditional sources of funding for technology transfer were either frozen or reallocated, the Technology Transfer and Innovation Support team concentrated their efforts on building new funding relationships and channels to external funding.

In **exploring** new paths, we made a special allocation of strategic funds available for key Covid-19- related projects.

### International funding

The table below shows the international funding each faculty received during 2020.

International funding for research	Actual as confirmed from faculties
Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences	R29 700.00
Faculty of Education	R371 981.67
Faculty of Humanities	R4 626.72
Faculty of Engineering	R1 853 091.37
Faculty of Health Sciences	R4 954 131.49
Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences	R7 623 476.49
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>R14 827 754.30</b>

## Activities: Explore and expand for continuous growth

### See how we explore, expand and evolve

#### NWU embarks on remote learning

The coronavirus pandemic has made it necessary for the NWU to **explore** new ways of conducting our core business.

We have for instance embarked upon remote learning, which includes online and distance learning. Staff and students have embraced the new way of teaching and learning, thereby enabling them to **expand** their horizons and **evolve** to become even more than they were before.



### Teaching-learning activities

The world of work is changing fast and our academic offering must keep pace. Once again, this challenges us to **explore, expand and evolve**.

This goes beyond simply **adapting** or renewing the specialised and technical content and delivery of programmes but, equally important, incorporates transferable skills and flexible mindsets.

For example, our environmental scanning shows that the top five skills in demand by 2025 will be analytical thinking and innovation, active learning and learning strategies, complex problem-solving, critical thinking and analysis, and creativity, originality and initiative. These are the kinds of skills we are focusing on as we strive to ensure our academic offering remains relevant for the future.

We also continue with academic programme alignment to ensure external compliance and enable us to provide academic programmes of comparable quality across all our campuses.

More information is available in the section on how we performed against our strategy and succeeded in increasing our intellectual capital.

### Increasing student access and success

Peer mentoring, reading development and supplemental instruction are some of the tools our Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) uses to enable student retention and success.

These interventions contribute to the consistently high student retention rate at the university, especially among first-time entering students who, if not sufficiently supported, may be more at risk of dropping out than senior students. More information about what we do to assure student success and retention is available [here](#).

### Promoting continuing education

Lifelong learning is becoming increasingly important in the labour market as employees and entrepreneurs at all stages of their careers come under increasing pressure to renew and diversify their skills. Our Unit for Continuing Education (UCE) has a diversified portfolio of short courses that is helping to build a skilled, agile and adaptable workforce for South Africa.

Focusing on improved growth and profitability, we continue to **expand** our offering by developing new products.

During 2020, 3 924 persons participated in 194 short course events combined for UCE and NWU Business School.

The distance learning market is poised for growth and the UCE has been hard at work **extending** the short course offering to this market through an online offering. Thus far, eight pilot courses have been earmarked for online learning and we hope to see further developments around this in 2021.

In the spirit of **exploring, expanding** and **evolving**, our intention is to deploy an innovative and effective online learning ecosystem, develop high-quality multimedia content, and continually implement emerging technologies.

### Improving graduate employability

The NWU Career Centre remained functional and productive during 2020, using online platforms to sustain its employability offerings during the Covid-19 health crisis. Some of the systems and tools that enabled the centre to keep operating were the Career Zone jobs portal, the first virtual career fair, social media platforms and the centre's websites.

While **exploring** new pathways, we accelerated the drive to automate career services. We concluded revised service level and data processing agreements to streamline data integration and allow easy interaction between employers and NWU students. Click [here](#) for more information on how we improved graduate employability.

### Focusing on academic and professional development

Excellent university teachers are fundamental to student success, which is why we emphasise the professional

development of our academics. Some of the professional development initiatives run at the NWU are the induction programme for new academics, the **Teaching Excellence Awards**, activities focused on the scholarship of teaching and learning, and the annual Teaching and Learning Conference.

### Research activities

Most of our research activities were conducted in our 54 research entities, consisting of 11 research chairs and 43 research entities. These comprised five centres of excellence, 11 research units, 14 research focus areas, 12 research niche areas, seven hosted entities and one commercial research unit.

Regular external and internal evaluations of our research entities ensure these continue to create maximum value for our stakeholders. The external evaluations were postponed in 2020 but the internal evaluations went ahead, focusing on quality, productivity, sustainability and good management practices.

In another example of how we worked to **expand** our horizons, we took our PhD review online, resulting in a self-evaluation report and improvement plan.

The **current NWU research landscape** can be seen on the NWU website.

## Output: Evolve to become critical thinkers

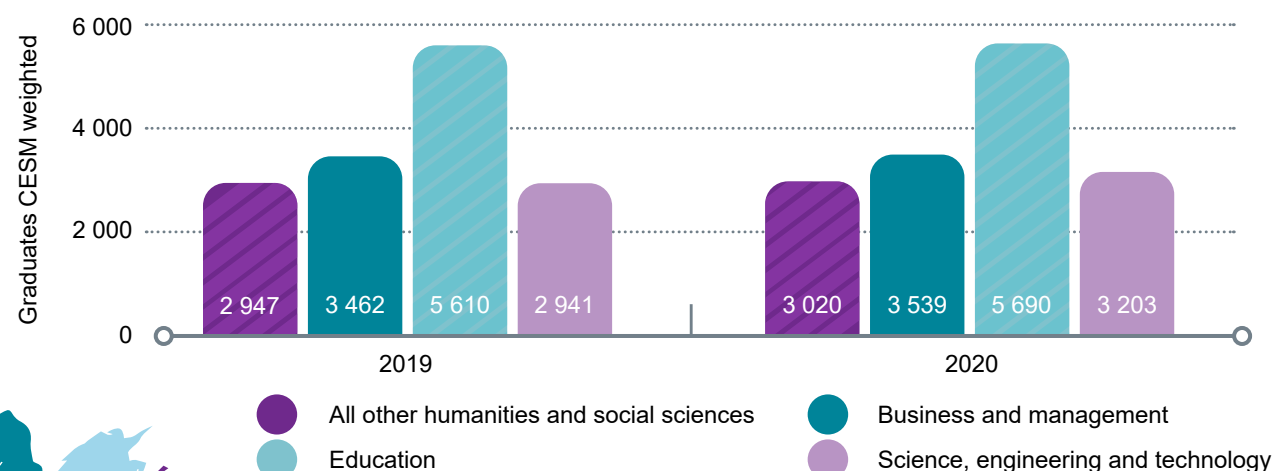
### Teaching learning output

Our contact success rate has stayed over 85% for the past three years. The contact undergraduate degree graduation duration factor stood at 1,12 in 2020, lower than in 2019, and indicates that most students complete their degrees in the minimum time.

The student-to-academic staff full-time equivalent (FTE) ratio is 29,17: 1 (31,93: 1 for 2019), meaning that one academic staff member is available for every 29,17 full-time equivalent students.

In the case of the first-time entrants, the dropout rate for contact degrees decreased from 10,8% in 2019 to 9,1% in 2020, and remains low in comparison to sector norms. The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is evident in these rates.

The following graph shows the number of graduates per field of study for 2019 and 2020.



The following table shows how our number of graduates compare with those of other South African higher education institutions (based on 2019 audited HEMIS data):

Institution	Total
University of South Africa	48 906
Tshwane University of Technology	16 871
<b>North-West University</b>	<b>14 961</b>
University of Johannesburg	14 099
University of Pretoria	12 651

### Teaching and learning awards

The NWU teaching and learning excellence awards are held annually to acknowledge and celebrate the exceptional output of our academic staff in teaching practices and innovation. Awards are presented in three categories: Emerging Teaching Excellence Award, Teaching Excellence Award and Distinguished Teaching Excellence Award.



During a virtual awards event on 12 March 2020, Dr Deon van Tonder of the Faculty of Education received the coveted award for distinguished teaching excellence.

### Research output

Our peers in the scholarly community are the best judges of the quality of our research and innovation output. They give their stamp of approval by publishing our articles in peer-reviewed journals and inviting our academics and postgraduate students to give presentations at accredited conferences. Master's and PhD students graduated is another important yardstick of quality.

The following table confirms that the quality and quantity of research at the NWU continues to improve.

Research output 2019 (intellectual capital)	
Journal articles	1 233,18
Conference proceedings	118,75
Books and chapters	189,22
Total article equivalents published	1541,15
Master's degrees conferred	798
Research master's	574,87
Research master's weighted	574,87
Doctoral degrees conferred	314
Doctoral degrees weighted	942
Total weighted research output	3 058,02
Postdoctoral fellows	231
Publication units per permanent academic staff member	0,8

Read more about [our research output](#) in the section on how we create value against our strategy, thereby strengthening our intellectual capital.

### Research and innovation excellence awards

We celebrate our researchers' hard work and exceptional output through our annual research and innovation excellence awards, held towards the end of the academic year.

At the 2020 celebration which was a virtual event owing to the pandemic, Prof Marius Nel from the Faculty of Theology was named the most productive senior researcher, while Prof Ruan Kruger from the Faculty of Health Sciences was the most productive emerging researcher.

Prof Leenta Grobler and Dr Henri Marais from the Faculty of Engineering received the award for innovation impact.



Prof Marius Nel from the Faculty of Theology was named the most productive senior researcher.



## Outcomes: Enter society as value creators

The first links in our value chain are our inputs and activities, as discussed in previous sections of this report. The next stage of the value chain consists of our outcomes, which are intended to create longer term value.

This future focus means that sustainability is an integral element of our outcomes. After we have taken care of immediate and medium-term needs, there must be sufficient capitals left to use for future value creation.

Financial stability is a good example of an outcome that supports our sustainability. When the NWU is financially stable, we are in a position to generate other outcomes, such as delivering skilled graduates to enhance the knowledge economy of the country.

By skilled graduates, we mean graduates equipped for the digital era and the Fourth Industrial Revolution, both technically and in terms of skills such as critical thinking and collaborative problem solving.

Another important outcome is finding solutions to real-life problems that leverage our research and innovation results.

The third leg of our core business, namely community engagement, also creates outcomes by empowering people to improve their lives in a sustainable way.



**PROF DAN KGWADI**  
CHAIRPERSON OF SENATE

“

“Our priority throughout the Covid-19 crisis has been to support students to continue their studies through the modalities best suited to these extraordinary circumstances.

“Similarly, when it comes to our staff, the university’s planning efforts have focused on keeping them safe and empowering business continuity from their home environments.

- Prof Robert Balfour, deputy vice-chancellor for teaching and learning



”

## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### Researcher steers team against Covid-19

**D**uring the hard lockdown, the North West Department of Health (NWDoH) approached a team of NWU researchers for assistance in the fight against the pandemic.

Prof Petra Bester coordinated a formidable team of NWU academics, researchers and experts in advising and assisting the department.

Their task was to predict the course of the virus in the province (epidemiological projections) so that the provincial government can spread resources optimally. They also created a centralised database to identify areas where symptoms are evident for testing and screening purposes.



.....  
Prof Petra Bester,  
director of the Africa  
Unit for Transdisciplinary  
Health Research  
(AUTHeR), led the team  
of NWU experts who  
assisted the North West  
Department of Health.

## Our vice-chancellor’s review

### Introduction: Looking at 2020

The Covid-19 pandemic has forced faculties and all teaching and learning support departments to **explore** new ways of teaching, learning and assessment, including online and distance education for contact students, and supporting distance students without the usual added value of support at a remote tuition centre.

Business as usual quickly became business unusual as Covid-19 invaded all aspects of human life. The pandemic had a grave impact on the NWU community, affecting campus and research activities and community engagement.

### Exploring new possibilities

The pandemic has impacted dramatically on our student value proposition, with all student activities coming to a halt at the time of the hard lockdown. These activities were gradually resumed from the beginning of May 2020 in an online format, and in a printed distance modality for students living in such remote areas that online access and participation in teaching, learning and assessment were impossible.

We salute the resilience and excellence displayed by staff and students in rising to the various challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a tribute to them that we succeeded in completing our academic year early in January 2021.

### Expanding our vision

In a major change triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, all physical graduation ceremonies were replaced by virtual ceremonies. During our first-ever virtual graduation ceremony on 29 May 2020, over 9 000 qualifications were conferred. All ceremonies after that also took place virtually, the last being the December ceremony.

The conditions under which researchers and postgraduate students had to continue with important projects were also impacted. During the year we participated in the national PhD review and are already implementing improvement plans following the self-evaluation report.

It is important to record the overall understanding of our combined efforts to successfully complete the academic year in this integrated report. The progressive steps we have taken to continue with teaching, learning, assessment and research initiatives within a challenging context should also inform future perspectives on higher education.

We maintained our financial stability during 2020 despite the impact of the global pandemic. Through scenario planning and a consultative process, we have implemented a risk-mitigation strategy and reprioritised our capital and operational projects.

### How our thoughts about ethics evolved

During 2020, we conducted an ethics assessment at the NWU and invited all staff to participate in the quantitative part of the assessment.

This was preceded by focus group interviews conducted by The Ethics Institute, the independent body that facilitated the assessment process. Valuable insights have been obtained and feedback will be used for the development of an Ethics Strategy and an Ethics Management Plan, and also for future ethics training.

Strategy revision was an important focus in 2020. We augmented the overarching NWU strategy to make provision for the digital business strategy, which had to be fast-tracked due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying shift to a virtual business environment. Our new teaching and learning strategy was also approved in 2020.

### Our managerial and administrative activities

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the commencement of the national lockdown at the end of March 2020, the NWU – like many other higher education institutions – has shown significant capacity to **adapt** very quickly to the crisis, with lots of flexibility.

Staff and students had to familiarise themselves with provisions, processes and mechanisms designed to resume teaching activities and transition to online education, with all that this entails in terms of technology and skills for digital teaching and learning.

After three years under the new structural arrangements at the NWU, our operational processes are now relatively mature. This is demonstrated in the successful way in which the relevant governance structures at faculty and university level operate.

That the NWU Council saw its way clear to embark on an external review of its effectiveness and efficiency under the defined measures of the NWU Quality Policy is an indication of the maturity of the Council, the confidence it has in the way it exercises its fiduciary duty and its willingness to learn.



## Adequacy of staffing levels, particularly in critical areas

In aspiring to be an internationally recognised university, we appreciate the importance of having talented, energised staff who are innovative and highly skilled.

Such employees are in demand in the higher education sector. This was a challenge we addressed in 2020 through strategic workforce planning, talent attraction and management, recruitment, optimal remuneration management, training and development and performance management.

We continued rolling out our scarce and critical skills programme to attract and retain the talent required. Having already implemented this programme in the academic environment, we commenced roll-out in the support environment in 2020.

The total staff headcount stood at 4 844 in 2020, up from 4 837 in 2019. As the following table shows, this growth is mainly in the academic environment where our academic cohort increased from 1 515 in 2019 to 1 580 in 2020, an increase of 65, which is in line with our strategy.

Total staff headcount – 2019 vs 2020						
Classification	Permanent		Temporary		Total	
	2019	2020	2019	2020	2019	2020
Academic	1 515	1 580	198	181	1 713	1 761
Support	2 400	2 379	724	704	3 124	3 083
Grand total	3 915	3 959	922	885	4 837	4 844

The overall attrition rate is 5,03%, well within our projected attrition rate of under 10%.

## Realising equity targets in the workplace

Various governance oversight committees regularly monitor our progress towards achieving our employment equity targets. The two committees of Council that oversee this important matter are the People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee and the Transformation Oversight Committee.

Our current employment equity plan runs from January 2016 to December 2020. The targets and outcomes for 2020, cascaded from the plan approved by Council on 28 September 2018, are shown in the following table.

Race	2020 target		% total	31 Dec 2020 actuals		31 Dec 2020 % total	Difference	Target achieved Y/N
	Male	Female		Male	Female			
African	19,9%	19,2%	39,1%	19,5%	17,9%	37,42%	1,7%	N
Coloured	3,5%	4,6%	8,1%	2,9%	3,7%	6,59%	1,5%	N
Indian	1,1%	1,3%	2,4%	0,7%	0,8%	1,57%	0,8%	N
White	18,4%	31,1%	49,5%	19,8%	33,2%	52,93%	-3,4%	Y
Foreign Nationals	0,7%	0,2%	0,9%	1,2%	0,3%	1,49%	-0,6%	Y
	43,6%	56,4%	100,0%	44,1%	55,9%	100,00%	0,00%	

The freezing of vacancies necessitated by the staff-cost risk mitigation plan due to the Covid-19 challenges had an adverse impact on our ability to reach the employment equity targets.

A revised employment equity plan that builds proportions of black, women, and people living with disabilities has been approved by Council. The new plan will focus on the following four main strategies:

- Barriers for attracting people from the designated groups and people living with disabilities
- Succession planning for key positions
- Retention strategies
- Establishing an enabling organisational culture



## The quality of information available to management

The Unit for Integrated Planning and Strategic Intelligence seeks to provide management reports that are clear, accurate and timely, and also custom-made for the intended reader.

Like the rest of the NWU, we addressed the challenges posed by the pandemic and the corresponding shift to online learning. Our approach was to **explore** new possibilities and **expand** and **evolve** the way we see and do things in 2020.

For example, we developed a number of new indicators to support our implementation of online teaching and learning. Weekly reports enabled academic and support staff to monitor students' usage of eFundi, our learning management system, and proactively identify inactive students.

Learning analytics and scenario planning were enhanced through the roll-out of Power-BI across the NWU. (Power BI is Microsoft's interactive data visualisation and analytics tool for business intelligence or BI.) The integrated information it produced was invaluable during the budget planning process, especially in identifying priorities and ensuring equity of provision, and we used it to inform our risk-mitigation strategy.

High-quality, reliable information is essential for decision-making that secures the long-term financial sustainability of the NWU and manages the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on our financial position. Consequently, we are focusing strongly on financial viability modelling and scenario planning.

## Student services and co-curricular activities

We offer various student support services and co-curricular activities to encourage a sense of belonging, develop well-rounded students and celebrate their inherent diversity. Our challenge in 2020 was to continue offering this support despite the disruption brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The immediate impact was a reduction of physical **co-curricular activities** from March 2020. Offsetting this as best we could, we migrated contact activities to the online environment, executed at residence, campus and institutional levels. Students embraced the virtual space, and although this did not replace the entire co-curricular offering, it still created a valuable platform for student engagement and assisted in creating some semblance of a vibrant student life.

Most notable was the facilitation of the **student leadership electoral processes** in the online environment, resulting in increased access and participation by eligible student voters and candidates. Similarly, activities relating to **arts and culture** and social cohesion continued through smaller virtual engagements,

harnessing social media, instant messaging and word-of-mouth communication.

**Counselling support services** were also migrated to the virtual space, using eFundi, telecommunications and video conferencing platforms to ensure that support services and psycho-social crisis interventions were still accessible to all students.

**Campus Health Care Centres (CHCCs)** resumed primary healthcare services as students gradually returned to campuses throughout the various national alert levels. Working with critical partners and stakeholders such as Higher Health and others, the CHCCs played a pivotal role in educating students on the risks and measures for managing Covid-19 in the university environment.

We also used virtual platforms to continue offering students and student leaders opportunities to **obtain valuable skills** such as project management, fundraising, teamwork, social responsibility and cultural integration.

It is worth highlighting and celebrating the fact that our Student Life portfolio managed to retain the most critical and valuable segments of support and opportunity available to students across 2020.

More information about **our academic support activities** for students can be found in the section on how we create value through our performance.

## Changing patterns in the provision of academic courses

Our strategy is to enrol more students in the fields of science, engineering, technology and commerce, and we are making steady progress in this regard.

In fact, we experienced over-enrolments in the faculties of Health Sciences and Natural and Agricultural Sciences (as well as Humanities, which is traditionally oversubscribed). Enrolments in the faculties of Law, Theology, Education, Economic and Management Sciences and Engineering were largely on track.

In total, 56 425 students were enrolled at our three campuses in 2020. Female enrolments decreased from 41350 to 35915, while male enrolments, at 20150, decreased from 22319 as in 2019.

In August 2020, we received ministerial approval for the NWU qualification and programme offering.

Newly accredited and NQF-registered qualifications supporting the NWU vision include the Bachelor of Engineering in mechatronic engineering, Bachelor of Human Resource Development and Research Master of Nursing Science.



Our distance offering expanded through the addition of the Postgraduate Diploma in special needs education and two advanced diplomas in education management and leadership and intermediate phase mathematics education (the latter's NQF registration is pending). In addition, South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) registration has been received for the PGDip (Industrial Engineering) and Bachelor of Theology Honours in Theology.

During 2020, our Senate approved the extension of qualification offerings to other campuses and the addition of new programmes under existing qualifications and additional major fields of study.

Where required, Senate approvals were followed by approvals from the Department of Higher Education and Training and the Council on Higher Education. There were programme approvals in all eight faculties, although most were in the fields of education, health sciences and natural and agricultural sciences.

The School of Languages continued consolidating the undergraduate degree programmes, which were extended to the Mahikeng Campus.

Campus alignment has been strengthened and five BSc honours programmes are now also available at the Vanderbijlpark Campus. Similarly, the BCom honours in marketing management and entrepreneurship, as well as and marketing management, are now available in Potchefstroom and Vanderbijlpark, and the BCom in business operations may now be taken in Vanderbijlpark too.

## Self-assessment of our achievements

Based on the figures presented throughout this integrated report, we can confidently state that we have succeeded in maintaining our upward trajectory as a university in regard to our core activities of teaching and learning, research and innovation and community engagement. Details to substantiate this can for instance be found in the section Overview of the NWU ([highlights](#)) and in the section on [our business model](#).

These accomplishments demonstrate the focused commitment of our executive team in working towards achieving our long-term strategic goals and the objectives in our Annual Performance Plan.

We can report substantial success in our ability to execute our strategy. (Refer to the section on [our performance against our strategy](#) and [our performance assessment report](#).)

## Looking to the future

Our future focus will be on maintaining a limited contact teaching and learning modality while finalising our digital business strategy for the long term to embrace the opportunities offered by the Fourth Industrial Revolution and to respond to the disruptors that the higher education sector is experiencing. Doing this while retaining a vibrant campus life is a key aspect of our student value proposition.

We continue to be driven by our core values, an ethic of care and a commitment to social justice. Our focus will also remain on developing more sustainable sources of income to maintain our competitiveness as an employer and ensure our financial future. The support that we receive from all of our stakeholders gives us confidence that we will succeed.

*“We continue to be driven by our core values, an ethic of care and a commitment to social justice”.*

*- Prof Dan Kgwadi, Vice-Chancellor*



## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### We shine in world rankings

The ranking the Times Higher Education (THE) announced on 20 September 2020, places us among the top six universities in South Africa and between 501 and 600 out of more than 1 500 universities across 93 countries and regions that were evaluated for the 2021 rankings.

Like last year, we achieved our top position in the area of

citations – we are ranked among the top five universities in South Africa in this area.



# Meet our management members



**Prof Dan Kgwadi**  
Vice-Chancellor and Principal



**Prof Marlene Verhoef**  
Registrar



**Prof Linda du Plessis**  
Vice-Principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Integrated Planning and Vanderbijlpark Campus Operations



**Prof Robert Balfour**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning



**Prof Frans Waanders**  
Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation



**Prof Marilyn Setlaleto**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Community Engagement and Mahikeng Campus Operations



**Prof Daryl Balia**  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Information Technology and Potchefstroom Campus Operations



**Ms Elmarie de Beer**  
Executive Director: Finance and Facilities



**Dr Mala Singh**  
Executive Director: People and Culture



**Mr Clement Manoko**  
Executive Director: Corporate Relations and Marketing



**Dr Sibusiso Chalufu**  
Executive Director: Student Life

*Prof Dan Kgwadi*

**PROF DAN KGWADI**  
VICE-CHANCELLOR

# How we engage with our stakeholders

## Creating value for ourselves and our stakeholders

We regard the relationships and regular engagement with our stakeholders as paramount for our success and long-term sustainability. Our stakeholder engagement approach and activities are guided by our commitment to diversity and inclusiveness.

Recognising that the needs and expectations of our various stakeholders are influenced by their varying backgrounds and circumstances, we consider it crucial to establish appropriate channels for engagement and to create value for ourselves and for all our stakeholders, regardless of their situation.

During 2020, the pandemic tested the strength of our relationships with our stakeholders, including students, staff, donors and alumni. The swift changes taking place around us made it necessary to **adapt** to the new circumstances, **explore** alternative ways of doing things, **expand** our horizons and **evolve** to become champions of change.

Our challenge was to secure stakeholders' support for the measures we needed to put in place to deal with the impact of the pandemic, while at the same time creating value for them.

Surveys were conducted to determine the needs of stakeholders and ensure an appropriate response and support. Two of these surveys entailed determining the connectivity and data requirements of students, and finding out which students preferred to return to the campuses. This approach, which confirms the mutually beneficial nature of our relationships with stakeholders, ensured that we concluded the academic year successfully.

## How we react to our stakeholders' interests and expectations

When we engage with our stakeholders, they raise matters that are of particular importance to them and to us.

In this report we focus on key stakeholders, including prospective students, current students, employees, alumni, donors and the business community.

The following tables show the key interests and expectations of these stakeholders in 2020, as well as our response to these:

Stakeholder group	
Prospective students	
How we engage	Issues raised (material matters)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Visits to schools</li> <li>♦ One-on-one and group career advice sessions</li> <li>♦ Marketing (direct and indirect)</li> <li>♦ Open days</li> <li>♦ Sports events sponsorships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Career choice</li> <li>♦ Connectivity (devices and data)</li> <li>♦ Equity of student experience</li> <li>♦ Health and safety</li> <li>♦ Application for admission</li> </ul>
Our response	
<p>We <b>adapted</b> our response to stakeholder needs and expectations in 2020 in order to curb the spread of the coronavirus. Owing to the pandemic and lockdown, we could not pay physical visits to schools or host other recruitment events such as open days and sports events. This prompted us to <b>explore</b> and introduce new student recruitment interventions.</p> <p>These interventions, which included virtual open days and interactive electronic brochures and webinars, reached an audience of approximately 7 850 300 people. <b>Expanding</b> our way of doing things proved to be successful, as these online interventions have generally been received positively by prospective students.</p>	

Stakeholder group	
Current students	
How we engage	Issues raised (material matters)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Webinars</li> <li>♦ Website</li> <li>♦ Social media</li> <li>♦ Meetings</li> <li>♦ Communiques</li> <li>♦ SMS</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Connectivity and data</li> <li>♦ Financial assistance/NSFAS</li> <li>♦ Equity of experience</li> <li>♦ Health and safety</li> </ul>
Our response	
<p>Our student portal, eFundi, is a crucial source of information for current students. It served as the primary resource for students and staff during the lockdown and played a key role towards the successful completion of the academic year.</p> <p>The portal was zero-rated to enable students to fully participate in online teaching and learning. Measures were introduced to empower students who had connectivity problems to return to campuses to continue with their studies. Devices and data were distributed to students in need, facilitating access and success. Authoritative structures such as Council and Senate offered strategic responses and support to students.</p> <p>Campus health centres were capacitated to continue to assist students who experienced health-related problems.</p>	

Stakeholder group	
Industry and business community	
How we engage	Issues raised (material matters)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Integrated report</li> <li>♦ Webinars</li> <li>♦ Publications and videos</li> <li>♦ One-on-one and group engagements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>♦ Assurance on stability and sustainability</li> <li>♦ Partnerships and collaboration</li> <li>♦ Graduate attributes</li> <li>♦ Research</li> </ul>
Our response	
<p>Demonstrating our adaptability to evolve and be more than we were before, we collaborated with industry players to develop solutions geared towards curbing the spread of Covid-19. For example, in collaboration with industry partners, we developed and distributed a Covid-19 screening app, "TjopTjop", which was selected as a winner in the 2020 United Nations Innovation and Investment Forum from a total of 168 submissions.</p> <p>We also partnered with various members of the business community to distribute relevant personal protective equipment (PPE) and other necessities to health and frontline workers/staff.</p> <p>We continued marketing our technologies to government and industry as a crucial aspect of <b>commercialising our intellectual property</b> and expertise.</p>	



## Stakeholder group

## Employees

How we engage	Issues raised (material matters)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Intranet</li> <li>◆ Email</li> <li>◆ Website</li> <li>◆ Webinars</li> <li>◆ Publications and newsletters</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Health and safety</li> <li>◆ Conducive work environment</li> <li>◆ Employee equity</li> <li>◆ Remuneration and compensation</li> <li>◆ Skills development and empowerment</li> <li>◆ Ethics and transparency</li> </ul>

## Our response

To ensure the health and safety of staff, we established the Covid-19 Response team to develop and manage protocols and other related interventions. The necessary policy guidelines were developed to assist in catering for the needs and preferences of our staff during lockdown.

We maintained and strengthened our partnerships with the South African Police Service and other local security service providers for the benefit of our staff, off and on campuses.

We continued engaging with staff representatives on remuneration, and reached agreements on key aspects of employees' benefits. For example, during 2020 management and SAPTU engaged on the revision of the group life benefit. After various consultations, an agreement was reached in this regard and the revised Group Life Benefit Scheme was implemented. Apart from this, and despite all the challenges we faced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to reach an agreement on the annual cost of living adjustment negotiations with SAPTU.

We continued to implement our NWU Culture Project, which is aimed at creating shared values among staff and contributing towards a conducive work environment. We also developed and implemented relevant initiatives to address the risks and challenges facing staff. These included a gender-based violence initiative, as well as a mental health awareness campaign.

We remain committed to being an ethics-oriented organisation; thus, we conducted an ethics survey in 2020 to determine the ethics, culture and staff perceptions. The recommendations of the survey will be implemented during 2021.

Staff equity, diversity and inclusivity remain top priorities for the university. Therefore, we continued to implement our transformation and equity plans in order to reach our set targets.

Convocation members who represent the alumni community sit on various committees and structures of the university and ensure that the interests of alumni are communicated and addressed. More than 170 alumni joined the Convocation in 2020, a continued upward trend in membership.

We organised the Covid-19 Response Fund benefit concert in partnership with alumni, who also contributed to the fund. The alumni are also active donors to and sponsors of the university.

During the lockdown we worked in collaboration with alumni in the health sector to present health-related advice online to staff and students.

We updated our alumni about developments and achievements of the university and involved them in our brand campaigns.

These are some of the responses from our alumni:

"Great insights from the panelists. Perfect time as well.... Thank you to the team who put it together." - Yvonne Kgwarae, watching from Gaborone, Botswana.

"My experience with the NWU Alumni Office has been pleasant, fun, and overall professional. The team took me back on a journey from my years on campus through to getting my first job. They are a dynamic team, professional, helpful, and always accessible. Well done." - Geronomow Tijueza, Johannesburg

## Stakeholder group

## Donors

How we engage	Issues raised (material matters)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Integrated report</li> <li>◆ One-on-one and group interactions</li> <li>◆ Publications</li> <li>◆ Website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Stability and performance of the higher education sector in general and the NWU in particular</li> <li>◆ Long-term sustainability of the Government's funding model</li> <li>◆ Students' access and success</li> </ul>

## Our response

The Board of Donors continued to make significant contribution to the university. During 2020, the total contributions amounted to R16 429 041,63. Donors also contributed towards the NWU Covid-19 Response Fund, which has been assisting students with connectivity during the lockdown.

We used the Board of Donors meetings and subcommittees to share news on developments within the university.

We reassured our donors about the prudent financial controls that are place to ensure long-term sustainability.

## Stakeholder group

## Government and regulatory bodies

How we engage	Issues raised (material matters)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Publications</li> <li>◆ One-on-one and group engagements</li> <li>◆ Conferences</li> <li>◆ Workshops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Compliance with legislation</li> <li>◆ Financial accountability and reporting</li> <li>◆ Quality and standards</li> </ul>

## Our response

We complied with the National Disaster Management Act, regulations and other related protocols with regards to Covid-19.

We continued to share our performance information through prescribed progress reports, the integrated report and course-specific reports.

## Stakeholder group

## Alumni

How we engage	Issues raised (material matters)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Webinars</li> <li>◆ SMS</li> <li>◆ Events</li> <li>◆ Newsletters</li> <li>◆ One-on-one and group engagements</li> <li>◆ Website</li> <li>◆ Social media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Stability</li> <li>◆ Sustainability</li> <li>◆ Partnerships</li> <li>◆ Reputation</li> </ul>

## Our response

We offered alumni various platforms for information-sharing and engagement, including participation in policy and strategy formulation through Convocation and Council.



## Stakeholder group

## Suppliers

How we engage	Issues raised (material matters)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Integrated report</li> <li>◆ One-on-one and group interactions</li> <li>◆ Publications</li> <li>◆ Website</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Compliance with legislation</li> <li>◆ Business opportunities</li> <li>◆ Quality and standards</li> <li>◆ Financial turn-around times</li> </ul>
Our response	

As in previous years, we communicated to and required our suppliers to comply with relevant legislation, including Occupational Health and Safety (OHS), Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA).

We shared business opportunities with suppliers through open advertising of new projects.

We continued to ensure that suppliers were paid in accordance with their signed contracts and service level agreements.

## “Motho ke motho ka batho” - African proverb

*This proverb means “I am because you are” or “a person is a person because of other people”.*

*We are indeed who we are because of the support of our stakeholders and the mutually beneficial relationships that we have created with them.*



# Our transformation journey

LANGUAGE BUTTONS

AFR

SES

SET

Transformation is inextricably connected to issues of culture, communal well-being and an ethic of care, as well as excellence in all its facets.

This view of transformation acknowledges that quantitative performance indicators focusing only on demographic representation cannot capture the extent of the fundamental shift required to establish the NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice.

We have identified 10 key transformation pillars which we believe are critical in the successful achievement of our goals. They are Diversity, Access, Alignment, Redress, Equity, Resource Allocation, Increased Unity, Student Experience, Success and Quality.

These pillars find expression in our Annual Performance Plan (APP) and in the individual operational plans of faculties and departments.

## The journey with Covid-19

The Covid-19 pandemic laid bare the existing societal inequalities prevailing within our student community, particularly in relation to students' access to technology and the competencies needed to use it. This compelled us to **explore** new pathways, **expand** our vision and **evolve** to embrace transformation even more decisively than before. Subsequently, and in line with our transformation goals, we swiftly adjusted our internal platforms for teaching, learning and research to increase students' access to the online environment.

Apart from developing zero-rated online platforms for students who could access these, we catered for students who do not have technology infrastructure at their places of residence by providing hard-copy learning and assessment materials.

We also provided data and devices to students who could complete the academic programme online and remotely. This, we feel, contributed towards our transformation goals by ensuring that all our students had the opportunity to successfully participate in university life.

## Monitoring transformation

We built on the work done in 2019 to develop a transformation dashboard as a progress monitoring and reporting tool that is fit for purpose in our university. This tool covers aspects such as culture, equity and redress, research and scholarship, teaching and learning and community engagement.

In 2020, in line with the directive from Council, we included transformation of the procurement space as part of the transformation dashboard. This resulted in the development of a preferential procurement strategy involving SMMEs, one of the first for South African universities. Reporting on transformation is now more comprehensive and coherent, in line with the broader institutional goals and objectives.

## Overseeing transformation

Transformation is the responsibility of every member of the NWU community. In addition, several Council structures play a critical oversight role to ensure that the university remains on track with respect to its transformation targets and goals.

These include the Transformation Oversight Committee, the People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee and also the Student Oversight Committee.

The subcommittees have diverse representation and ensure that the university complies with the national transformational goals. The Institutional Forum is a statutory committee that fulfils an important advisory role on matters relevant to transformation.

In addition to these governance structures, transformation is inculcated as a primary objective for staff and students, specifically emphasising the importance of creating a diverse student population and student leadership cohort. It is inspiring to note that both staff and students are embracing the transformation journey and seeking innovative and practical mechanisms towards ensuring its success.

## Adding value

In transforming and positioning the NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice, we reached some important milestones in 2020, despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

An example is the progress made with the NWU Culture Change Project. In an effort to build hope and optimism amid the pandemic, we added the Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Project (OCBP) to the Culture Change Project plan. The OCBP was positioned as a platform from which NWU encouraged, demonstrated care and addressed concerns.



Developments in the standardisation of assistance and opportunities available to students living with disabilities are also well under way. This includes improving existing mechanisms through the sharing of best practices, among other things.

In 2020, our staff participated in various sectoral transformation initiatives, ensuring the NWU's senior management are attuned to transformation trends across the entire higher education sector.

These included the Universities South Africa (USAf) virtual summit where our executive director for student life and assigned function transformation, Dr Sibusiso Chalufu, chaired a plenary session focused on institutional cultures.

## Pursuing and enabling equity

At the NWU, transformation is synonymous with justice, culture, performance indicators, communal wellbeing, excellence and relevance.

Transformation is also about being responsive to environmental and political changes, and being relevant to the needs of the communities we serve.

The Employment Equity Plan for the period 2021-2023 was approved by Council in September 2020. This plan gives expression to the Employment Equity Policy, which ensures that the university creates equal opportunities for all.

At its meeting on 21 November 2019, Council resolved that in order to accelerate the pace of transformation, the following targets will be incorporated into the new Employment Equity Plan:

- Appointment of black employees: 70%
- Appointment of people living with disabilities: 2%

Targets have been incorporated into the university's Annual Performance Plan (APP) and cascaded to individual performance agreements.

All individual performance agreements for line managers have been re-designed to incorporate the people

management KPA for managing employment equity and diversity.

## Academic transformation

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about unprecedented transformation in the thinking of academics and support staff regarding teaching, learning, assessment and student support. In line with the theme of this integrated report, **explore**, **expand** and **evolve**, we set out to find solutions to new challenges.

As already mentioned, our predominantly contact offering was transformed into a fluid and focused online offering within a matter of weeks, the success of which was evident in our 2020 throughput rates.

We also remained true to the spirit of the NWU Language Policy and, to the best extent possible given the disruption caused by the pandemic, continued working towards the implementation of faculty language plans. In particular, we continued developing short courses that can be taught as multilingual offerings and presented language acquisition short courses.

We also hosted an exciting online joint gender and language awareness week from 28 September to 2 October 2020 and are continuing in our efforts to decolonise and align our curricula.

## Looking ahead

Although we continue to make significant progress in our transformation trajectory, there is a lot more to be done.

We believe we are up to the challenge. Our primary motivation for continuing and accelerating our transformation journey is that it is the right thing to do and accords with our values.

We stay committed to further building our unitary institution, establishing an institutional culture and a unique NWU way of life that supports our strategy and speaks of care, equality and fairness for all. That is why transformation will stay high on our future agenda.

## COUNCIL STATEMENT ON TRANSFORMATION

"The NWU believes that value-adding transformation should be deeply embedded in all our activities, from the transformation of the curriculum to transformation of the institutional culture. All our members are required

to further the transformation objectives of the university and to be change champions of transformation initiatives. We are committed to making meaningful changes that will impact positively on the lives of our staff and students."

*Statement approval obtained from the NWU Council on 17 June 2021*



PROF DAN KGWADI  
CHAIRPERSON OF SENATE



DR BISMARK TYOBEKA  
CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL

# Material risks and opportunities impacting value

LANGUAGE BUTTONS

AFR SES SET

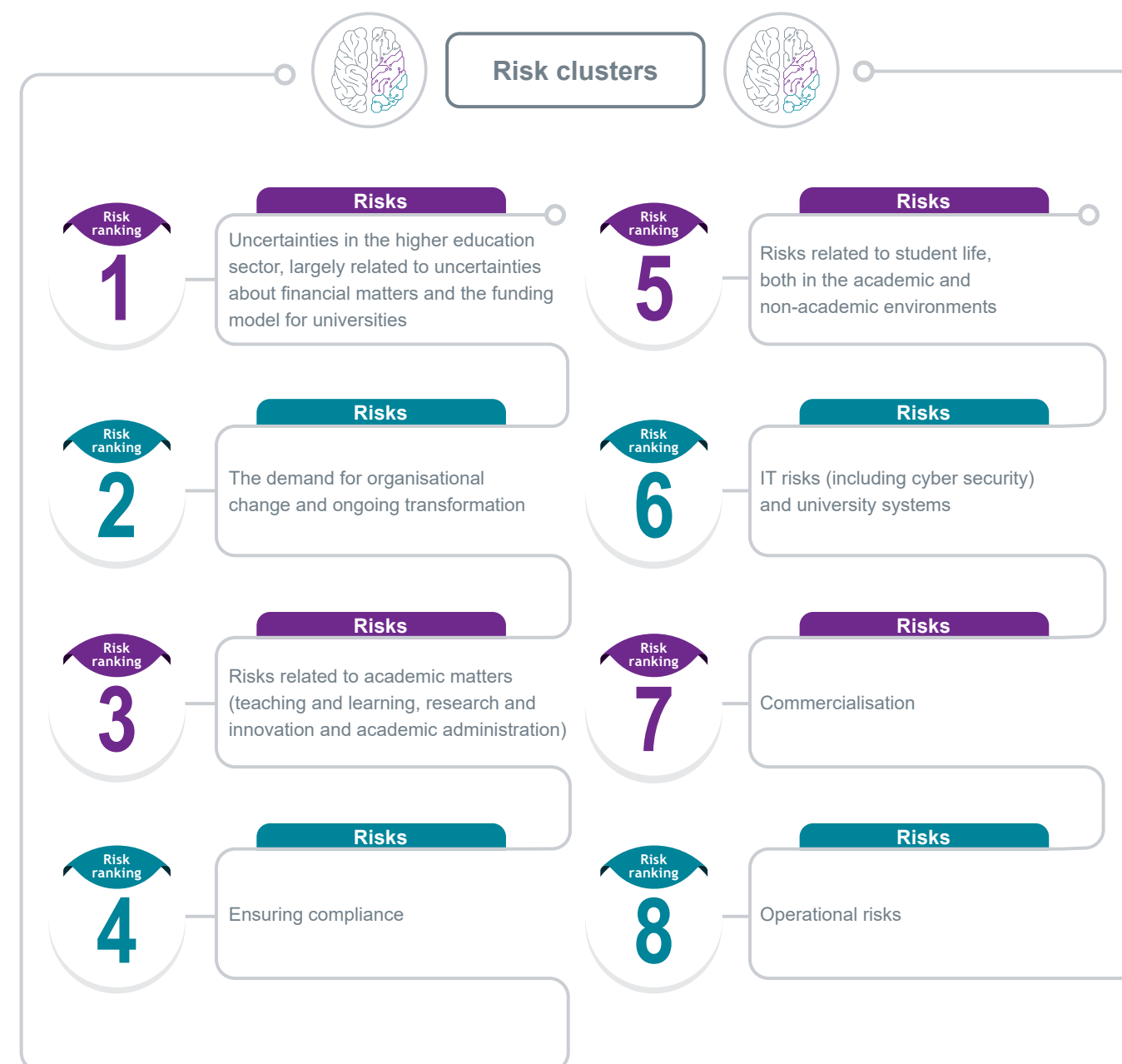
## Overview: our risk governance and management processes

With the additional risks and opportunities associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to apply our minds to **explore** these, **expand** our way of thinking to mitigate the risks and harness the opportunities, and **evolve** to be able to navigate the "new normal".

Our strategic approach to risk and opportunity management entails identifying and prioritising risks and opportunities that could influence our ability to implement

the university's strategy, and adopting appropriate risk mitigation strategies and initiatives.

In doing so, we take into account the demands of and uncertainties in the **external environment** and align our risk management processes with the King IV guiding principles. This approach ensures streamlined processes and procedures in accordance with the prescripts of the King IV code.

















## How we prioritise our risks and opportunities

The NWU's strategic goals are the point of reference for prioritising, defining and assessing our risks. We use a template for risk identification and risk definition, coupled with a comprehensive process of implementing internal controls and action plans to address the causes of risk and manage the risks to an acceptable level. All risks above appetite are prioritised and highlighted for reporting purposes.

Certain risks tend to be interrelated and can often be grouped into clusters. For the past few years, we have been using a risk-cluster categorisation approach to identify the material risk clusters that are important for the university's strategy, governance and management, performance and future planning.

These clusters are listed in the following table where we describe the risks related to each cluster and give a short summary of the associated mitigation strategies. (For more information, refer to our [risk register](#).)

<div>Risk ranking</div> <div>1</div>	<b>Uncertainties in the higher education sector, largely related to uncertainties about financial matters and the funding model for universities</b>			
	<p><b>Related material matter:</b> <i>Ensure financial sustainability.</i> (Annual Performance Plan [APP], Enabler 4)</p> <table> <tr> <th>Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals</th><th>Mitigating actions</th></tr> <tr> <td> <p>Risks that may put our financial stability under pressure were additional expenses and reduced income levels brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, uncertainties around the proposed fee regulation model, reservations about the sustainability of government's funding model, an overdependence on a dominant source of income (government subsidies and NSFAS) and student debt.</p> <p>Capital affected: </p> </td><td> <p>Mitigation measures included the acceptance of a financial impact model containing all the mitigation plans included by Council. The mitigation strategies include fundraising and endowment initiatives to ensure new sustainable sources of income, building available reserves to cover one year of operational expenses, building optimal relationships with funders and facilitating start-up capital by the Technology Transfer and Innovation Support office.</p> </td></tr> </table>	Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals	Mitigating actions	<p>Risks that may put our financial stability under pressure were additional expenses and reduced income levels brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, uncertainties around the proposed fee regulation model, reservations about the sustainability of government's funding model, an overdependence on a dominant source of income (government subsidies and NSFAS) and student debt.</p> <p>Capital affected: </p>
Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals	Mitigating actions			
<p>Risks that may put our financial stability under pressure were additional expenses and reduced income levels brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, uncertainties around the proposed fee regulation model, reservations about the sustainability of government's funding model, an overdependence on a dominant source of income (government subsidies and NSFAS) and student debt.</p> <p>Capital affected: </p>	<p>Mitigation measures included the acceptance of a financial impact model containing all the mitigation plans included by Council. The mitigation strategies include fundraising and endowment initiatives to ensure new sustainable sources of income, building available reserves to cover one year of operational expenses, building optimal relationships with funders and facilitating start-up capital by the Technology Transfer and Innovation Support office.</p>			
<div>Risk ranking</div> <div>2</div>	<b>The demand for organisational change and ongoing transformation</b>			
	<p><b>Related material matter:</b> <i>Govern, lead and manage in a sustainable and transformed way with an effective operating model</i> (APP, Enabler 1)</p> <table> <tr> <th>Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals</th><th>Mitigating actions</th></tr> <tr> <td> <p>Risks in this cluster included insufficient level of diversity in staff and student environments, escalation in sexual and gender-based violence, poor implementation of the unitary business model, uncertainties around the language plan implementation, and difficulty in recruiting and retaining talented staff.</p> <p>Capitals affected:   </p> </td><td> <p>Mitigation measures included a well-defined student recruitment and admission process; a scarce-skill allowance; building employment equity targets into the performance agreements of management members; retention strategies; clear position profiles for senior management; diversity targets; an Employment Equity Policy, and language plans for faculties and support departments.</p> </td></tr> </table>	Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals	Mitigating actions	<p>Risks in this cluster included insufficient level of diversity in staff and student environments, escalation in sexual and gender-based violence, poor implementation of the unitary business model, uncertainties around the language plan implementation, and difficulty in recruiting and retaining talented staff.</p> <p>Capitals affected:   </p>
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### Capitals



Intellectual



Human



Social and relationship
























Manufactured/manufacturing



Natural



Financial

<div>Risk ranking</div> <div>3</div>	<b>Risks related to academic matters (teaching and learning, research and innovation and academic administration)</b>			
	<p><b>Related material matters:</b> <i>Intensify research and innovation (APP, Goal 2) and promote excellent learning and teaching, and reposition the NWU to attain the size and shape required by market direction decisions.</i> (APP, Goal 1)</p> <table> <tr> <th>Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals</th><th>Mitigating actions</th></tr> <tr> <td> <p>In this cluster, we focused on risks such as a decline in research funding and research, poor financial support to postgraduate students, loss of opportunity income, subsidy and loss of return, limited infrastructure planning for teaching and an insufficient global engagement/internationalisation effort.</p> <p>Other risks were an apparent lack of preparedness for a blended learning environment, uncompetitive salaries, slow external processes for approval of qualifications/programmes, over and under enrolment, and the perceived inability to meet marketplace expectations if graduates do not find employment quickly enough.</p> <p>Further risks were declines in student throughput and student success, and the possibility that undergraduate and postgraduate academic offerings and related services may not be sufficiently responsive, price appropriate and of the required quality and standard.</p> <p>Capitals affected:    </p> </td><td> <p>Mitigation strategies at play here included a budgetary process to focus on sustaining research, merit bonuses for qualifying postgraduate students who received NSFAS funding during undergraduate studies, strategic funds for postgraduate bursaries and an internationalisation policy, as well as a well-organised process for cooperation agreements.</p> <p>With regard to infrastructure, mitigating steps included the Strategic Intelligence committee aiming to redesign the system to ensure effective use of infrastructure; provision for infrastructure planning as part of our budgeting planning, and the establishment of a space management project.</p> <p>Further actions included an induction programme on blended teaching and the implementation of a blended model aimed at enhancing student access and success.</p> <p>Measures to improve student success were admission and placement tests to guide admission into second or third choice qualifications, measuring tools to track student success, faculty plans to enhance throughput, and support interventions such as supplemental instruction, group and individual tutorials, student advisors and student support walk-in services.</p> <p>More detail about our mitigation actions is included in our <a href="#">risks register</a>.</p> </td></tr> </table>	Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals	Mitigating actions	<p>In this cluster, we focused on risks such as a decline in research funding and research, poor financial support to postgraduate students, loss of opportunity income, subsidy and loss of return, limited infrastructure planning for teaching and an insufficient global engagement/internationalisation effort.</p> <p>Other risks were an apparent lack of preparedness for a blended learning environment, uncompetitive salaries, slow external processes for approval of qualifications/programmes, over and under enrolment, and the perceived inability to meet marketplace expectations if graduates do not find employment quickly enough.</p> <p>Further risks were declines in student throughput and student success, and the possibility that undergraduate and postgraduate academic offerings and related services may not be sufficiently responsive, price appropriate and of the required quality and standard.</p> <p>Capitals affected:    </p>
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<div>Risk ranking</div> <div>4</div>	<b>Ensuring compliance</b>			
	<p><b>Related material matter:</b> <i>Govern, lead and manage in a sustainable and transformed way with an effective operating model.</i> (APP, Enabler 1)</p> <table> <tr> <th>Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals</th><th>Mitigating actions</th></tr> <tr> <td> <p>Risks receiving attention in this cluster were inadequacies in environmental management and information governance, disaster recovery and business continuity, fraud prevention, the inconsistent application of the Policy on Academic Integrity, and a lack of compliance with health and safety laws and regulations, other statutory requirements, licences and other legal requirements.</p> <p>Capitals affected:   </p> </td><td> <p>Mitigation measures included business continuity planning and contingency planning for key processes such as registration, as well as the implementation of the Digital Business Strategy.</p> <p>Other measures were an audit plan on environmental management, and continual occupational health and safety training, monitoring and awareness campaigns. The 2020 internal audit plan addressed risks around academic integrity. We also have a policy and rules on academic integrity.</p> </td></tr> </table>	Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals	Mitigating actions	<p>Risks receiving attention in this cluster were inadequacies in environmental management and information governance, disaster recovery and business continuity, fraud prevention, the inconsistent application of the Policy on Academic Integrity, and a lack of compliance with health and safety laws and regulations, other statutory requirements, licences and other legal requirements.</p> <p>Capitals affected:   </p>
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### Capitals



Intellectual



Human



Social and relationship



Manufactured/manufacturing



Natural



Financial



Risk ranking

5

**Risks related to student life, both in the academic and non-academic environments**
**Related material matter:** *Develop a clearly differentiated student value proposition (APP, Goal 4)*

*Promote excellent learning and teaching and reposition the NWU to attain the size and shape required by market direction decisions.(APP, Goal 1)*
**Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals****Mitigating actions**

In this cluster, the risks were student safety on and off-campus, the possible negative effect of “standardising” student life across campuses and the management of student life in a new structure.

Other risks include inadequate measures to create a welcoming student environment, inadequacies in student leadership skills, and the possibility of student unrest.

Mitigation strategies included various security projects across all campuses, awareness and training programmes on LGBTQ+ and other human rights issues, student leadership training, and emergency contingency plans for student unrest.

Capitals affected:



Risk ranking

6

**IT risks (including cyber security) and university systems**
**Related material matter:** *Develop best-in-class information and communications technology to support the core business. (APP, Enabler 2)*

**Related material matter:** *Govern, lead and manage in a sustainable and transformed way. (APP, Enabler 1)*
**Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals****Mitigating actions**

In this cluster, a risk receiving attention was the fact that cyber security is not addressed adequately, a risk that may increase with our digital transformation.

Other risks included IT provisioning for certain administrative and academic functions not being optimal, and uncertainties around the digital business strategy which could lead to delays in new system design and implementation.

In addition, a possible inadequate disaster recovery plan within IT could halt our operations.

Mitigation measures included the implementation of a cyber-incident and execution management system, development of a cybersecurity strategy and using the best-in-class firewall solution.

Other steps taken were the audit plan executed annually by Internal Audit, and institution-wide network access control and penetration testing. Furthermore, we have an enterprise-wide digital business strategy as part of our strategic positioning.

Capitals affected:



Risk ranking

7

**Commercialisation**
**Related material matter:** *Promote excellent learning and teaching, and reposition the NWU to attain the size and shape required by market direction decisions. (APP, Goal 1)*

*Promote excellent learning and teaching and reposition the NWU to attain the size and shape required by market direction decisions.(APP, Goal 1)*
**Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals****Mitigating actions**

The commercialisation environment looked into the failure of licensees or spin-out ventures to commercialise, along with commercialisation risks such as the offering of non-compliant service level providers, income not coming to the NWU, and missing out on commercialisation opportunities.

Mitigation measures included making provision for an effective financial and operating model and a management structure for continuing education, increasing commercialisation opportunities and finalising the establishment of the Unit for Continuing Education, as well as the policy on continuing education. Commercialisation focused on undertaking due diligence and creating standardised licensing agreements.

Capitals affected:



Capitals



Intellectual



Human



Social and relationship



Manufactured/ manufacturing



Natural



Financial

Risk ranking

8

**Operational risks**
**Related material matters:** *Govern, lead and manage in a sustainable and transformed way. (APP, Enabler 1)*

*Ensuring the financial sustainability of the NWU. (APP, Enabler 4)*
**Risk(s) and the impact on value creation and capitals****Mitigating actions**

Operational risks included the academic project facing challenges around ineffectiveness and inefficiencies of support functions, possibly leading to loss of income and potential growth, loss of staff and negative impact on the reputation and ranking of the NWU.

Mitigation measures included a project to optimise space management and receipt of a substantial grant from the DHET to optimise our infrastructure development.

We are also to further strengthen our integrated planning for academic infrastructure.

Other risks were absenteeism and loss of valuable staff owing to low staff morale.

Capitals affected:

**Risks and Covid-19**

The following risks with regard to the Covid-19 pandemic's financial and related impacts received high priority and were included and described in our risk register as follows:

- The large number of additional expenses, as well as reduced income levels, brought about by complying with the lockdown and the accompanying regulations.
- Increases in outstanding debt due to parents not being able to pay/refusing to pay since the NWU was not conducting business as usual.
- The risk impact was categorised as severe and the likelihood as certain, resulting in an inherent risk rating of 25 and a financial impact of R161 338 000. After considering the control established (the financial impact model with the mitigation plans approved by Council) which was rated as adequate, the residual risk rating came down to 13, which is still above the risk appetite of the NWU.

**Using our opportunities**

As part of the risk-cluster approach, we continually identify opportunities to adapt to our changing environment, **explore** new pathways and **evolve** to become more.

The opportunities we consider vital are those that:

- continually safeguard the financial sustainability of the university
- enable us to implement our new strategy, structure and operating model
- promote excellence in teaching and learning and research and innovation
- establish a clearly differentiated student value proposition
- develop and retain excellent staff and create an equitable staff and student profile

- enable the deployment of best-in-class information technology to support the core business
- provide an effective financial model, policies and structure for continuing education offerings and increased commercialisation opportunities.

**Steps taken in 2020**

The focus of the ongoing refinement of risk management was on strengthening the internal control environment, for instance through the continual review of policies and the current drive towards the governance and management of ethics.

The emphasis on an improved description of internal controls assisted in the mitigation of risks, both in the understanding of the risk and in the pursuit of managing the relevant risks to acceptable levels.

The continued implementation and improvement of the electronic risk management approach contributed to more systematic risk management. The focus allowing risk owners to link risks to the operations and quality enhancement within a particular business process provided an opportunity for the integration of controls.

Clear conventions have been established for the use of information sources for ongoing risk management purposes. These sources include existing data source owners (finances, strategic intelligence, people and culture) and information shared at governance levels and in the annual integrated report. Risk management was rolled out to faculty level and a number of support departments by sharing developments related to internal controls and how these controls secure the sustainability of the NWU.

Improved monitoring was introduced in 2020. This entails conducting various internal and external evaluations to monitor risk management and internal controls implemented for mitigation purposes.



The following graph indicates the status of residual risks for 2020 of the NWU strategic risk register, after the consultation phase with risk owners.

### Residual heat map report

21 #0	22 #0	23 #0	24 #0	25 #0
16 #1	17 #0	18 #0	19 #0	20 #0
11 #0	12 #1	13 #3	14 #1	15 #0
6 #9	7 #5	8 #2	9 #0	10 #1
1 #1	2 #7	3 #6	4 #8	5 #0

### Top 10 residual risks

Rank	Risk	Description of risk	Residual risk
1	Cyber security	Cyber security is not adequately addressed at the NWU and is the number one IT issue worldwide. An attack on the NWU is likely and digital transformation will increase the risk.	16.00
2	Digital Business Strategy	Digital transformation will have a severe impact on operational models, structures, people, processes and roles.	16.00
3	Environmental management	The lack of focus in this regard poses a risk to sustainability and compliance.	13.50
4	Information governance, business continuity programme and disaster recovery programme	Inadequacies around a focused approach on information governance, disaster recovery and business continuity could hamper our operations.	12.80
5	Covid-19 financial impact	Covid-19 was declared as a national disaster, with all the different levels of lockdown and the accompanying regulations that severely impacted the economy and the ability to continue with business as usual.	12.50
6	Research	Decline in research funding and research, and possibility of inadequate quality research products.	12.00
7	Fee regulation	Uncertainties around the proposed fee regulation model, leading to uncertainty around sustainability.	10.00
8	Business processes	Academic project in jeopardy because of the ineffectiveness and inefficiencies of support functions, possibly leading to loss of income and potential growth, loss of staff and a negative impact on reputation and rankings of the NWU.	8.00
9	Internationalisation	Insufficient global engagement/internationalisation effort, with the effect that the NWU has little international exposure, hampering our ability to attract international staff, students, investment and sponsoring of research.	8.00
10	Postgraduate students	Poor financial support to postgraduate students resulting in loss of student income and discontinuity from undergraduate to postgraduate progression. Furthermore, the dependency of postgraduate numbers on bursaries.	7.20

### Key to risk indicators

Risk Indicator Key		
Name	Number of risks	Description
High	1	The risk is potentially disastrous and will hinder the achievement of objectives and/or lead to the collapse of business and/or project
Medium	5	The risk could have serious impact on operations. A risk that can be managed with some additional resources, budget and maintenance effort.
Low	17	A risk that is unlikely to occur, but if it does occur it can be managed under normal operating conditions
Minor	22	A risk event that holds no significant threat to the organisation, employees or stakeholders



### Improving the effectiveness of risk management

A highlight of 2020 was the approval of a Risk and Compliance Management Policy by Council in March 2020.

Effective assessment of risk exposure and risk management is essential to us, especially on the operational, managerial and governance levels where risks are controlled.

Our combined assurance model is aligned with the good-practice governance principles in King IV and aims to incorporate and optimise all relevant assurance services, functions and structures. These are the university management committee, academic and support managers, the NWU's registrar, a designated risk and compliance officer and the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee.

Two other structures involved in risk management are the Compliance Committee and the Combined Assurance Forum (CAF). Internal Audit also plays a substantial role in establishing an environment conducive to risk management.

### Continuous assessment of risk

Regular reporting of risks takes place at the appropriate governance level, and all oversight structures receive twice-yearly updates on the status of risk management in these categories.

We identify potential risk events that might emerge and assess the likelihood of these occurring and their potential impact. Our assessment scale includes ratings for impact, probability, control effectiveness and residual risk.

Furthermore, we link responsible business process owners to each risk.

While the University Management Committee is responsible for overall management and control of risk, each risk owner remains responsible for ensuring that appropriate abatement strategies are established. Risk owners also provide feedback on the progress of managing the particular risk event, and ensure that the risk register is updated regularly.

Thus, operational managers are at the heart of the university's risk management project, taking responsibility and accountability for this.

From the above, our stakeholders may rest assured that all efforts were made in 2020 to continue to identify, assess and manage the relevant potential risk consequences on the university's effectiveness and efficiency.

**PROF MARLENE VERHOEF**  
REGISTRAR DESIGNATED WITH  
RISK RESPONSIBILITY

**MR THABO MOKGATLHA**  
CHAIRPERSON: AUDIT, RISK AND  
COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

## COUNCIL STATEMENT ON RISK MANAGEMENT

"The NWU Council, as the final decision-making body of the university, affirms that it is endowed with the responsibility and accountability for the effectiveness and efficiency of the risk management process. It is continually apprised of developments by means of management and audit reports on the management and risk coverage processes; and had been provided sufficient assurance over the past year from all relevant assurance providers."

*Statement approval obtained from the NWU Council on 17 June 2021*



# Our strategy guides us to explore, expand and evolve

LANGUAGE BUTTONS

AFR

SES

SET

Here we describe what our goals and enablers are and how we intend to reach those goals. This is how we create value for our stakeholders.

Our guiding light on this journey is our 2015-2025 strategy, which sets the overall framework within which we seek to attain the specific objectives in our Annual Performance Plan – the map to help us reach these.

## Explaining our strategy

In the following diagram, we depict how our identity (purpose, dream and brand promise) drives our strategy, which informs our long-term goals and enablers. Each year, we review and agree on our annual objectives that we capture in our Annual Performance Plan. These objectives anchor the broad direction in concrete actions through which we **explore, expand** and **evolve**.

## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### NWU research group contributes to international bird study

The NWU's research on the genetic data of the nine lovebird species (genus *Agapornis*) that are native to Africa and Madagascar has been included in a comprehensive international bird study.

This accomplishment is in line with our dream to be an internationally recognised university in Africa.

The research has also led to a patent and the possible commercialisation of a genomic test developed by the NWU that will be of great value to conservationists and parrot breeders.

[\(Read more\)](#)



Dr Henriëtte van der Zwan's research on lovebird genetics is included in the prestigious Nature B10K bird study.



**OUR STRATEGY:** Transform and position the NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice.

## Annual Performance Plan

### Our dream

#### DREAM

Internationally recognised  
Engaged scholarship  
Social responsiveness  
Ethic of care

#### PURPOSE

Innovative learning and teaching  
Cutting-edge research  
Benefitting society through knowledge

#### BRAND PROMISE

Dynamic  
Values-driven  
Excellent

Realised through

### GOALS (CORE PERFORMANCE)

1. Promote excellent learning and teaching and reposition the NWU to attain the size and shape required by the market direction decisions.
2. Intensify research and innovation.
3. Integrate and align community engagement with core activities (teaching and learning and research) and promote sustainability principles.
4. Develop a clearly differentiated student value proposition.
5. Develop and retain excellent staff and create an equitable staff and student profile.

### ENABLERS

1. Govern, lead and manage in a sustainable and transformed way with an effective operating model.
2. Develop best in class information and communications technology to support the core business.
3. Communicate, engage and develop core business capability to increase brand equity, leadership efficacy, and community solidarity.
4. Ensure the financial sustainability of the NWU.

RISK REGISTER

Linked to

FINANCIAL PLAN

Revision

Measured by

### Key Performance Indicators

Contact student success rate  
International student enrolment  
First-time entrant dropout rate for contact degrees

Publications per permanent academic staff member  
Student: academic staff FTE ratio  
Permanent academic staff with PhDs

Contact undergraduate graduation duration factor  
Weighted research output  
Student mix: contact and distance

## Five goals to realise our strategy

### How we get there

Quality is embedded in all aspects of teaching and learning, and an excellent and aligned learning experience is available across our campuses and modes of provision.

Always ready to **explore** new trends and **expand** our vision of the world of work, we often revise our academic programmes to ensure relevance and augment the work-integrated learning and service learning components within modules. More broadly, we are re-imagining the shape and size of our PQM. Through these efforts, we enhance the quality and work-readiness of our graduates.

Our academics and professional teaching and learning support units provide accessible and appropriate student support in a variety of formats.

We promote the scholarship of teaching and learning among our academic staff and conduct ethically sound research on the curriculum, student learning and assessment, among others.

Short learning programmes are now also available in the online environment. This, and the growth in the number of our short learning programmes, provides professional services to the community while creating third-stream income for the university.

### Where we want to go

We want to promote excellent learning and teaching and reposition the NWU to attain the size and shape required by the market direction decisions.

### How we get there

During the year, we successfully concluded the evaluations for research funding applications to the National Research Foundation (NRF), Medical Research Council (MRC) and similar bodies. Research funding opportunities were widely publicised on NWU online platforms as they were received.

We managed the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) and made progress with establishing the joint Namibia-RSA chair, which is another example of our the action we are taking to **expand** and **evolve** to become more than we were before.

Researchers and students attended briefing and training sessions on funding and ethics, and we concluded research grants. We **explored** and evaluated the NWU research landscape, research funding mechanisms and research project portfolio in light of the pandemic, and pursued a holistic strategy for the internationalisation of research.

### Where we want to go

It is our goal to intensify research and innovation.

### How we get there

The integration of community engagement into teaching and learning and research provides an opportunity to develop a culture where we share knowledge and expertise and, on the other hand, we learn from the community.

Work-integrated learning and service learning through discipline-based outreach and research are undertaken in the community, and we encourage staff and students to volunteer in communities, thereby enhancing their social responsiveness.

We have a responsibility towards the environment; it is for this reason that we embark on different projects such as maintaining green campuses and promoting waste management, electricity savings and recycling awareness.

### Where we want to go

We want our community engagement to be integrated and aligned with our teaching and learning and research, and want to promote sustainability principles.

### How we get there

We continually implement projects to enhance our student value proposition. However, only some of the planned projects and programmes went ahead in 2020 (for instance the development of a Student Life Policy) while others were put on hold as a result of the pandemic.

As we are eager to **evolve** and **explore** new opportunities to enhance student life, we pursued the use of multi-modal approaches – including innovative digital platforms – in the provisioning of student life experience.

### Where we want to go

It is important to develop a clearly differentiated student value proposition.

### How we get there

By striving for staff and student equity, we promote social justice and diversity on all campuses.

The Residence Department has introduced an online application process for all three campuses, enabling better control over placements.

All our residences are expected to reflect our enrolment targets for 2025 by following the plans and processes put in place for this purpose.

Council has approved our new Employment Equity Plan, which complies with all the Department of Labour's requirements. The new plan focuses on removing barriers to the recruitment of people from the designated groups and people living with disabilities. It also addresses succession planning for key positions, retention strategies and the establishment of an enabling organisational culture.

### Where we want to go

We want to develop and retain excellent staff and create an equitable staff and student profile.

## Four enablers to help us realise our strategy

### How we get there

We have an integrated and holistic approach to ensuring the realisation of the 2015 – 2025 NWU Strategy.

Our management model promotes accountability across divisions to achieve organisational outcomes, and our values influence our policy framework at all levels of operation.

Keeping to the theme of this report, namely to **explore**, **expand** and **evolve**, we have **adapted** to the Covid-19 pandemic by fast-tracking our digital business strategy. We believe that the implementation of this strategy will enable us to **evolve** in the way in which govern, manage and lead in future

### Where we want to go

Govern, lead and manage in a sustainable and transformed way with an effective operating model.



### How we get there

We are incorporating the digital experience gained during the Covid-19 pandemic into the future-proofing of our operations.

We will use our digital business strategy to create new competitive advantages and make technology/digital transformation a core component of the NWU strategy.

Our high-quality IT capabilities kept the NWU running throughout the pandemic and we will use the lessons learnt to inform our ongoing digital transformation.

We are aware of the importance of ensuring stable, scalable, hybrid, manageable and responsive infrastructure, and of establishing the Next Generation Digital Environment (NGDE) as part of the long-term integration platform. (The NGDE is a modern integration platform and one of the basic building blocks for digital transformation.)

We will focus on maximising business agility, ensuring a secure digital environment and building the technology ecosystem that integrates students, partners, employees and things.

Our intention is to deliver exceptional customer experience and establish a responsive operating model known for flexibility, competent people, best practices, innovative culture and well-looked-after staff.

### Where we want to go

Develop best-in-class information and communications technology to drive digital transformation.

### How we get there

The way we weathered the financial storm caused by the Covid-19 pandemic is another example demonstrating our resilience and proactive spirit to **explore**, **expand** and **evolve**.

The financial impact model and mitigation plan was developed to respond to the possible impact of Covid-19, together with a three-year rolling budget for 2021 to 2023. The intention is to ensure medium and long-term sustainability, with a focus on cash flow management for the shorter term.

The impact of remote learning on infrastructure projects was carefully considered in order to optimise capital investment and cash flow management.

The Continuing Education Strategic Project is expected to optimise and **expand** our continuing education income.

We are also making good progress with the facility optimisation project to increase effective use of our buildings and facilities.

### Where we want to go

Ensure the financial sustainability of the NWU

### How we get there

### Where we want to go

Communicate, engage and develop core business capabilities to increase brand equity, leadership efficacy and community solidarity

We continue to develop and implement appropriate communication and engagement strategies targeting specific stakeholder groups. We build partnerships to implement these strategies to achieve optimal value.

Our partnerships with stakeholders such as staff, alumni and students play a key role in enhancing our brand, especially in terms of digital media platforms.

We continuously evaluate our performance and work towards finding the most reliable performance measurement tools for our marketing communication initiatives to ensure maximum return on investment.

## Annual Performance Plan

### How the Annual Performance Plan fits in with our strategy

The Annual Performance Plan (APP) sets out what we must do annually to implement our strategy so that we ultimately deliver value to all our stakeholders and support national priorities.

The five goals and four enablers drive the implementation of our strategy, along with key performance indicators to measure our progress towards implementation.

### How the APP was revised in 2020

We identified risks and opportunities that were likely to impact the NWU in the short, medium and long term. This information was then used to draw up an updated situation analysis to inform the further development of the NWU strategy, as well as the APP.

An external situation analysis of the structure and competitive nature of the higher education landscape equips management and Council with a broad overview of issues that will impact on the implementation of the NWU strategy and budget priorities.

An assessment of our major risks and opportunities informed our performance objectives for 2020. This

assessment took into account variables relating to market size and growth, our customers, the impact of technology on teaching and learning, our income, capital and funding, and our relationships with communities. These factors are likely to have an impact on the university both in the near future and in the longer term.

## Future outlook

There are two assumptions concerning Covid-19 that underpin our planning: first, that Covid-19 will not disappear in the near future, and that we will continue to function within a regime of (health-related) caution, and second, that vaccines will take time to develop and roll out globally.

Covid-19 has also accelerated the implementation of our digital business strategy. Our future digital platform for the university will integrate students, partners, employees and things, in order to connect people to contextualised information and services.

The vehicles for this will be modern digital delivery channels and a resilient integration platform sitting on top of stable, hybrid, responsive, manageable and secure infrastructure and enabling systems. These will support our business and operating models, provide analytics-driven insights and enable exceptional customer experience, in order to differentiate this university from others.

*The expectation is that a willingness to **adapt** to changing circumstances, **explore** new possibilities, **expand** our way of thinking and **evolve** in how we do things, might be a key contributor to realising strategies in future.*



# Our performance against our strategy: Harnessing our capitals to explore, expand and evolve

In this part of the integrated report we would like to show you how we respond to our stakeholders' needs through our business activities, and how these activities lead to outputs and outcomes, thereby transforming the value of our six capitals.

These capitals represent the value we create for ourselves and our stakeholders; our performance against them shows how we are faring in achieving our strategic goals and, consequently, **evolving** to become more than before.



## Our intellectual capital

Our intellectual capital is all about our knowledge-based intangibles that result from our core business activities: teaching and learning, research and community engagement.

We will also show you how we govern and manage the university through our structures, policies, processes and systems, and how we support our core business by maintaining and further developing our information and communications technology.

### Stakeholders who will benefit from our intellectual capital

Increasing our intellectual capital benefits all our stakeholders who are interested in the knowledge that we create through our research or our teaching and community engagement activities.

They include our staff, current and prospective students and their parents, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), communities, donors, alumni, employers, business and industry and professional bodies.

### Material matters (goals or enablers) involved

(Click [here](#) to see what the icons used in this section stands for.)



### Risks involved

The risks include the demand for organisational change and ongoing transformation (for instance concerning the decolonisation of the curriculum), risks related to academic matters (teaching-learning, research and innovation and academic administration), the risk of non-compliance (for instance with the standards and regulations of professional bodies), risks related to IT, university systems and commercialisation of our innovation and research results.

Click [here](#) to see how we mitigate these risks.

### Material matter:

### Teaching and learning



## See how we explore, expand and evolve

During 2020, we used remote learning, which includes online and distance learning, to continue our academic activities.

"Our priority throughout the Covid-19 crisis has been to support students to continue their studies through the modalities best suited to these extraordinary circumstances," says Prof Robert Balfour, deputy vice-chancellor for teaching and learning.

"Similarly, when it comes to our staff, the university's planning efforts have focused on keeping them safe and empowering business continuity from their home environments."



Prof Robert Balfour, deputy vice-chancellor for teaching and learning.

In realising our commitment to foster academic success, we emphasise the quality and diversity of teaching and learning activities and readily invest in staff development and student support and development. We also align our academic programmes across the university, ensure they are evaluated regularly and **expand** the reach of our distance learning offerings through appropriate ICT and multimedia resources.

### Increase student access and success

Extensive, value-adding academic support is offered to students, as discussed in the following section.

#### Extended curriculum programmes

In a number of natural sciences and economic sciences programmes, students can complete their studies over an extended period of time. The value of these programmes is evident from their overall student success rate of approximately 90%.

In 2020, we had 1 275 first-time entering students on extended programmes and a total enrolment of 4 404 students. By the end of 2020, some 15% of this group of students had graduated.

#### University Preparatory Programme (UnivPrep)

UnivPrep is a one-year short learning programme that enhances access to specific degree programmes at the NWU. Each year, approximately 45% of successful UnivPrep participants become eligible to apply for formal degree studies.

#### Academic literacy tests and modules

An academic literacy test is compulsory for all first-year students, who may then be required to register for specific academic literacy modules in academic writing, reading, computer and information literacy and study skills.

Incorporating discipline-specific content where possible, these modules allow seamless integration of contact and multimodal offerings, as well as a greater focus on self-directed learning. It was noted, with concern, that students struggled with self-directed learning, particularly the weaker students who are in need of greater in-person support.

#### Tutorial programmes 2020

Together with the other student support programmes, appointing tutors enabled us to maintain a good contact success rate of 90%.

#### Supplemental instruction

During 2020, Supplemental Instruction (SI) was offered in an online modality for the first time due to Covid-19. Targeted at historically difficult (at-risk) modules, it supports undergraduate students within these modules through regularly scheduled small-group sessions by trained SI facilitators.

SI was offered in 455 modules across the three campuses in 2020. In the first semester, 453 SI leaders were appointed and 318 SI leaders in the second semester. A total of 22 648 students attended the more than 17 706 sessions during the year.



### ► Academic peer mentors

In the academic peer mentoring programme, high-performing senior students support first-year students to adapt to university life. Despite the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic, the 74 academic peer mentors recorded 5 052 interactions with 3 285 student mentees in their first year at the NWU.

### ► Taking the contact offering into the online environment during the Covid-19 crisis

In response to stringent national lockdown measures, our faculties developed contingency plans to deal effectively with teaching and learning and continuous assessment while adhering to the General Academic Rules and specific Faculty Rules.

Our lecturers did not hesitate to **explore** new pathways, **expand** their horizons and **evolve** their skill sets. They embraced appropriate technologies and online methodologies to enable the continuation of quality

teaching and learning. In exceptional cases where connectivity issues hampered participation in the online programme, printed material was provided.

From the start, we focused on mobile-friendly, low-tech, low-data and low-immediacy teaching. This approach was intended to enhance the chances of every student engaging with lecturers and with their study materials, and completing online assessments successfully.

Students who needed printed materials to complete their studies received comprehensive information packs and additional guidance for every module.

The NWU launched a project to provide students in need with data and devices, while faculties established special call centres to communicate with students and Library and Information Services came to the table with virtual library and information services. The Centre for Teaching and Learning made sure that staff and students had optimal virtual support to teach and learn in an online environment.

## See how we explore, expand and evolve

Lending a helping hand to our lecturers

**A**s with all things new, the NWU community has had to address the many challenges associated with technical and other difficulties by exploring new possibilities, expanding our view and evolving in how we do things.

During the pandemic, the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), for instance, has implemented various channels to reach out to lecturers.

They offer comprehensive support for staff needing to use electronic media to facilitate learning online or teach via the distance modality. This support has included webinars, telephonic and video assistance, as well as print material.

One of the CTL's initiatives is helping our lecturers to design interactive digital study material.

*2020 will be remembered as a year during which all staff and students were required to think differently, act differently and interact differently – and succeeded in doing so.*

### ► Student success rate

As indicated earlier, we maintained a good contact success rate of 90%.

Our 2020 contact undergraduate graduation duration factor was 1,12, improving slightly from the 1,13 of 2019. This can be attributed to enhanced strategies for student support, early identification of at-risk students and NSFAS funding with provision for books and accommodation.

### ► How much value we created, compared to previous years

Academic performance	2017	2018	2019	2020
Contact student success rate	86%	85%	85%	90%
Contact undergraduate, graduation duration factor	1,15	1,13	1,13	1,12
Graduation rate	25,6%	25,1%	23,5%	27%

### ► How much value we created, compared to our targets

Academic performance	Target	Definition	Actual
Contact student success rate	85%	Based on HEMIS data. Completed FTE's divided by enrolled FTE's on a module level.	90%
Contact undergraduate, graduation duration factor	1,2	Based on HEMIS data. The time (in years) it takes a student to graduate divided by the minimum time of the qualification.	1,12

Students across our campuses should all benefit from comparable high-quality teaching and learning, and have access to equivalent resources. It is important that academic programmes are sustainable and always relevant, so that all graduates have an equal opportunity to find work or to develop into entrepreneurs who create jobs for others.

### Ensure high-quality academic programmes

In 2020, three major NWU programmes were externally evaluated for quality assurance: BSc Agriculture (agricultural economics), Postgraduate Diploma (nuclear science and technology) and the Bachelor of Theology (pastoral counselling and psychology).

No professional or statutory body evaluations/reviews were conducted in any faculties because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A number of internal programme reviews were conducted virtually at the faculties of Humanities and Theology. The NWU National Doctoral Review took place in the second semester of 2020, and the report is expected in early 2021.

### Contingency plan for Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning Task Team

In another example of how the NWU community lived the theme of this integrated report, namely to **explore**, **expand** and **evolve**, the CTL was instrumental in

developing the strategy for emergency remote teaching and learning.

A comprehensive keep-on-teaching webpage was prepared and a task team generated information on students' data access, connectivity and technology access. All information about emergency remote teaching and learning was centrally coordinated and communicated via a single channel and portal.

### Learning design

Owing to the pandemic, there was a need to redesign modules and study materials while migrating to the online environment.

Through webinars, one-on-one virtual consultations and general drop-in rooms, we assisted lecturers to execute the so-called "LOW strategy". This refers to the combination of low bandwidth, low connectivity, low technology, low data and low immediacy characteristics that comprised our online strategy, which was also mobile friendly and based on eFundi, our learning management system.

Lecturers also received support in the design and development of paper-based study materials for students without access to connectivity, data and technology.

### Digital Teaching and Learning Environment (DTLE)

Our eFundi infrastructure was upgraded to support the explosion in digital traffic in 2020. This entailed increasing the number of servers from 10 to 20. We also launched a proof-of-concept project to **expand** the footprint of

Panopto, a digital platform used for the uploading and downloading of video materials, as part of the broader integrated video strategy.

Other important DTLE projects entailed completing an on-screen PDF marking system and implementing a call centre and service management system to deal with the sudden increase in service requests to the eFundi help desk.

## Work-integrated (WIL) and service learning system established

The development of a centralised system for WIL and Service Learning started in 2019 and continued into 2020. Its primary client during this time has been the Faculty of Education, which requested the new system for its teacher trainee placements.

Although WIL placements could not go ahead owing to the outbreak of the pandemic, system development proceeded and from June 2020, was expanded to include the WIL modules of the schools of Nursing and of Pharmacy in the Faculty of Health Sciences.

## Expand distance learning

We expanded our academic offering via distance learning in 2020. We received SAQA registration for the PGDip in industrial engineering, Bachelor of Theology Honours in theology, AdvDip in IP mathematics education, AdvDip in education management and leadership and PGDip in special needs education. (PGDiP stands for postgraduate diploma.)

*This is how our graduation rates (for undergraduate students) compare to other South African higher education institutions:*

*NWU graduation rate for students in 2020: 27%  
(The national average for 2019 was 20,6%.)*



## Challenges in teaching and learning

Critical teaching and learning priorities had to be managed despite the pandemic. A number of these included the further decolonisation of the curriculum, the Africanisation of appropriate sections of our offerings and creating opportunities to promote multilingualism in teaching and learning spaces. At any given time, the NWU must also ensure that all our offerings are nationally and internationally comparable and appropriately designed and incorporate accessible ICT to address teaching and learning challenges such as those associated with Covid-19.

The pandemic compelled us to attend to several key teaching and learning issues, **expanding** the way we think about our activities. Issues receiving attention were the development of the emergency remote teaching and

The AdvDip in intermediate phase mathematics education received accreditation, with NQF registration pending. Further development to our distance offering includes PQM clearance for the AdvDip in foundation phase education, AdvDip in intermediate phase education, AdvDip in FET phase education and BEdHons in early childhood development.

## Our output: graduates

The number of graduates is much lower than planned due to the drop in distance enrolments.

► *How much value we created, compared to previous years*

Graduates	2017	2018	2019	2020
Overall	16 004	15 350	14 961	15 454
Contact	9 931	10 650	11 191	11 697
Distance	6 073	4 700	3 770	3 757

► *How much value we created, compared to our targets*

Output	Target	Definition	Actual
Graduates	15 743	Based on HEMIS data; number of graduates in reporting year.	15 454

learning strategy, eAssessment platforms and the 21 Futures task team (responsible for addressing capacity and spatial challenges associated with Covid-19 protocol adherence going into 2021).

## Future outlook

In 2021 we will pursue the further establishment of a Centre for Higher Education Development, and the professionalisation of university teaching at the NWU through the development of a postgraduate diploma in higher education. Also planned for the year is a strong focus on language, race and gender as key themes for cross-curricular, online engagement between academics and students.

The finalisation of our digital business strategy will be a key pillar of the unfolding teaching and learning journey

at the NWU, and we will remain committed to helping to “transform and position the NWU as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence with a commitment to social justice”. From a teaching and learning perspective, this means concentrating all our efforts on supporting student success and developing our academic and administrative staff, with a continued commitment to an ethic of care.

Our commitment to staff development, student support, research, and teaching and learning excellence remains firm. In 2020, we gained immense learning and understanding about how to operate effectively during a national (health) disaster. We can now build on this advantage by approaching 2021 with a spirit of hope and optimism, careful to curtail risks to our communities and determined to overcome the impact of isolation, fear and anxiety associated with Covid-19.

Even within an ethos of Covid compliance, we will strive to enhance our ethos of care to not only minimise the risk to lives but also enhance the sustainability of the NWU as an academic community devoted to social justice and committed to excellence.

“Our theme in 2020 as university was one of consolidation, in terms of the operational model and systems, but in fact it turned out to be a year of accelerated change and responsiveness.”



## Material matter:

## Research



Our researchers and inventors strive to find affordable, workable solutions to real-life problems. Through their cutting-edge research and innovation activities, we increase our intellectual capital and create value for ourselves and our stakeholders.

Our researchers and innovators embarked on a journey like never before to **explore, expand** and **evolve**. They did this in a concerted effort to help society overcome the challenges the pandemic posed – they designed face masks, built or adapted respirators, developed Covid-19 screening apps and helped the North West province prepare for the pandemic.

## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### Award-winning app solves school gate congestion

**C**hop-chop. This is how quickly the smartphone app – aptly dubbed “TjopTjop” – can solve congestion problems at school gates caused by mandatory health screening of learners.

What's more, this digital health-screening kit and brainchild of the Faculty of Engineering has won a United Nations Economic Commission for Africa innovation award. It was also a national finalist for South Africa in the World Summit Awards 2020.

The kit captures data about the identity of the learners, their temperatures and whether they are wearing masks. The data can be viewed in real time on a web portal.

Click [here](#) to read more about this award-winning invention.



Click [here](#) on the video above to see how the nifty TjopTjop smart phone application works. Besides schools, its customer base also includes businesses and large corporates.



## Research output

NRF ratings are a key indicator of the calibre of a university's researchers. We again recorded an increase in NRF ratings, increasing from 229 in 2017 to 248 in 2019. The numbers of researchers in the different rating categories are set out in the following table.

NRF	2017	2018	2019
A	2	2	0
B	24	25	27
C	155	150	161
P	2	1	2
Y	46	54	58
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>248</b>

## Publications

► *How much value we created, compared to previous years*

Research	2016	2017	2018	2019
Publications per academic staff member	0,92	0,86	0,94	0,98
Weighted research output	2 609,64	2 605,50	2 708,94	3 058,02

## Increase our global standing and visibility

The NWU signed 19 formal international research and innovation collaborations in 2020, which further **expanded** our global presence. Of these collaborations, five were with top 500 institutions as rated by Quacquarelli Symonds.

However, it must be said that the Covid-19 pandemic adversely affected many internationalisation activities at the NWU and severely hindered the pursuit of new partnerships and collaborations. The impact of these constraints will be reflected in our reporting in 2021.

What has not changed is the calibre of our international partners. Our research collaborations, which range from joint degrees and co-chairs to collaborative research and innovation programmes, skills development and international student recruitment and exchange, involve prestigious institutions such as the Corporación Universidad de la Costa in Colombia, the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom and the University of Hong Kong in Asia.

The NWU also belongs to strategic inter-institutional collaborations such as the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA), which recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the OBREAL Global Observatory. Another strategic involvement is our membership of the Southern African-Nordic Centre (SANORD), which advances strategic, multilateral



academic collaboration between institutions in the Southern African and Nordic regions.

When international travel is allowed, NWU delegations visit Chinese universities as China is a research and innovation hub and both China and South Africa are part of the BRICS bloc, whose other members are Brazil, Russia and India. The NWU is an active partner in BRICS research collaborations and has knowledge and skills-sharing agreements with several BRICS universities.

## Innovation and technology fuel our drive to explore, expand and evolve

The university is **evolving** its approach to innovation. Instead of focusing on intellectual property (IP) curation, we are shifting to the transfer or monetisation of our IP portfolio. This includes trimming the low-value or mature patents, and taking more relevant technologies to the marketplace.

Marketing the NWU's technologies is a critical step of the technology transfer process, but was affected by the cancellation of various national and international events in 2020. We have pivoted to online marketing which will intensify as the pandemic persists.

Despite a difficult year for laboratory research, NWU researchers submitted 16 new IP disclosures to the Technology Transfer and Innovation Support Office, which filed four new patent applications. Among the disclosures were digital solutions to combat the Covid-19 pandemic, namely the TjopTjopTM health screening app, a method



for **remote monitoring of ventilators** and a system to digitally process polymerase chain reaction or PCR-based diagnostic test results.

Researchers also re-engineered existing technologies towards Covid-19 solutions. An example is the **ozone generator prototype for disinfection**, which was adapted from the ozone-producing method of Mr Barend Visser of Physics.

Externally, the NWU was part of the MERSETA Viro-Vent Skills Innovation project, where we worked with researchers from four other South African universities to train scientists and engineers in ventilator development and production.

The Technology Transfer and Innovation Support office again received recognition for excellence in innovation management. Innovation manager Mr Hannes Malan received the DSI/SARIMA Award for Professional Excellence in Innovation Management in 2020. This followed the DSI/SARIMA award for Early Career Excellence in Innovation Management awarded to Mr FR Bezuidenhout, commercialisation Specialist, in 2019.

Licensing to industry, locally and internationally, is our preferred commercialisation route. In 2020, we concluded a new licence agreement for the **Whartels™** mathematics board game.

The NWU's relationships with industry and communities are vital enablers of innovation and industry-led research. Efforts to develop these relationships will continue in all earnest.

## Challenges with research output

The Covid-19 pandemic has been a massive challenge for humanity but one that brought out the best in the research and innovation community globally. The NWU is privileged to have been able to contribute towards solutions to some of the societal challenges posed by the pandemic.

By the same token, the global health crisis has exacerbated existing funding constraints, adding to the already significant effort that will be needed if we are to succeed in increasing our research output.

Another pre-pandemic challenge that has been amplified is the unequal distribution of contributions made to research and innovation. About 20% of our academics deliver almost 80% of our research output, limiting our ability to increase per capita output. This showed only slight growth from 0,94 in 2019 to 0,98 in 2020. We also view the lack of sufficient incentives for our productive researchers as a challenge.

## Future outlook

The societal challenges within South Africa and the continent more broadly have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the inequalities and shortcomings it has exposed will have to be addressed in the months and years ahead.

There is room for contributions from researchers in all disciplines, from law and education to the natural and social sciences and the economic and management sciences. It is to be hoped that those not yet participating actively in research and innovation activities will heed the call to do so. This is in their professional best interests as the requirement to contribute has been formalised through the setting of research output targets in the faculties, in consultation with the relevant academics.

The NWU is playing its part through support mechanisms such as research leave, relief from teaching at selected times, dedicated research time for each academic and the integration of research into teaching and learning activities.

At the same time, we are formulating additional strategies to encourage and guide academics who do not deliver research output, and to retain those who are active researchers.



*"The university is evolving its approach to innovation. Instead of focusing on intellectual property (IP) curation, we are shifting to the transfer or monetisation of our IP portfolio. This includes trimming the low-value or mature patents, and taking more relevant technologies to the marketplace."*



## See how we explore, expand and evolve

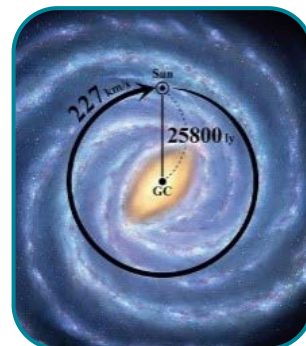
### Researcher helps uncover new data about Earth and the Milky Way

Prof James Chibueze is the only researcher from Africa who has made contributions to the finding of a Japanese radio astronomy project that the Earth is moving faster than it used to.

They also discovered that Earth is nearly 2 000 light-years closer to the black hole in the centre of the Milky Way Galaxy.

Prof Chibueze, an associate professor at the NWU's Centre for Space Research since 2019, is an avid promoter of radio astronomy and astrophysics.

He is passionate about his research. "I am excited that through this research, we are able to provide a glimpse into what our galaxy, the Milky Way, looks like and how close we are to its centre."



Updated information shows that our solar system is 258 000 light years from the Milky Way Galaxy and its rotation velocity is 227 km/s. Prof James Chibueze says every piece of the puzzle in our understanding of the Milky Way is important. "Our new finding is crucial as it closes the gaps in our understanding of our home galaxy."

#### Material matter:

#### Govern, lead and manage



Our governance structures and approach to ethics, as well as our strategy, values, success model and Annual Performance Plan, guide us to ensure good governance and management.

These are part of our intellectual capital, together with the systems, processes, procedures and policies that support governance and management.

For more information about how our management activities increase our intellectual capital, refer to the [report of the vice-chancellor](#) and, for information about governance, see the section on [governance supporting and protecting value](#).

#### Material matter:

#### Information and communications technology



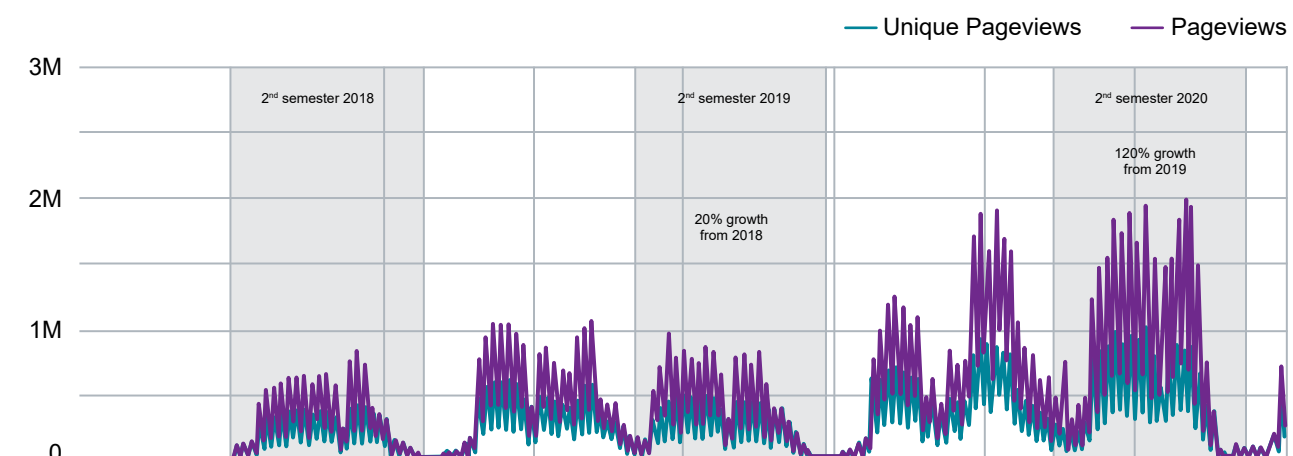
If there is one field in which our theme, **explore, expand and evolve**, came to the fore during 2020, it was in information and communications technology (ICT).

As a 21st century university, the NWU uses ICT and digital resources for all aspects of its core business, as well as support services.

ICT affects two of our capitals: intellectual capital, such as software programs, IT support services and the e-learning system eFundi, and manufactured capital, comprising the networks and hardware that make up our physical ICT infrastructure.

The Information Technology (IT) department is responsible for enabling most of the university's technological capabilities and has comprehensive product, project and services portfolios.

Utilisation of IT products within the university community has been growing exponentially, an example being eFundi, our primary learning platform. The following image shows how activity on eFundi has escalated since 2018.



Since starting with online learning in 2020, the number of students using eFundi daily has at least doubled. Approximately 45 terabytes of traffic have been flowing to and from eFundi each month and lecturers have loaded about three terabytes of content on the system since the lockdown started.

Another factor that impacted our systems in 2020 was the huge increase in online meetings. During the first 16 days of lockdown in 2020, 5 470 connections were made on Vidyo, compared to 4 943 in the last sixth months of 2019. This does not include connections made via other virtual platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Google Hangouts, Zoom and Big Blue Button.

The IT team also developed a **Covid-19 pre-screening app** with questions that staff members have to answer before gaining access to the campuses.

We expect that the usage of our IT products will continue to grow strongly as the university moves deeper into the digital era.

In our **2020 Performance Assessment Report**, you can see how we performed against key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to the goals in our Annual Performance Plan. By comparing the actual figures for 2019 and 2020, we could assess how well we had done against our targets.

## COUNCIL STATEMENT ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

"Council affirms, as the final decision-making body of the university, that it is endowed with the responsibility and accountability for the effectiveness and efficiency of information technology processes, including governance framework, alignment with NWU objectives, significant IT investment, risk management, assets, policies and strategies, and compliance with statutory requirements. Council is continually apprised of developments, by means of management and audit reports to the Technology and Information Governance Committee, and received sufficient assurance over the past year from all relevant assurance providers."

Statement approval obtained from the NWU Council on 17 June 2021



"Covid-19 accelerated the NWU's digital journey and we will not go into reverse now. We have learned that digital transformation will touch business models, culture, clients, operating models and technology. NOW is the time to put the foot on the accelerator and not on the brake."

- Boeta Pretorius, director of Information Technology







## Our human capital

Our human capital influences and is influenced by all our other capitals. Staff and students are the two major stakeholder groups that make up the university's human capital.

The infrastructure and support we offer our staff enable them to undertake research and teaching activities that increase the value of our intellectual and social and relationship capital. Similarly, when we provide students with various forms of support and high-quality study and residence facilities (manufactured capital), they are able to succeed academically and in other aspects of student life, which creates value for the university and strengthens our other capitals.

Student tuition fees increase our financial capital, and students increase our social and relationship capital when they graduate and contribute to society.

In this section, we highlight the prominent role our staff and students play in the NWU value chain.

Stakeholders who will benefit from human capital activities	
Our human capital activities mainly affect our staff and students, although their families are also indirectly affected by our activities.	
Material matters (goals or enablers) involved	
Almost all material matters affect our staff and students. (Click <a href="#">here</a> to see what the icons used in this section stands for.)	
Risks involved	
Our main risks are uncertainties in the higher education sector, the demand for organisational change, risks related to academic matters, compliance matters, risks relating to student life, IT risks and operational risks. Almost all of these risks have a bearing on our staff and students.	

### Material matter:

Teaching and learning, research, community engagement



### Caring for our students

When NWU students graduate, they should be ready to enter the labour market as highly qualified, skilled people who are able to contribute to the economy of South Africa.

This goes beyond acquiring technical and professional skills. The world of work is changing rapidly – even more so since the Covid-19 pandemic broke out – and it is crucial for the workforce of the future to be well-rounded, versatile and **adaptable** global citizens, ready to explore ways in which they can contribute towards the knowledge economy, expand their skills and evolve to become leaders in their fields of expertise.

This is why social, cultural, arts and sport activities are such an important part of student life at the NWU. As a

direct result of the pandemic, we moved these activities to online platforms, along with physical and psychological health and wellbeing services, while retaining traditional mechanisms of delivery where possible. Our agility in **adapting** our service delivery and student engagement ensures that our students have the life skills needed in a changing world. More information is available in the **vice-chancellor's report**.

#### ► Academic support

Information on how we help prospective students to gain access to the university and, once enrolled, to complete their studies successfully, can be found in the section on **our value chain** and in the section on **our intellectual capital** under student access and success.



### ► Career-related support

Our Career Centre's first NWU virtual fair attracted 48 companies and 2 771 students. We also offered CV training to 4 222 students and held our first virtual work readiness seminars, in which eight companies from various industries gave presentations.

The centre's social media outreach increased significantly, receiving 17 052 Facebook likes and attracting 17 749 followers.

### Caring for our staff

#### ► Building staff capacity

Our staff continue to benefit from internal and external skills development opportunities, as well as formal training. These interventions build our employees' capacity and support their career development, which in turn increases our human capital.

About 20% of our training spend was used for in-house training, mainly in people skills, leadership and diversity management skills, and business etiquette. We also presented an employee learnership to staff with a Grade 12 certificate as their highest qualification.

We provide financial aid in the form of study discount benefits so that our staff and their dependants can study at the NWU. In 2020, we spent over R27,8 million on these benefits, which reached 1 003 people. Of these, 502 were staff members and 610 dependants. Altogether 422 were historically disadvantaged South Africans and 625 were female.

These development programmes support our strategic goals and the internal success model which form part of our overall NWU strategy.

Information about our various incentivising initiatives, such as the **annual awards for teaching excellence**, is available in the section on our value chain.

#### ► Empowering our researchers

In developing and motivating our researchers, we leverage opportunities that come with being part of the larger research community in South Africa.

In 2020, such opportunities included five research integrity webinars with speakers from the National Research Foundation (NRF), the Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) and the NWU itself.

Emerging researchers are encouraged to further their studies. During the year, they received study funding support of over R3,5 million from our University Capacity Development Programme. In addition, NWU staff busy with their master's and doctoral studies received support worth R2 613 675 through the NWU Staff Discount Scheme and R1 005 838 in Emerging Researcher grants.

In 2020, 227 researchers attended 12 research capacity-building workshops on supervision and article writing.

Our annual **Research and Innovation Excellence Awards** fulfilled a dual role: recognising outstanding researchers for their contribution and inspiring others. You can read more about these in the section on our value chain.

### Material matter:

Student value proposition



We affirm that our students remain our primary stakeholders, and we continuously refine the services, programmes and offerings available to them to ensure that they receive the necessary support and opportunities to positively grow into well-rounded and socially responsible individuals.

In addition to the academic support and career advice that we provide, our students have access – both physically and in the online environment – to various wellness support services and skills development programmes.

Our campus healthcare centres, together with counselling and social welfare services, support our students' overall physical and psychosocial wellbeing.

The campus disability rights units ensure that the needs of students living with disabilities are efficiently

addressed, while social welfare projects such as the Meal-a-Day programme support students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.

In parallel with these programmes and initiatives, we provide crisis interventions to identify and support at-risk students through *Thuso*.

Such interventions proved instrumental in supporting our students to cope with the stresses brought about by the pandemic. Through this programme, registered psychologists provide services that promote the psychological wellbeing of students so that they can flourish in their studies and personal lives. Despite the limitations imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, we were able to **explore** and implement new ways of providing our students with psychosocial support services using online, telephonic and SMS platforms.

## Dropout rates

Our student-to-staff ratio decreased from 31,93 to 29,17 in 2020. Our first-time entrant dropout rate decreased from 10,8% in 2019 to 9,1% in 2020.

► *How much value we created, compared to previous years*

Dropout rate	2017	2018	2019	2020
First-time entrant dropout rate for contact degrees	11,11%	9%	10,78%	9,1%

► *How much value we created, compared to our target*

	Target	Definition	Actual
Academic staff full-time equivalent ratio: students	26,6	Based on HEMIS data and refers to the enrolled student full-time equivalent divided by the permanent instruction/research professionals full-time equivalent.	29,17
First-time entrant dropout rate for contact degrees	Below 15%	First-time entering students in contact degree qualifications who register in the reporting year but do not return in the next year.	9,1%

### Material matter:

Develop and retain excellent staff and create an equitable staff and student profile



## Our employees matter

Our wellness offices support the all-round wellbeing of our staff through services that encompass biopsychosocial and spiritual facets.

We have a comprehensive employee wellness assistance programme, Care Ways, for NWU employees and their immediate families. The programme provides access to experienced counselling professionals who assist with personal, family and work-related problems. This free service is available 24 hours a day.

Our campus healthcare centres offer health services to staff, while our campus disabilities offices provide support for staff living with disabilities, in line with our Disability Policy. We also host an HIV and AIDS workplace programme and a toll-free emergency number that operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Campus Protection Services and the Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Office contribute towards a safe and secure working environment.

## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### We care about our staff's wellbeing

Through our employee assistance programme, staff and their immediate families have access to free telephonic financial and legal advice, as well as face-to-face counselling for any psychosocial concerns.

**Exploring** new possibilities and **expanding** the ways in which we support our staff members, People and Culture has initiated the Wellness Fridays webinar series to equip staff with skills to relieve stress and anxiety. The virtual sessions are held every Friday and tackle different topics



According to Bonita Maboeta, senior wellness specialist, the NWU Wellness programme is run as part of the university's commitment to promoting employee health and wellbeing.

## Staff profile

Striving to create an equitable staff profile, we are guided by our employment equity plan for the period from January 2016 to December 2020. Vacancies had to be frozen to manage staff costs amid the financial constraints brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic and this had an adverse impact on our ability to reach the employment equity targets.

► *How much value we created, compared to previous years*

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
African (%)	33,5%	34,5%	35,9%	37,5%	38,3%
Coloured (%)	5,7%	5,7%	6,3%	6,5%	6,6%
Indian (%)	1,2%	1,3%	1,3%	1,5%	1,6%
White (%)	59,6%	58,5%	56,5%	54,5%	53,4%
Female (%)	56,9%	56,9%	56,8%	57,2%	
Male (%)	43,1%	43,1%	43,2%	42,8%	

► *How much value we created, compared to our target*

	2020 target	Actual
African (%)	37,5%	38,3%
Coloured (%)	86,4%	6,6%
Indian (%)	1,5%	1,6%
White (%)	54,4%	53,4%



## COUNCIL STATEMENT ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

"The university is committed to principles of collective bargaining, progressive discipline, restorative justice and alternative dispute resolution as far as possible, in order to address conflict situations.

"During 2020, the NWU successfully dealt with potential conflicts that could possibly harm the institution's reputation, at the lowest level. This includes, among others, bargaining forums with recognised trade union(s), internal disciplinary procedures, grievance procedures and mediation processes.

"The main focus is always to act in the best interest of the institution, while creating a 'win-win situation' for all, as far as possible."

*Statement approval obtained from the NWU Council on 17 June 2021.*







## COUNCIL STATEMENT

### ON WORKER AND STUDENT PARTICIPATION

"The Recognition Agreement between the NWU and SAPTU was revised in August 2019. In terms of this agreement, all employee issues of mutual interest will be addressed through the University Bargaining Forum, either by means of negotiation or consultative processes. In order to be a recognised trade union at the NWU, a trade union must meet the membership threshold of 30% across the university.

"An Organisational Agreement between the NWU and NEHAWU regulates the relationship between the parties in terms of the Labour Relations Act. We have ongoing Management and Trade Union Consultative Forum meetings."

*Statement approval obtained from the NWU Council on 17 June 2021.*



#### Material matter:

Govern, lead and manage; information and communication technology; and financial sustainability



Good governance is important in supporting and protecting our human capital. This is part of the responsibilities of the Council and some of its committees, such as the Remuneration Committee, the People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee and the Student Oversight Committee.

We also have several policies that provide guidelines for the fair and just people management of the university, thereby protecting and increasing our human capital.

These include policies on conflict of interest, governance oversight and management control, human rights, remuneration, performance management, staff learning and development, employment equity and disabilities, to name a few.

When it comes to information and communication technology, our IT department is a key enabler of student

success and the effectiveness of our staff. As such, access to IT resources and services must be equitable. We have achieved this by adopting a centralised approach to system delivery and a decentralised model for service delivery. This combination ensures that our systems are well maintained and that staff and students on all three campuses have the necessary hardware and software, as well as access to helpdesk services for daily support.

Lastly, it is our responsibility to make sure that our university stays financially sustainable. This ensures that our current staff and students, as well as future generations, will have a financially stable institution at which to work and study. More information about how we do this is in the section on [our financial capital](#).



## See how we explore, expand and evolve

**Solving widespread hunger – two million meals at a time**

Millions of citizens were unable to earn a living during the lockdown, leaving tens of millions of dependants not knowing where their next meal would come from.



This crisis encouraged our engineers to adapt their way of thinking and explore several possible solutions.

Taking their innovations to a higher level, NWU spin-off company CFAM Technologies developed a food auto bank – a recycled shipping container filled with dried porridge and placed in a strategic location in a residential area.

Coupons bearing a pin number are sent to cellphones, and when keyed in on the auto bank's digital keypad, a bag of dry porridge is delivered via the chute. [\(Read more\)](#)



## Our social and relationship capital

As a university we appreciate that a substantial part of our success depends on the relationships we have with individuals, groups and communities outside the NWU – locally, nationally and internationally. These relationships constitute our social and relationship capital.

When our stakeholder relationships are sound, they contribute to our social licence to operate, meaning that our stakeholders broadly approve of what we do.

Effective engagement with our external stakeholders increases the value of our social and relationship capital.

### Stakeholders who will benefit from effective engagement with the NWU

External stakeholders who need to benefit from our engagement with them include the parents of our current and prospective students, communities surrounding our campuses, donors, alumni, employers, business and industry, professional bodies and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

### Material matters (goals or enablers) involved

Our relationships with external stakeholders directly or indirectly influence all our goals as a university that strives to benefit society through knowledge.

In increasing the value of our social and relationship capital, our communication, marketing and stakeholder engagement activities also fulfil an important role.



### Risks involved

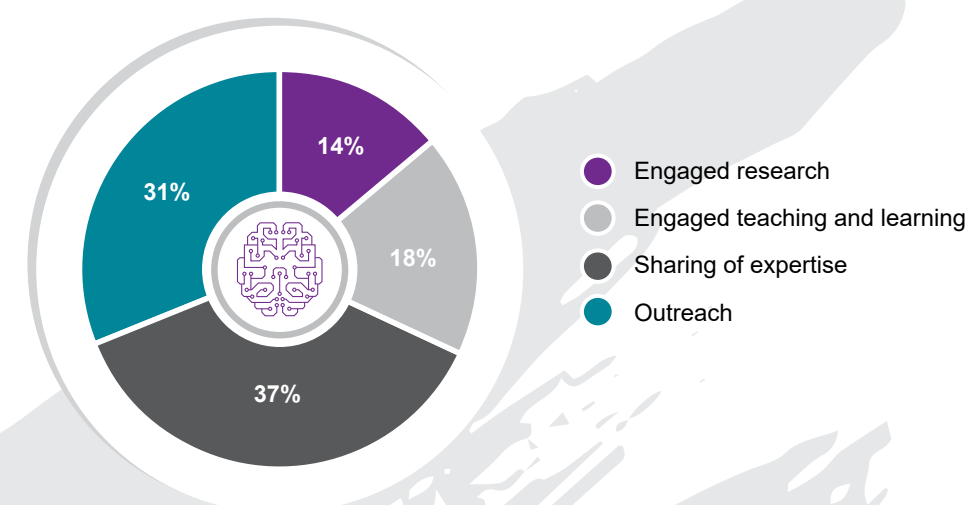
Communities surrounding our campuses may withdraw their support for work-integrated learning (WIL) or service-learning opportunities, on which the NWU and our students are reliant, or may decline to participate in research initiatives involving community engagement.

Parents of students may be affected by the uncertainties in the higher education sector, the demand for organisational change and risks relating to student life. (Matters that may concern them include state funding, tuition fees and the safety of our campuses in the event of unrest.)

Other risks that affect our external stakeholders include risks related to academic matters, compliance and commercialisation of intellectual property.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused hardship in many communities around our campuses in 2020. In response – and true to our theme, explore, expand and evolve – our staff and students undertook many innovative giving activities to assist communities. A total of 105 engagement activities were reported.

The figure below provides a breakdown of our 2020 community engagement activities:



Service learning for students is an important part of our community engagement work. Since 2019, we have been updating our database of legitimate service-learning partners for student placements by making contact with local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), public benefit organisations (PBOs) and religious organisations.

### Material matter:

### Teaching and learning; community engagement



Community engagement is embedded in many of our teaching and learning activities, often in the form of opportunities for work-integrated learning and service learning for students; even student outreach can contribute to the acquisition of soft skills such as planning, negotiation and collaboration.

In 2020, as our responsiveness was challenged, we **explored** new and innovative ways of engaging with our community partners. Our activities ranged from outreach and providing food to those in need to donating personal protective equipment (PPE). We also deployed our mobile science labs to advance Covid-19 testing by the North-West Department of Health and used radio programmes to raise awareness.

As part of service learning, education students utilised social media to provide teaching assistance to teachers at schools. Commerce staff and students from the

We continue to make this a priority so that we can expand the number of modules that contribute to service learning in our communities and have started to expand and validate our data by calling our partners to verify their details on our database.

Vanderbijlpark and Potchefstroom campuses used social media platforms to provide tax tips to individuals, dealing with lockdown-related topics such as the impact of working from home on tax and travel allowances, as well as how to manage personal finances.

The NWU's law clinics and psychosocial service centres continued enabling students to integrate theory and practice while serving communities. At the Potchefstroom law clinic, staff and students saw 810 clients and attended 117 court proceedings. The law clinic in Mahikeng assisted clients with a wide range of matters, including divorces, domestic violence, children's court matters, evictions, civil claims and maintenance matters.

Given the reported increase in domestic violence during the pandemic, it was important to continue offering access to justice and legal aid to people in need.

### Material matter:

### Research



We conduct research with, in and about communities and the real-life problems they face, thereby empowering people and improving their quality of life while increasing our social and relationship capital.

An example is the Bacha Tswelopele (Youth Taking Charge) project, which explores how a participatory action learning and action research approach can enable unemployed youth to take the initiative in making themselves and their peers more employable.

We also partnered with Gatelepele Youth Development Consultancy in Khuma to ensure the sustainability of the Youth Taking Charge project. In addition to enhancing the employability of participants, this project examined the perceptions of local youth towards unemployment.

Dr Mulunda Mwanza from the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences collaborated with the provincial Department of Agriculture to arrange activities in communities. He also secured an ambulance for use in the community and organised animal health training for emerging farmers.

Many of our researchers proactively **explored** innovative options to **expand** their contribution and **evolve** to break new ground in the fight against the Covid-19 scourge.

Prof Petra Bester and Prof Andrew Robinson from Health Sciences assisted the North West Province Department of Health with Covid-19 contact tracing and monitoring (surveillance), data capture, epidemiology modelling and trend analysis. Prof Hazel Mufhandu was part of the team formed to take action in the event of an increase in the infection rate.

The African Centre for Disaster Studies within the Unit for Environmental Sciences and Management has been advising the Department of Health on the declaration of a national state of disaster, the creation of the Covid-19 WhatsApp service and the drafting of the protocols for quarantine sites and lockdowns. Currently it is involved in scenario planning and is part of the department's multi-institutional Covid-19 modelling teams.

Various units within the university embarked on radio campaigns to raise awareness about Covid-19 precautions, including the Mahikeng Campus Science Centre.

## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### Rising to the Covid-19 challenge

A team of NWU engineers is working on 3D printing of face masks, and has designed a ventilator that made the top three in the #ZA Ventilator Challenge.

In addition, researchers in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Sciences developed a viable and cost-effective assisted-breathing device.

The "ventilator" prototype was demonstrated at a gathering of officials of the North West Provincial Department of Health and stakeholders at Wes Vaal hospital in Orkney on 17 June 2020.



NWU engineers are using 3D printing technology to manufacture these face shields.

### Material matter:

### Student value proposition; develop and retain excellent staff



Encouraging our students and staff to contribute to society through volunteerism promotes the culture of citizenship that we strive to instil in all members of our NWU community.

The deputy vice-chancellor for community engagement and Mahikeng Campus operations and the deputy chairperson of the Students' Campus Council distributed food parcels and vegetables to students off campus in May 2020 in Mahikeng.

The Student RAG Community Services (SRCS) on the Potchefstroom Campus donated clothes collected in 2019 and food collected in early March 2020. Annually, more than 400 students actively participate in over 80 similar projects in the greater Potchefstroom area.

The Student Campus Council of the Mahikeng and Vanderbijlpark campuses collected food, clothing and toys and distributed these in the communities, specifically at early childhood development centres.

### Challenges and future outlook

While striving to assist communities and contribute to social justice under the new normal of the pandemic, we realised the magnitude of the digital divide. Because data is expensive and not all external partners have equitable access to connectivity, the playing field is unequal and could hamper our efforts to advance social justice.

Another challenge is that the communities we work with are accustomed to face-to-face interaction, in particular when trust has to be built with new partners. It will require a "cultural reset" to build new relationships and maintain existing ones using mainly online methods.

The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated poverty, inequality and unemployment in many of the communities around our campuses, and amplified the obligation that institutions such as the NWU have to contribute to poverty alleviation and community capacity-building.

Our staff and students responded with agility and creativity to these challenges in 2020, bearing in mind that the range of community engagement activities available to them was severely curtailed as a result of the national disaster regulations. Amid projections that the pandemic will continue into 2021, the experience gained during the past year will be invaluable to the university and communities alike.

We also believe it would be beneficial to extend our community development footprint nationally, focusing on applied research that addresses socio-economic challenges and has sustainable impact and income generation potential. This would be in alignment with the National Development Plan and Agenda 2060 for Africa.

In adapting to the new normal, we are ready to **explore** new ways of building and maintaining relationships, **expand** our vision of community engagement and **evolve** our efforts to empower society.





## Our natural capital

As with so many other aspects of human existence in 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted how vital it is for our society to safeguard natural resources such as water. Water, healthy soil, clean air and suitable land are fundamental to the sustainable operations of the university and our ability to add value to our other capitals.

Without a healthy supply of water, the university would literally not be able to function. We use land and resources such as soil and water to construct buildings and strengthen our manufactured capital. However, by building on the land and using natural resources and creating waste during the construction process, we decrease the value of our natural capital.

Stakeholders who will benefit from strong natural capital	
All our stakeholders need natural capital to exist and flourish	
Material matters (goals or enablers) involved	
We will not be able to realise any of our goals or implement our enablers without natural resources as input.	
The material matter “to promote sustainability” (part of goal three in our Annual Performance Plan) is particularly relevant here.	
Risks involved	
Risks include those related to academic and operational matters, student life, compliance (for instance with environmental regulations) and IT (infrastructure needs an energy source).	



We are committed to reducing the environmental footprint of our activities by using natural sources responsibly, decreasing our energy use and complying with environmental regulations. These are part of the draft strategy and policy we have compiled and will share with our stakeholders in 2021.

As our campuses were not operating as usual in 2020, our use of resources such as energy and water were

considerably lower than in previous years, which has arguably had a positive effect on our environmental footprint. Depending on how universities resume operations in 2021, this could be a temporary or more lasting scenario that will have to be taken into account in our environmental impact strategy and measurement processes going forward.

### Material matter:

### Promoting sustainability



This section focuses on the environment as an important element of sustainability. (For information about general sustainability at the NWU, see the [Council statement on sustainability](#).)

### Environmental audit

For the past six years, since conducting an institution-wide environmental audit, we have been systematically correcting the non-compliance issues found.

This work was interrupted in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, when most of our staff worked remotely and very limited on-campus resources were available. We expect that compliance-related work will resume, to some

extent at least, during 2021, although this will depend on the conditions under which the university is allowed to operate.

The different role players identified in the initial environmental compliance audit are still responsible for finalising outstanding compliance issues.

### Material matter:

### Student value proposition



Yet again, the disruptive effect of the Covid-19 pandemic was felt. The various Green Campus initiatives that were up and running to save energy and water, to encourage recycling and to raise awareness of environmental sustainability had to be put on hold. With no students living in the residences, the annual energy-saving competition was postponed.

One area where we made progress is in incorporating environmental sustainability issues into the curriculum. Several existing modules contribute substantially to student environmental training, such as those on environmental philosophy and marine spatial planning, which cover issues such as marine pollution, microplastics and fishing pollution. Third-year tourism management students undertake eco-tourism recycling projects.

All final-year engineering students take a course that has significant environmental content. Research contributions from engineering included a project on the reduction of organic fraction of municipal solid waste. This entails using solid waste and sewage sludge to produce solid and liquid fuel products, bio-adsorbents and biochemicals.

An important contributor to environmental sustainability scholarship and research is the South African Research Chair (SARChI) in Cities, Law and Environmental Sustainability (CLES) in the Faculty of Law. The chair is part of the SARChI Initiative of the National Research Foundation and focuses on legal scholarship and research skills development for sustainable urban development in South Africa, the broader African region and beyond.

## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### Sharing environmental insights

The e-Agro-Tourism CoLab funds e-agriculture skills within communities in the North West Province and runs a food security project at various schools.

The CoLab is funded by the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA) and assists schools to start their own vegetable gardens and gain environmental insights.

The schools that benefit from this outreach are Lokaleng, Signal Hill, Ramosadi, Seetsele, Lotlmoreng and Podile primary schools.



.....  
We aim to instil in our students the responsibility to manage natural resources with the wellbeing of future generations in mind.

*With more than seven billion people relying on earth's natural resources, it is more important than ever to **explore** novel ways to find sustainability solutions, **expand** our contributions aimed at protecting earth's natural resources and **evolve** in the way we see and use them.*



## Challenges

It is clear that the NWU has limited specialised expertise in environmental remediation and sustainability matters.

We took steps to begin correcting this in late 2019, when we prepared a draft strategy and policy guideline on environmental responsibility. This was submitted for consultation with all stakeholders in December 2019. Currently no progress can be reported on this matter.

## Future outlook

We have benchmarked ourselves against other universities to determine proper placement of the environmental management office. Indications are that this office should be part of the Facilities department.

As a starting point towards establishing an environmental management office, we are considering appointing an environmental expert who will be responsible for coordinating environmental issues at the university.

The Sustainability and Community Impact Office will continue with awareness creation, for instance by developing posters highlighting different aspects of sustainability such as littering, water and electricity usage.

As students and staff return to our campuses, we will be able to resume activities such as the Flip-the-Switch campaign launched in March 2019 to highlight energy consumption and the impact it has on the environment.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, there were fewer people on our campuses in 2020, and consequently the challenge of litter was considerably reduced. As students and staff return to our campuses, we will place more bins on our campuses to separate waste. We also intend to utilise the separation-at-source model for a variety of consumables that are normally treated as general waste.

Some of our other future plans include encouraging the habit of using jugs and water glasses instead of plastic water bottles at campus meetings, and encouraging our campuses to celebrate important days such as Arbor Day on 1 September

## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### NWU launches campaign to support students

As the Covid-19 pandemic continues to affect our lives in the most unprecedented ways, the university has launched the NWU Covid-19 Response Fund.

"The objectives of the fund are to support the students with laptops and other devices; and offer support to staff, students and the communities around our campuses with necessary equipment and other needs," says NWU vice-chancellor Prof Dan Kgwadi.

The Covid-19 campaign launch was preceded by a survey conducted among students which found that many of them did not have the necessary devices, network connectivity and/or electricity.



Our brand stores donated R70 000 towards the university's Covid-19 Response Fund. NWU mascot Eagi delivered the cheque to Elmarie de Beer, executive director for finance and facilities, at her home in a Covid-19-compliant way.



## Our financial capital

LANGUAGE BUTTONS

AFR

SES

SET

The sources of our financial capital are state funding, debt and grants, as well as revenue generated through our operations and investments. We use this capital to provide services and maintain and improve our infrastructure so that we can create value for the NWU and our stakeholders.

Managing our income and spending, as expressed in our annual budget, is the key to the health and stability of our financial environment, which is a prerequisite for achieving our strategic objectives as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence.

### Stakeholders who will benefit

All our stakeholders benefit when the NWU's financial capital is strong. Financial stability enables us to keep our tuition fees within reach of our current and future students and their families. It also means we are able to afford fair remuneration for our staff and reassure our donors and the DHET that we spend their donations and funding wisely, serving the national priorities for higher education.

### Material matters (goals or enablers) involved

Although Enabler 4 (financial stability) is the main focus, all our goals and other enablers are also implicated, as we need money to achieve and implement these.



### Risks involved

The main risks are uncertainties in the higher education sector (for instance the drive towards fee regulation), and the demand for organisational change (for instance, free education resulting in higher dependency on state funding).

The other top risks in our risk register are also implicated, as we need money for all the activities linked to them. (These are the risks related to academic matters, compliance – for instance with financial laws and regulations – risks relating to student life, IT risks, commercialisation and operational risks.)

### Material matter:

Ensure the financial sustainability of the NWU



Securing the NWU's long-term financial sustainability requires us to distribute our resources in a way that supports our core business strategies.

When compiling the annual budget, our budget task team prepares a high-level break-even budget on a cash flow basis. The budget for 2020 was shaped by the realistic prediction of income, translating to expenses that we can "afford". This means we paid close attention to the calculation of the key sources of revenue, taking into account all the latest, most relevant information available.

As a financial sustainability guideline to steer the NWU towards the ideal combination of income and expenses, we used pre-determined ratios (expenses measured as a percentage of core business income). The 2019 budgeted expense ratios were used as the basis for the 2020 expense budget. The result of the income calculation gave an indication of the adjustment needed in terms of the 2020 expense budget. We then did a three-year forecast, based on the same principles and certain assumptions.

The following ratios guided us:

- Staff cost as a percentage of income
- Operating cost as a percentage of income
- Capital cost as a percentage of income



The Covid-19 pandemic was an unforeseen event and was therefore not included in the 2020 budget. In the next paragraphs we explain our strategy to manage the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020 and in the years beyond (medium term).

### How we managed the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The full financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic for the NWU and the sector, as well as South Africa, is still unknown. Financial losses will be inevitable and therefore we have adopted a prudent approach that entails compiling different scenarios based on financial risk factors with various assumptions. The aim is to determine the possible financial impact and put a mitigation plan in place to ensure financial sustainability in the medium to long term.

Our cautious wait-and-see approach is also flexible, ensuring that we use the latest information to make decisions. We are continuously updating our financial impact model and mitigation plan as and when more information becomes available, using the model as the baseline in order to guide decision-making, which can be scaled up or down.

We are working from the stance that we need to:

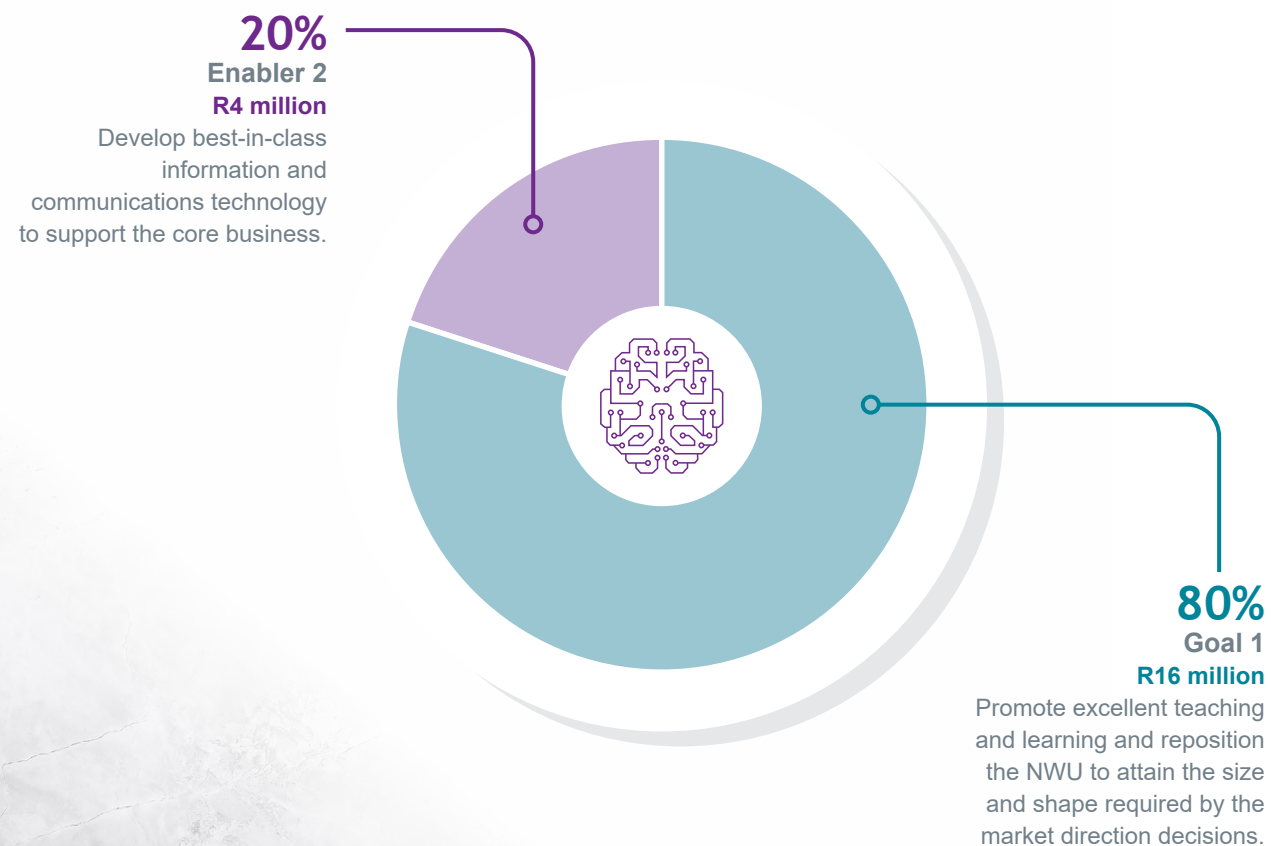
- manage the unknown as and when it occurs.
- support the remote learning mode so as to reduce any possible negative impact on the throughput rate, enable students to complete the academic year successfully and retain students.
- preserve permanent and fixed-term appointments and salaries, also towards the medium to long term.

In the following sections we explain how we financed our strategic initiatives in 2020 and allocated our funds to achieve our goals and implement our enablers.

### How we plan to finance our strategic initiatives

The strategic fund is used to invest in our strategy and to ensure all activities and resources are aligned with the strategy and success model of the university. The fund is therefore used to allocate funds for specifically identified strategic projects. Managers request funds for these projects during the budget process and the University Management Committee approve the allocation of strategic funds.

### Strategic funds allocated per goal/enabler



### Strategic projects per goal/enabler

#### Teaching and learning

##### Goal 1:

Promote excellent learning and teaching and reposition the NWU to attain the size and shape required by the market direction decisions.

- Continuation of Medical School project
- SA Board for People Practices Accreditation project
- First generation study project
- Transformation of learning spaces project
- Work-integrated learning (WIL) and service learning management project

Goal  
01



#### Research and innovation

##### Goal 2:

Intensify research and innovation.

- Furnishing of new piggery unit
- Seed funding for research hub on Mahikeng Campus
- PhD review

Goal  
02



#### Students

##### Goal 4:

Develop a clearly differentiated student value proposition.

- Re-branding of NWU sport teams

Goal  
04



#### Improved technology

##### Enabler 2:

Develop best-in-class information and communications technology to support the core business.

- Developing a Digital Business Strategy (DBS)
- Establishing the Next Generation Digital Environment architecture

Enabler  
02



#### Financial sustainability

##### Enabler 4:

Ensure the financial sustainability of the NWU.

- Staff and business development in the Faculty of Engineering
- Implementing the online enterprise strategy of the Unit for Continuing Education

Enabler  
04



## In the near future: opportunities and challenges in executing our strategy

In response to #Feesmustfall, the annual across-the-board tuition fee increase that the DHET has requested since 2015 has been based on the consumer price index (CPI). The CPI rate is not representative of the increase in cost required to operate a university and we regard the so-called Higher Education Price Index (HEPI) as a better yardstick.

Universities are also grappling with a deficit in real terms in the historical subsidy increase. This deficit is widening because the pace of subsidy increases has been below higher education inflation. Universities would need to adjust their expenditure in line with price changes (as calculated by the HEPI) if they want to maintain the same level of quality and real output.

However, volume changes based on the so-called higher education volume index should also be taken into account when estimating total budgetary requirements, resulting in a higher education budget index. The Bureau of Economic Research analysis of the 2017 – 2019 dataset found that the cost of higher education was higher than headline inflation at the time.

The financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in the short and medium term can be added to the challenges that we are facing and will still be facing in the foreseeable future.

The possible impact of risk factors we considered as part of our financial impact model include lower block grant subsidy because of decreased 2020 outputs, lower block grant and earmarked funding available to universities due to the financial difficulties that government is experiencing, the global economic downturn, etc.

These were factored into the 2021-2023 rolling budget as part of the mitigation plan to ensure future financial sustainability.

However, there is a limit to what universities can achieve without a sustainable national funding model. Our view is that the NSFAS model is also not sustainable and that, owing to the considerable increase in the number of NSFAS-qualifying students, the model poses a sustainability risk for the higher education sector.

## Future outlook: how to maintain financial sustainability

The funding of higher education and the as-yet unknown financial impact of the pandemic have implications for how we go about maintaining our healthy financial position.

We will have to focus on diversifying and optimising our income streams, improving operating cost efficiency and effectiveness, optimising the use of infrastructure and managing our mitigation plan and cash with the utmost care, while reviewing the higher education and NSFAS funding model.

If not, the financial sustainability of public higher education institutions may be jeopardised to such an extent that some may lose their competitive edge in the market and the ability to contribute to the skills and knowledge economy of South Africa.

To prevent this from happening at the NWU, we intend to participate actively in the modelling of the future funding design. We remain committed to working with the DHET to not only ensure a well-functioning and sustainable NWU, but also help safeguard the stability and sustainability of the South African higher education sector.

“

*“We are committed to maintaining financial stability, and therefore it will become increasingly important to generate our own income, review activities that are not financially viable and focus on disciplined cost.”*

”



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## COUNCIL STATEMENT ON BORROWINGS

“The NWU did not enter into any new long-term borrowing agreements in 2020.”

*Statement approved by Council on 17 June 2021.*

”



## Financial review

This is the report of the chairperson of the Finance Committee of Council and the Executive Director: Finance and Facilities.

The purpose of this report is to present a summary of our financial results for 2020 and to provide information about the following:

- Budgeting and budgetary control processes
- Overview of financial achievements

## Budgeting and budgetary control processes

The Finance Committee of Council approved the budget process and timeline for the 2020 budget in May 2019.

We used an interactive budget process. All levels of management participated actively in compiling the budget (per planned activity) for the next year and took ownership of the process. Where possible, we applied zero-based budgeting principles.

The main focus within each executive portfolio during the budget process was to “cost” their annual performance plan for 2020, thus putting an R value to their plan. This plan needed to be aligned with the managers’ portfolio strategies, the NWU strategy and the NWU Annual Performance Plan (APP).

Budget discussions took place on various management levels. Executive managers also had the opportunity to discuss their portfolio budgets with the budget committee task team. This ensured that the detailed budgets were aligned with the NWU strategy and that managers paid attention to equitable resource provision. It also enabled us to identify possible risks and concerns.

The high-level budget, taking into account the approved APP, the viability and sustainability indicators and other financial information available, was used as a budget framework during the budget process.

## Financial overview

Please click [here](#) for the full financial overview and [here](#) for a summary of how we added value to the economy and reached our financial goals.



## Our manufactured capital

The sources of our financial capital are state funding, debt and grants, as well as revenue generated through our operations and investments. We use this capital to provide services and maintain and improve our infrastructure so that we can create value for the NWU and our stakeholders.

Managing our income and spending, as expressed in our annual budget, is the key to the health and stability of our financial environment, which is a prerequisite for achieving our strategic objectives as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence.

### Stakeholders who will benefit from our manufactured capital

Our staff and students are the main beneficiaries. However, we also use our building and maintenance projects to create business and jobs for people outside the university community. Furthermore, our donors and the DHET have stakes in our manufactured capital as they fund many of our projects.

### Material matters (goals or enablers) involved

(Click [here](#) to see what the icons used in this section stands for.)



### Risks involved

Uncertainties in the higher education sector (for instance state funding), demand for organisational change (equity of resources), risks related to academic matters, compliance (for instance with building regulations), IT and operational risks.



## How we weathered the Covid-19 storm

### Students in our residences

The Covid-19 pandemic brought about a whole new way of accommodating students in university residences during the various alert levels. High levels of compliance to residence protocols were demanded from students and it was through the implementation of strict compliance rules that we managed to contain the spread of the virus to the bare minimum.

Students were allowed to return to campuses and residences according to the regulations under Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 1. The majority of the residence students accepted the invitation to return under the various levels.

Management engaged extensively with the DHET and the rest of the education sector to develop a rebate formula for the residence fees based on the savings generated on the variable cost portion of the residence expenses. The rebates; ranged from 0% to 8% for an average of 5% of the residence fees for 2020.

### Safety on our campuses

A comparison of crime statistics in 2019 and 2020 indicated major decreases in crime during the lockdown associated with Covid-19.

The lockdown levels and our online learning approach meant there were very few students and staff members on or in the vicinity of our campuses who could be targeted by criminal elements. This, together with visible policing, regular patrols carried out by our Protection

Services officers, and the ban on the sale of alcohol are the main reasons for the reduction of crime in 2020.

Although Covid-19 negatively impacted our progress in developing the infrastructure of the NWU, the challenges of the initial lockdown levels were overcome by implementing remote working practices, which enabled the project planning and procurement processes to continue.



We implemented Covid-19 safety protocols at all our sites and ensured that all contractors and suppliers followed these.

## Infrastructure development

We spent a total of R163 million from the DHET and our own funds in 2020 for capital works, macro maintenance and minor works across the university. The following table gives a spending breakdown.

		Potchefstroom Campus	Mahikeng Campus	Vanderbijlpark Campus	Projects across campuses	Total
DHET	Funding 2015-2016			R912 696	R-	R912 696
	Funding 2016-2017	R12 194		R-		R12 194
	Student housing 2016-2017	R -	R29 699 762	R-	R-	R29 699 762
	Student housing 2017-2018		R536 658			R536 658
	Funding 2017-2018	R166 060				R166 060
	Funding 2018-2021	R1 539 504	R7 726 089	R2 583 970	R18 410 156	R30 259 718
Capital works	New	R17 914 641	R8 308 671	R23 768 467		R49 991 779
	Upgrade	R11 596 298	R10 140 040	R6 974 330	R3 515 988	R32 226 655
Macro maintenance		R6 462 323	R276 164	R5 821 833	R4 373 082	R16 933 402
Minor works		R1 292 134		R900 656	R97 532	R2 290 322
	<b>Total</b>	<b>R38 983 154</b>	<b>R56 687 384</b>	<b>R40 961 951</b>	<b>R26 396 758</b>	<b>R163 029 247</b>



## DHET grant funding

In 2020, the total spent from DHET grant funding from various funding cycles amounted to R61 687 088. This excluded R82 218 434 from NWU capital funding and R19 223 724 on macro and maintenance expenditure.

The NWU needs to invest in infrastructure for digital transformation, in line with our Digital Business Strategy, which is in turn aligned with the DHET's priorities. We have submitted an application for the first phase of this to the DHET.

## Accommodation for our students

Student housing on and in close proximity to the three campuses consists of 41 university-owned residences and four leased accommodation facilities being operated as formal residences. Collectively, these have the capacity to accommodate 11 066 students. The staff complement of these residents includes 110 residence officers and house parents.

Through a joint initiative by the NWU, the Development Bank of Southern Africa and the DHET, we have started to build additional residences on the Mahikeng Campus to accommodate up to 1 728 more students.

By making sure our students have safe accommodation on or around our campuses, we strengthen our student value proposition (including safety and security, and conducive study spaces) and consequently, our human capital.

## Complying with norms and standards

Apart from aligning residences and the associated fees, management also focuses on ensuring that all residences comply with the national policy on norms and standards for public universities in South Africa.

All new student residence developments are developed in line with approved minimum norms and standards for student housing as prescribed by the DHET. When residences are upgraded, we ensure that the changes and improvements comply with these standards.

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic delayed the phasing in of the minimum norms and standards at residences which do not currently comply. This work will resume in the coming year.

A refreshed student accommodation strategy is in the development stage and includes an analysis of student behaviour in relation to residences. The new target is to increase the percentage of residence places available for first-time entrant students to at least 30% of the total residence capacity.

We also made good progress with the accreditation of private student accommodation suppliers, in line with the DHET's expectation of the role that universities must play in this space.

The DHET has allowed the universities to develop their own accreditation criteria based on their unique circumstances. To this end, we have established guidelines that identify the accommodation needs and available spaces on each campus.

## Construction and refurbishment

Like all other campus operations in 2020, infrastructure, design and construction projects were interrupted during 2020, resulting in project backlogs. In all, 111 calendar days were lost during the period from 26 March to 3 July 2020.

These unprecedented circumstances challenged us to **explore** different pathways. We prioritised and reevaluated projects, ensuring that all critical projects continue and postponing others, as approved by Council.

Construction sites were opened under strict Covid-19 regulations and some projects were completed during the year.

## Large projects completed during 2020

Capital projects completed in 2020 included upgrading the Mahikeng Campus library (final phase), constructing bulk services infrastructure (NWU water reticulation), developing a multipurpose facility for student social life (Rag farm) and upgrading the roof of Building A2's storage area.

Total expenditure on capital projects came to R49,9 million for new infrastructure and R32,2 million for refurbishments. Several large projects have reopened and are still in the construction phase.

## Macro maintenance and smaller projects completed during 2020

Addressing deferred maintenance remained a priority for the university throughout 2020, despite the pandemic.

Macro maintenance projects included external renovations of technical facilities, (which included demolishing asbestos buildings), upgrading the roofs and ceilings of lecture halls, resurfacing rugby fields and netball and tennis courts, upgrading HT substations and installing water meters.

The total spend on macro maintenance for 2020 amounted to R16,93 million. The projects that were not attended to were carried over to 2021 for implementation.

Seven smaller projects with a combined value of R2,29 million were completed across the campuses.

## Projects carried over to 2021

Due to the impact of Covid-19 on construction activities and to manage the cash flow of the university, 32 projects were carried over into 2021 and nine were rescheduled for implementation in 2022. These projects will be completed over the next two years.

## Facilities strategic optimisation project

In an effort to optimise the facilities environment, a strategic project was implemented to improve business processes by integrating and aligning role players, systems and processes to support the NWU's unitary strategy.

The project was initiated in 2019 and gained good momentum in 2020 despite the challenges of social distancing and working from home. The final phase of the project is scheduled for completion in 2021.

## IT infrastructure and developments

IT plays an indispensable role in the value chains of teaching and learning, research and the student life cycle, from student access to tertiary education through to continuous professional development for our graduates and others. Optimal, cutting-edge IT support is provided to all students and staff.

Here are some of the 2020 highlights:

- IT played a key role in enabling emergency remote learning, as well as work from home. Nearly all services could be accessed from anywhere. We were proud to implement virtual application environments, enabling students to have access to all their PC lab applications.

- Security was, and still is, a big concern in the work-from-home era. NWU had a ransomware attack in July 2020, but we were able to fully recover most critical services in one day and all other services in seven days.
- Many major projects are under way. Preparations to implement a brand-new student information system are currently in the request for information phase, and the first phase of the **integrated work management system** will be live in the first month of 2021. Robotic process automation opportunities are being evaluated. These are just a few of over 100 active IT projects.
- We continued to offer uncapped, unshaped internet services to staff and students at a speed not matched by most universities in South Africa. The NWU is one of the biggest consumers of bandwidth in the public higher education system.

## Future outlook

Being able to respond to the "new normal" during 2020 raised our confidence tremendously, as did the general stability of our IT services during the pandemic.

Years of applying good principles in planning and design are now bearing fruit. It will also be much easier to focus on digital business transformation going into the future and participating to the full in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

“

*“Our investment in IT infrastructure, support and teaching and learning solutions will determine the NWU market share in the teaching and learning value chain, as well as in the student life experience.”*

”



“

## COUNCIL STATEMENT ON ADDITIONAL INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE

“All additional investments in infrastructure at the NWU during 2020 were duly authorised.”

*Statement approval obtained from the NWU Council on 17 June 2021.*

”



## Plans for the future

The coming year will see further renewal of the buildings and infrastructure on the three campuses.

On the Vanderbijlpark Campus, we are on track to complete the new administration building in 2021 and will then convert the existing administration building into a multi-purpose hall.

The new main road and lecture halls should also be completed in 2021 and construction will start on Psychosocial Health's new building which is planned for completion in 2022.

We are also planning a new building link between the two buildings occupied by the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences to improve and expand the teaching and learning experiences and spaces of staff and students.

Highlights on the Mahikeng Campus will be the completion of the first phase of the new student residences and the addition of new lecture rooms to support the new way of teaching and learning. The Disability Unit will be relocated to a new space adjacent to the Campus Health Clinic and will offer a one-stop health support service to students living with disabilities.

In 2021, we plan to complete the new space for the Business School and Unit for Continuing Education, as well as the new Psychosocial Health building. Various academic departments will be relocated while their

spaces are being upgraded. Construction of a new Law Clinic to serve the community is planned for the near future.

On the Potchefstroom Campus, the construction of the new laboratories for the Faculty of Education will commence in 2021, along with the extension of the Faculty of Education's library to support students' group-work activities.

The High Performance Institute (HPI), currently located in building K21, will move to building K2 which will be renovated and restructured to house the institute and other research and educational units. Biological Sciences and Geo and Spatial Sciences will also relocate to upgraded spaces.

**DR BISMARK TYOBeka**  
CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL

**PROF DAN KGWADI**  
CHAIRPERSON OF SENATE

## See how we explore, expand and evolve



**D**espite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the NWU has moved ahead with its ambitious construction programme.

One of the new buildings being constructed is the Vanderbijlpark Campus Administration building.

“The pandemic has understandably impacted the original timeline for the delivery of the building but everybody involved has done an excellent job adjusting to the challenging working conditions,” says Prof Linda Du Plessis, deputy vice-chancellor for planning and Vanderbijlpark Campus operations.

The building will house staff offices, including the deputy vice-chancellor's office, Corporate Relations and Marketing, Finance, Student Academic Life Cycle Administration and Human Resources. It will also feature event space and a 50-seat conference room.

Its many architectural highlights will include two towers facing towards the entrance, fire stairs and a beautiful lobby with artwork to welcome students, guests and staff.

Completion is scheduled for May 2021 and will be ready for occupation soon afterwards.



Visible from the road, the new Administration building on the Vanderbijlpark Campus will portray a cutting-edge image for the university.



# Governance: Supporting and preserving value

LANGUAGE BUTTONS

AFR

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## STATEMENT ON GOVERNANCE

“The NWU is committed to the principles of discipline, transparency, independence, accountability, responsibility, fairness and social responsibility, as advocated in the King IV Report.

“Accordingly, Council endorses the Code of Practices and Conduct and the Code of Ethical Behaviour and Practice as set out in King IV, and has applied these in a rigorous way during the period under review. In supporting these codes, Council recognises the need to conduct the business of the NWU with integrity and in accordance with generally accepted good practices.

“The monitoring of the NWU’s compliance with these codes forms part of the mandate of the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee.

“A distinct difference exists in the roles and responsibilities of the chairperson of Council and that of the vice-chancellor.”

*Statement approval obtained from the NWU Council on 17 June 2021.*

## The role and function of Council and its committees

As the overall custodian of good corporate governance, the NWU Council takes its oversight and guidance role seriously. We carry out this responsibility by setting strategy, ensuring proper governance, driving compliance and risk management and monitoring the material activities of the university. The intention is to provide a sound foundation for the creation of value, long-term growth and sustainability.

We act in strict accordance with the stipulations of the Higher Education Act and the NWU Statute, which was reviewed and published on 8 May 2020.

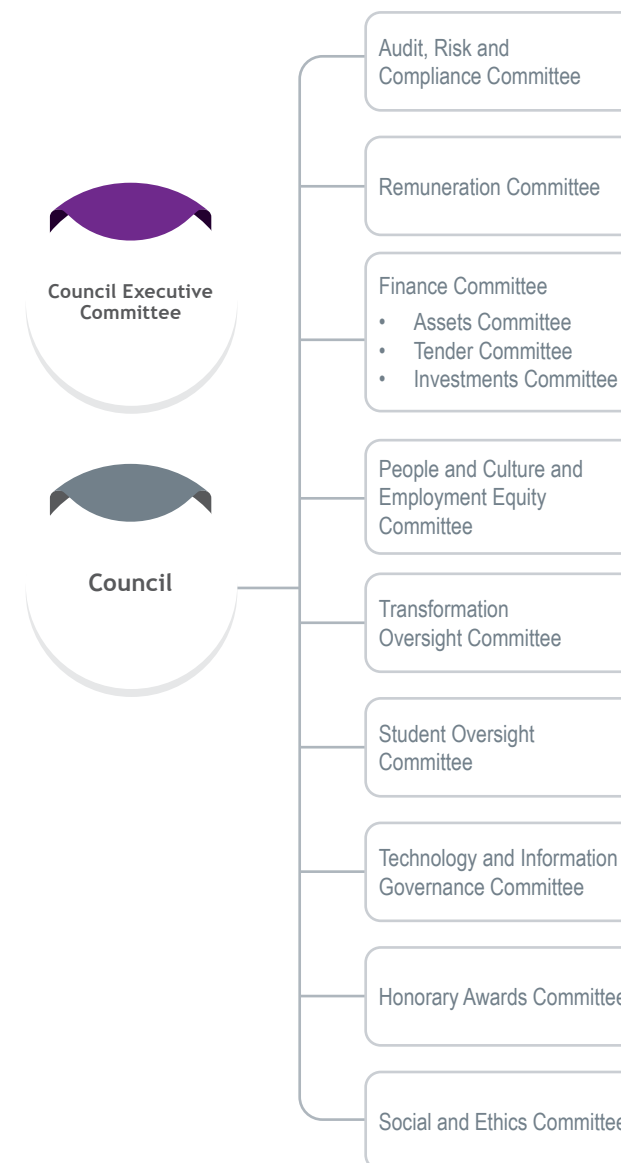
For the period under review, under Council’s leadership, the NWU continued to adhere to high governance standards, while creating a value-driven governance landscape.

The composition of our Council accords with the guidelines provided by the Higher Education Act and the university’s Statute.

*Of the 30 Council members, 60% are external and 40% internal, ensuring independence in the governance environment.*

Council members externally elected or designated		Council members internally elected or designated	
Ministerial appointees	5	Management: vice-chancellor and vice-principal	2
Donors	3	Senate	3
Convocation	4	Academic staff	2
Community leaders	3	Support staff	2
Specific expertise	3	Student Representative Council	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>		<b>12</b>

To ensure proper oversight and proper accountability, Council has a number of committees to advise it on all the relevant governance matters



A number of the committees meet twice a year and report to Council twice a year. The remaining committees that meet more often are the Executive Committee of Council, the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee, the Remuneration Committee, the Transformation Oversight Committee, Tender Committee, the Investment Committee and the Technology and Information Governance Committee.

### The following new members joined the Council during the year under review:

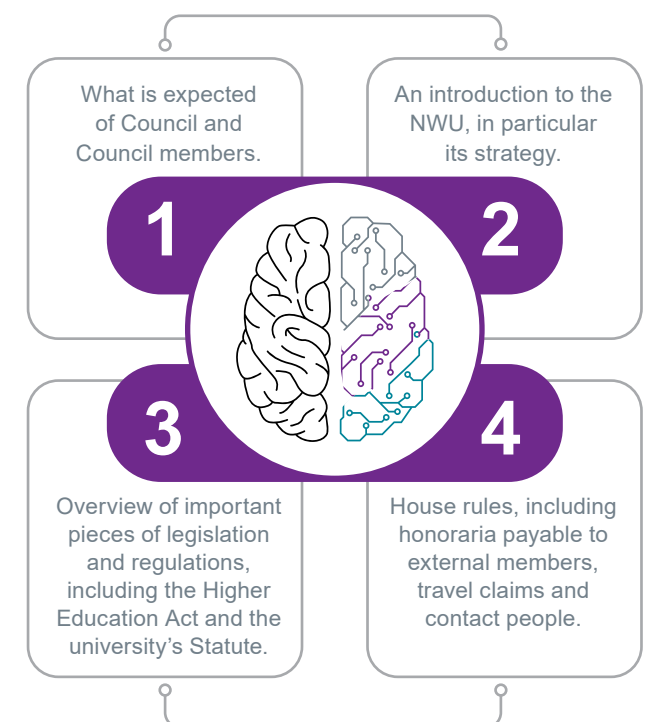
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pastor P Tlhabanyane</li> <li>Ms S Britz</li> </ul>	Appointed by Council from the ranks of the university's community leaders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr T Tlale</li> <li>Mr S Hlope</li> <li>Ms D Giorgi</li> </ul>	Designated by the SRC

### The following members re-joined the Council for subsequent terms:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr TC Kgomo (third term)</li> <li>Mr OE Mongale (second term)</li> <li>Mr MSJ Thabethe (second term)</li> </ul>	Appointed by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mr A Sorgdrager (second term)</li> </ul>	Elected by the Convocation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr BM Tyobeka</li> </ul>	Appointed by the Council for specific expertise

## Council training

It is Council practice to require all new members joining Council in a particular year to attend an induction workshop. The annual induction meeting took place on 27 July 2020 and covered the following four topics:



All Council members attended a workshop on 27 July 2020 that covered the following topics:

Subject
Engagement with the chancellor of the NWU, Dr Anna Mokgokong
The NWU's Digital Business Strategy
<b>Engagement with the DHET covering the following topics:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student funding: past, present and future</li> <li>Feedback on the NWU Governance Scorecard</li> </ul>
Self-evaluation outcome 2019

## Code of Conduct and declarations of interest

All Council members are required to adhere to a Council Code of Conduct, which is revised as and when needed, most recently in March 2018. At the beginning of 2020, the Council members pledged their commitment to the Code by taking part in the annual signing process.

The Higher Education Act prescribes annual declarations of directorships and interests on the part of Council members. We consider this requirement to be of the utmost importance to ensure absolute integrity in our behaviour at governance level. At each ordinary meeting of the Council Exco, its members review the declarations of interest and engage on these.

Council Exco also scrutinises the transactions between the NWU and companies in which Council members declared (or did not declare) a direct or indirect interest.

At the Council meeting of 19 November 2020 it was noted that not all members of Council had fully declared their involvement in companies as was required. The chairperson subsequently requested the relevant members to do so by 30 November 2020. As at 31 December 2020, four Council members had not made the necessary declarations, and formal letters from the registrar were sent to these members to indicate this non-compliance and its consequences.

During 2020, Exco continued with the practice of regularly noting and discussing all declarations made by members of the university management committee and referring any inquiries to the vice-chancellor.

## Meet our Council members (Council membership as at 31 December 2020)



**1. PROF ND KGWADI**  
(52)  
Vice-Chancellor  
and Principal

**Qualifications:** BScEd (University of North West), MSc (physics) (Ball State University, USA), MPhil (environmental law and management) (North West University), PhD (physics education) (Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education (PU for CHE), PhD (management – honoris causa) (Hanseo University, South Korea)

Vice-chancellor, appointed for a six-year term from 2014 to 2020

**Council committee and total years of service:**

All Council committees (except Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee – not a full member) | One year into second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
53 meetings | 77% attendance

**Directorships:** USAf



**2. PROF L DU PLESSIS**  
(51)  
Vice-Principal

**Qualifications:** PhD (education), MSc (computer science), Hons BSc, BSc (PU for CHE), Certificate for environmental educators (Unisa), Leadership in Higher Education (Institute for Educational Management, Harvard), Certificate in ICT in Education for Policy Implementers (Wits, Oracle University)

Oracle SQL, Oracle Units and Oracle Forms 1 and Oracle Forms 2, Oracle Reports, Oracle data base administration | Clarion for Windows 1.5, Linux | You, the manager, and your team, the essentials of Leadership | Professionalism in workplace, project management | Environmental education (one-year course, Unisa)

Vice-principal, appointed in 2020 for a three-year term coinciding with her term as deputy vice-chancellor for assigned functions and Vanderbijlpark Campus operations

**Council committee and total years of service:** Council Exco | Second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
27 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** None

## Meet our Council members (Council membership as at 31 December 2020)



**3. PROF HH**  
**JANSE VAN VUUREN**  
(56)  
Elected by Senate

**Qualifications:** MCom (accountancy), BComHons – CTA, BComHons (cost and management accounting), BCom (accounting) (NWU); appointed for a three-year term from 2018 to 2021

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Student Oversight Committee | Honorary Awards Committee | Social and Ethics Committee

Two years, nine months into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
8 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** None



**4. PROF AF KOTZÉ**  
(55)  
Elected by Senate

**Qualifications:** BPharm, MSc, PhD (NWU), appointed for a three-year term from 2019 to 2022

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Honorary Awards Committee | People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee

Two years into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
9 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** Innovation Highway Enterprises | Hanks TB Diagnostics



**5. PROF HJ**  
**VAN DER MERWE**  
(58)  
Elected by Senate

**Qualifications:** BSc, BScHons (University of Pretoria), MEd (Rand Afrikaans University), PhD (Unisa), higher education diploma (University of Pretoria); appointed for a three-year term from 2019 to 2022

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Honorary Awards Committee | Technology and Information Governance Committee

Two years and one month into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
9 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** International Association for Mobile Learning (IAmLearn) | Innovation Highway Enterprises | IntSys (speech technology)



**6. PROF JD**  
**VAN ROMBURGH**  
(42)  
Elected by academic staff  
members

**Qualifications:** Chartered accountant (South Africa) (CA(SA)), MCom (management accounting) (NWU); appointed for a three-year term from 2018 to 2021

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Transformation Oversight Committee | Social and Ethics Committee

Two years and eight months into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
10 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** Adams & Adams Forensic Investigation Services Pty Ltd | Moerlandspan Boerdery Pty Ltd | Isebe The Branch Pty Ltd



## Meet our Council members (Council membership as at 31 December 2020)



**7. PROF W DU PLESSIS**  
(61)  
Elected by academic staff members

**Qualifications:** BJur, LLB, MA (environmental management), LLD (NWU), appointed for a three-year term from 2018 to 2021

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Student Oversight Committee  
Two years and five months into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
6 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** None



**8. MR FM NKOANA**  
(58)  
Elected by support staff members

**Qualifications:** Bachelor in Administration, appointed for a three-year term from 2019 to 2022

**Council committee and total years of service:**

People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee  
One year and nine months into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
6 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** None



**9. DR F BOTHMA**  
(49)  
Elected by support staff members

**Qualifications:** BA, Higher Education Diploma (N) Counselling (cum laude), BEdHons, MEd, DPhil in education law, appointed for a three-year term from 2019 to 2022

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Transformation Oversight Committee  
One year and one month into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
7 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** None



**10. MR S HLOPE**  
(25)  
Student Representative Council

**Qualifications:** Enrolled for BEd, NWU

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Student Oversight Committee  
One month into one-year term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
No meetings were held after appointment in 2020

**Directorships:** None

## Meet our Council members (Council membership as at 31 December 2020)



**11. M T TLALE**  
(28)  
Student Representative Council

**Qualifications:** Enrolled for BEd, NWU

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Student Oversight Committee  
One month into one-year term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
No meetings were held after appointment in 2020

**Directorships:** None



**12. MS D GIORGI**  
(25)  
Student Representative Council

**Qualifications:** Enrolled for LLM in international child law, NWU

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Student Oversight Committee  
One month into one-year term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
No meetings were held after appointment in 2020

**Directorships:** None



**13. MR OE MONGALE**  
(48)  
Appointed by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

**Qualifications:** Studying towards a master's of philosophy (in conflict transformation) (Nelson Mandela University), postgraduate diploma in management, master's in industrial psychology (NWU), honours in industrial psychology, bachelor's in administration (UniBo); appointed for a three-year term from 2020 to 2023

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Tender Committee | Finance Committee | Executive Committee (alternate)  
Three months into second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
13 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** Hub Farming | Sego Programme and Project Management | The Hub People | Monchwa Investment | Bachem | Izinyoni Trading 328 | Kehu Projects | Teki Project and Programme Management



**14. MS T SEMANE**  
(43)  
Appointed by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

**Qualifications:** Postgraduate diploma in business administration (GIBS), BCom (accounting), studying towards a master's degree in industrial psychology; appointed for a three-year term from 2018 to 2021

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Technology and Information Governance Committee | Social and Ethics Committee | Finance Committee

Two years and five months into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**  
15 meetings | 80% attendance

**Directorships:** Linea Pty Ltd

## Meet our Council members (Council membership as at 31 December 2020)



**15. MR C MABE**  
(41)

Appointed by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

**Qualifications:** BCom (University of North West), Dip AIBM (finances), diploma in financial management (business management College of Southern Africa), certificate in managing the employment process (Unisa), MBA (NWU), appointed for a three-year term from 2018 to 2021

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Finance Committee | Remuneration Committee | Transformation Oversight Committee

Two years and five months into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

15 meetings | 93% attendance

**Directorships:** NH 2606 Pty Ltd | CM 2510 Pty Ltd | Jepa Resources



**16. MR TC KGOMO**  
(52)

Appointed by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

**Qualifications:** BCom (University of North West); appointed for a three-year term from 2020 to 2023

**Council committee and total years of service:**

People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee | Executive Committee of NWU Council | Transformation Oversight Committee | Honorary Awards Committee | Innovation Highway Advisory Board | Senate | Senex

Two years and three months into second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

12 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** None, only shareholding



**17. MR MSJ THABETHE**  
(45)

Appointed by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation

**Qualifications:** National diploma in information technology, BTech in information technology (TWR), MCom in information systems (University of the Witwatersrand), appointed for a three-year term from 2020 to 2023

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Technology and Information Governance Committee | Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee | Social and Ethics Committee | Innovation Highway Enterprises Advisory Board

Three months into second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

15 meetings | 93% attendance

**Directorships:** Sihlasi Technologies CC



**18. MR JDS DE BRUYN**  
(69)

Elected by the Board of Donors

**Qualifications:** BCom (accounting science), Bluris, LLB (PU for CHE); appointed for a three-year term from 2018 to 2021

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee | Tender Committee | Senate

Two years and six months into second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

12 meetings | 92% attendance

**Directorships:** None

## Meet our Council members (Council membership as at 31 December 2020)



**19. MR A VAN ROOY**  
(51)

Elected by the Board of Donors

**Qualifications:** BSc (chemistry, biochemistry) (NWU), BProc (Unisa), Patent Examination Board, qualified as a patent attorney, admitted as an attorney; appointed for a three-year term from 2018 to 2021

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Innovation Highway Enterprises Advisory Board | Assets Committee

Two years and one month into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

5 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** DM Kisch Inc | Kisch Africa Inc | Sederkrans Familie Boerdery



**20. MS U BARRAVALLE**  
(37)

Elected by the Board of Donors

**Qualifications:** BSc (chemistry and biochemistry), BSc (chemistry), (Hons) (RAU), LLB (Unisa), appointed for a three-year term from 2020 to 2023

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Assets Committee

One year and one month into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

5 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** DM Kisch Inc | Kisch Africa Inc



**21. MR A SORGDRAGER**  
(61)

Elected by the Convocation

**Qualifications:** Bluris and LLB (PU for CHE), international executive programme (INSEAD Business School); appointed for a three-year term from 2020 to 2023

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Executive Committee of Council | Remuneration Committee | Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee | Investments Committee | Student Oversight Committee

Six months into second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

32 meetings | 94% attendance

**Directorships:** Yellowstone Trust | Vaalrivier Steiltes | Pegasus Alumni Trust | Erf 549 (Edms) Bpk



**22. PROF AL COMBRINK**  
(74)

Elected by the Convocation

**Qualifications:** BA, BAHons in English, MA in English, DLitt in English (PU for CHE) and higher education diploma (Unisa); appointed for a three-year term from 2018 to 2021

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Student Oversight Committee | Executive Committee of Council (alternate)

Two years and two months into second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

18 meetings | 83% attendance

**Directorships:** None



## Meet our Council members (Council membership as at 31 December 2020)



**23. MR C MULDER**  
(34)  
Elected by the Convocation

**Qualifications:** BA Communication Studies, BSc IT (NWU), appointed for a three-year term from 2018 to 2021

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Transformation Oversight Committee | Student Oversight Committee | Social and Ethics Committee

Two years and six months into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

14 meetings | 86% attendance

**Directorships:** None



**24. REV CANON DP DINKEBOGILE**  
(66)  
Appointed from the ranks of the university's community leaders

**Qualifications:** Diploma in theology (St Peters College), Master's in Christian education (MACE) (USA-Virginia Theological Seminary); appointed for a three-year term from 2019 to 2022

**Council committee and total years of service:**

People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee | Institutional Forum | Remuneration Committee

One year and six months into second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

17 meetings | 88% attendance

**Directorships:** None



**25. DR MB TYOBEKA**  
(45)  
Appointed by Council for specific expertise

**Qualifications:** BScEd and MSc (applied radiation science and technology) (University of North West), MSc and PhD (nuclear engineering) (Penn State University, USA), MSc (management) (Colorado Technical University, USA); appointed for a three-year term from 2020 to 2023

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Executive Committee of Council | Finance Committee | Remuneration Committee | Honorary Awards Committee

One month into third term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

27 meetings | 96% attendance

**Directorships:** None



**26. MR A REDELINGHUIS**  
(70)  
Appointed by Council for specific expertise

**Qualifications:** MCom (PU for CHE), CA (SA); appointed for a three-year term from 2016 to 2019

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee | People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee | Remuneration Committee

One year and six months into second term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

18 meetings | 100% attendance

**Directorships:** None

## Meet our Council members (Council membership as at 31 December 2020)



**27. MR TV MOKGATLA**  
(45)  
Appointed by Council for specific expertise

**Qualifications:** BCom (accounting) (NWU), Honours Bcompt/Certificate of theory in accounting (CTA) (Unisa), appointed for a three-year term from 2019 to 2022

**Council committee and total years of service:**

Assets Committee

One year and six months into first term

**Number of committee meetings and average attendance:**

6 meetings | 50% attendance

**Directorships:** MTBG Investments | Metsi Phepha Batho Holdings | Neliscore | Baphalane Ba Mantserre Investment Holdings | Baphalane Siyanda Chrome Company | Philisani Pty Ltd | Avior Capital Markets Holdings | StokFella | Baphalane Ba Mantserre NPC | Paphalane Property Holdings | His Crown Apostolic Ministries | BBMIH Textile | BBMIH Food | BBMIH Manufacturing | Hyprop Investment | Alpha Cube Capital | 4AX | YeboYetho Investment Company | YeboYetho (RF) Limited | Atomic Trading | Nutritional Holding

### Diversity of skills and experience

Our Council members boast a variety of valuable skills and experience. Their fields of expertise are given below:

- Governance and ethics in general
- Higher education governance
- Student management and governance
- General management, business, industrial psychology
- Science/innovation, technology, engineering
- Communication, languages
- General legal expertise
- Psychology and theology

Having resolved in November 2018 to pursue the establishment of a particular skills set, the NWU Council took these skills into account in 2020 when seeking to fill vacancies in membership. The coloured blocks in the diagram below represent the skills that are given emphasis.

1	General legal expertise
2	Environment, land and indigenous law
3	Global engagement expertise
4	Data analytics expertise
5	Audit and accounting expertise
6	Investment expertise
7	Fundraising expertise
8	Finances and business expertise (medium to macro enterprises)
9	Business administration and/or strategy expertise
10	Governance and ethics expertise
11	Corporate communication expertise
12	Information technology expertise
13	Technology transfer expertise
14	High positive public profile – science
15	High positive public profile – community engagement
16	Arts/people management

### Council transformation

Council continued to focus on transformation targets for its membership and approved the following equity targets for Council to achieve by January 2025:

African female	African male	Indian/Coloured male/female	White female	White male	Total
7	8	2	6	7	30
23,3%	26,7%	6,7%	20,0%	23,3%	100%

As at 31 December 2020, the equity profile of Council was as follows:

African female	African male	Indian/Coloured male/female	White female	White male	Vacancies	Total
1	8	0	8	12	1	30
3,3%	26,7%	0%	26,7%	40%	3,3%	100%

## Council and COVID-19 in 2020

Realising the affect the Covid-19 pandemic had on how institutions conduct their business, Council understood that being the overall custodian of good corporate governance was not “business as usual”. Where necessary, they **adapted** their decision making, **expanded** their view of the higher education environment and **evolved** in their oversight and guidance role to assist the NWU to navigate the new landscape.

Owing to the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the NWU Council meeting scheduled for 18 and 19 March 2020 was cancelled, and Exco – as mandated in the NWU Statute – disposed of any urgent business between meetings on behalf of the Council.

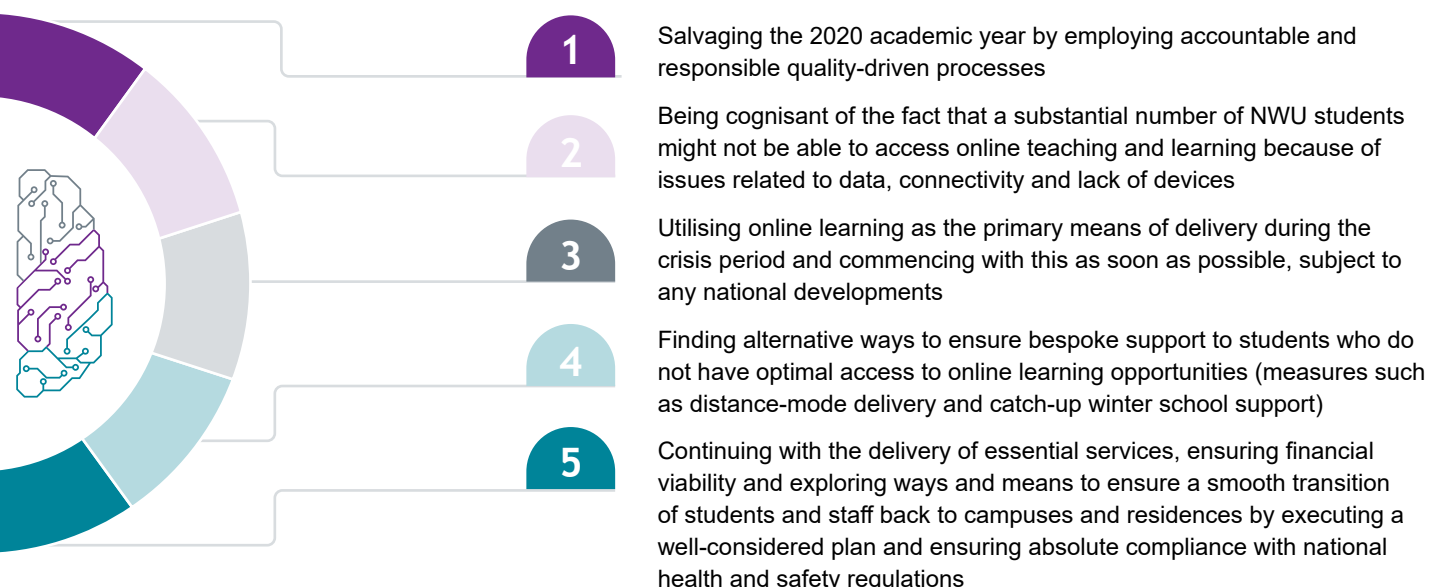
All matters so disposed of by the Exco were ratified by Council at its next meeting on 28 July 2020, which was

also held electronically, as was the Council meeting of 10 September 2020. After the country moved to lockdown level one, a hybrid format was used for the 19 November 2020 Council meeting, with Council members joining electronically and in person at a venue on the Vanderbijlpark Campus.

At each meeting, Council received reports concerning business continuity amidst the Covid-19 situation.

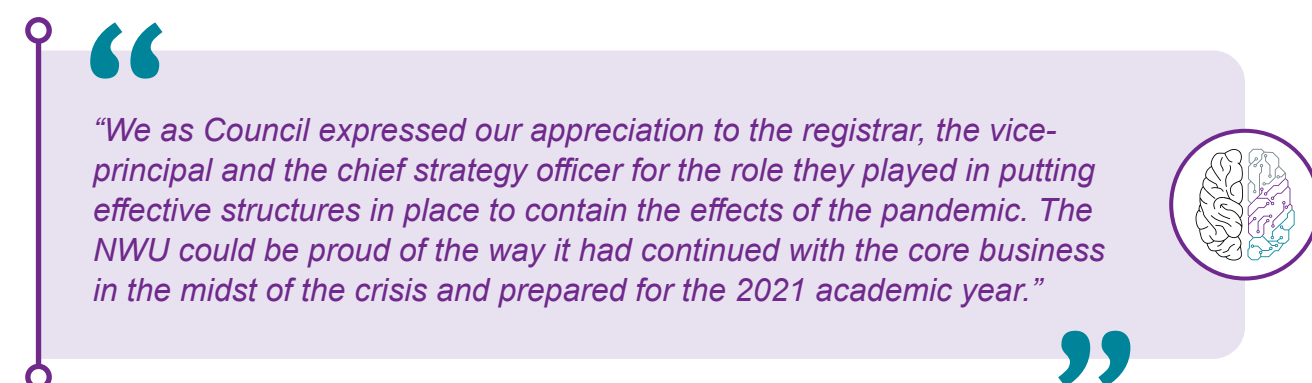
Council also received comprehensive reports from a Covid-19 response team the vice-chancellor had established. These reports included information about the return of staff to the workplace, what measures were in place to mitigate the risk of the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace and ensure business continuity as far as possible, along with a financial impact report and a compliance report.

Council also noted the following principles agreed upon by the University Management Committee that would guide its response to the threats posed by Covid-19:



On 10 September 2020, Council noted matters such as the reintegration of our staff and students, the health and safety measures taken, preparations for a possible move to Alert Level 1 and the risks the coronavirus posed for the NWU.

In November 2020, Council received a comprehensive report on teaching and learning, student life, and staff matters. Click [here](#) to read the full report.



## Key decisions taken by Council in 2020

Management highlighted a number of value-creation issues during 2020 and Council responded by taking key decisions on the following:

- NWU Business School – alignment and autonomy
- Augmenting the NWU Strategy
- Approval of the Preferential Procurement Strategy
- Approval of the Covid-19 Financial Impact Model

The following table gives a summary of Council’s decisions.

### Key governance decisions taken by Council during 2020

As part of the ongoing implementation of the 2015-2025 NWU Strategy, Council approved the refinement of academic structures such as the approval of the Unit for Open Distance learning (UODL) structure. This was approved on the basis that no new costs are incurred and the UODL would be located in the portfolio of the deputy vice-chancellor for teaching and learning.

### How these governance decisions affect future value creation

As Council we are confident that the ongoing implementation of the strategy, structure and brand is shaping the NWU’s operations and efficiency.

We remain confident that the realisation of the strategic agenda of the NWU adds to the improved positioning of the university in the South African higher education landscape.

### Key governance decisions taken by Council during 2020

#### Policies and rules

The Policy Refinement Committee continued with its activities in the drafting and review of policies.

In ensuring compliance with national directives and mitigating possible risks facing the university, we approved nine policies (either revised or new) in 2020.

### How these governance decisions affect future value creation

The NWU’s success model indicates that the university is committed to the continued adoption of responsible and risk-embracing strategies and transformational practices.

In line with this undertaking, and in adhering to the prescripts of the Statute, the university continually drafts and revises policies and rules.

### Key governance decisions taken by Council during 2020

#### Financial matters

We, as Council, approved the audited financial statements for 2020 and the financial overview 2020.

In addition, the following financial approvals were among the highlights of 2020:

- Approval of the Covid-19 Financial Impact and the Mitigation Plan, the Preferential Procurement Strategy, the Rolling Budget 2021-2023, the revised infrastructure project list, and tuition, registration and meal fee adjustments.
- Approval of a broad mandate enabling the executive director for finance and facilities to negotiate on the possible granting of credit for part of the residence fees for 2020 due to Covid-19.
- Approval of the extension of the two contracts (Amorispan and Ciaratouch) by a further three years to deliver more beds at Moahi and Bohlale.

### How these governance decisions affect future value creation

We are confident that the right decisions were taken in the short term to enable the university to realise the goals in the Annual Performance Plan and to continue pursuing its strategic agenda.

However, Council is on record that it expressed concerns on the medium to long-term effects of the national uncertainties around the sustainability of South African higher education. These uncertainties relate predominantly to the funding of public higher education.



### Key governance decisions taken by Council during 2020

#### Tender matters

Council approved several matters regarding tender matters, including the following:

- Approval of a number of tenders as recommended by the Tender Committee, and also that a joint meeting of the Transformation Oversight, Finances and Tender committees consider suggested amendments to the Financial Policy, including the procurement guidelines.
- Approval that the Tender Committee undertake a trending analysis of the awarding of tenders and shortlisted bidders for the previous three years. Should any concerns be raised, the possibility of a further forensic audit process may follow.
- Approval that the Internal Audit Department continue the investigation regarding 2K Konstruksie, in particular completing the matters in regard to their shareholding, trust and beneficiaries. The report from Internal Audit was to be tabled at the Executive Committee of Council.

#### How these governance decisions affect future value creation

As Council we ensure that the university procures services by means of a process that is fair, equitable, transparent and cost-effective, while also ensuring the realisation of transformation objectives.

We are confident that the tenders that were awarded adhered to the principles laid down in relevant legislation.

### Key governance decisions taken by Council during 2020

#### Appointment of office bearers

We oversaw the process of appointing senior office bearers and approved the following:

- Subsequent term appointments of the registrar, Prof Marlene Verhoef, and the deputy vice-chancellor for assigned functions and Vanderbijlpark Campus operations, Prof Linda du Plessis.
- To appoint Ms Elmarie de Beer for another term as executive director for finance and facilities for a period of four years.
- To appoint Prof Linda du Plessis for another term as vice-principal for a period of three years.

#### How these governance decisions affect future value creation

We made sure that the appointment of these office bearers was informed by the Statute and relevant rules.

The calibre of those who are appointed is key to achieving the NWU's strategic objectives.

### Key governance decisions taken by Council during 2020

#### Governance matters

Key resolutions related to governance include the following:

- Approval of the Annual Performance Plan 2021, the Mid-Year Performance Report 2020 and the Annual Integrated Report for 2019.
- Approval of the awarding of an honorary doctorate to Justice Bess Nkabinde, and the election of Dr Bismark Tyobeka as chairperson of Council for a subsequent term and of Mr Bert Sorgdrager as deputy chairperson of Council.
- Approval of the Approval of the Successive Employment Equity Plan (2021-2023), and of the vacancy management and temporary appointment processes (the latter with the proviso that management cautiously considers temporary appointments to prevent overloading academic staff).
- Approval of the annual re-appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers as external auditors.
- Ratification of the full and final settlement agreement that was signed on 31 October 2020 by the chairperson of Council of the North-West University and Prof Refilwe Phaswana-Mafuya, Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation (on suspension).
- Approval of the following amendments to the NWU Strategy: the revised common strategy assumptions, success model, and goals and enablers.

#### How these governance decisions affect future value creation

Through sound governance principles and practices, we create an ethical environment in which the NWU can realise its strategy.

## Remuneration of externally elected Council members

Since 2009, following a Council resolution to this effect, the university established the practice of paying an honorarium to external members of Council and of Council committees.

The honorarium is considered a token of the NWU's gratitude for members' time and effort.

The honorarium fee is paid twice a year, in August and December. The fee is linked to the university's annual cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) process, which the Remuneration Committee approves before implementation.

The following table shows the honoraria paid for each meeting attended.

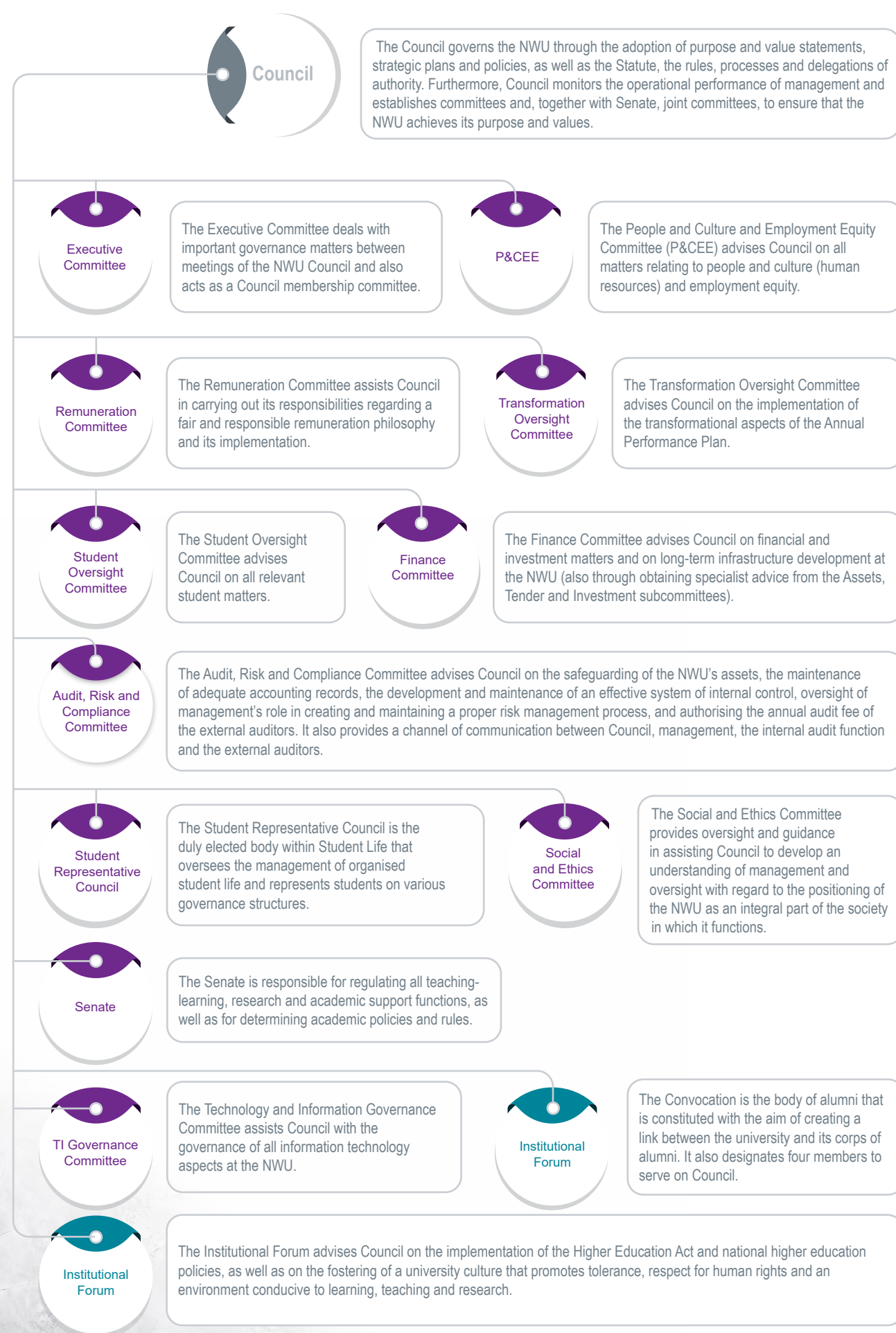
External Council member	R3 356
Council-appointed external expert in a structure, but not a Council member	R 4 225
Chairperson of a Council committee	R 4 225
Deputy chairperson of Council	R3 357
Council chairperson	R6 708
Council chairperson or deputy chairperson as an ordinary member of the structure	R3 357

## King IV as the guiding framework for value creation through governance

After King IV came into effect on 1 April 2017, the NWU initiated an internal process to ensure compliance by aligning structures, policies and procedures with the necessary requirements. The connections between King IV and the corresponding internal structure or responsibility are shown below:

KING IV requirement	<IR> content element	Relevant governance structure
Leadership and ethics	Stakeholder engagement and relationships; governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council</li> <li>• Social and Ethics Committee</li> </ul>
Performance and reporting	Strategy and resource allocation; performance; outlook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Executive Committee</li> <li>• Finance Committee</li> <li>• Senate</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>
Governance structure and delegation	Governance and remuneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council</li> <li>• Executive Committee</li> <li>• Remuneration Committee</li> </ul>
Risks and opportunities	Stakeholder engagement and relationships; risk and opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee (as primary committee for oversight purposes)</li> <li>• Other committees of Council (for risks and opportunities relevant in the said area of oversight)</li> <li>• Senate</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>
Technology and information	Governance, risk and opportunity; strategy and resource allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TI Governance Committee</li> <li>• Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee</li> <li>• Executive Committee</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>
Compliance	Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee</li> <li>• Other committees of Council (for compliance matters relevant in the said area of oversight)</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>
Remuneration	Stakeholder engagement and relationships; remuneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remuneration Committee</li> <li>• Honorary Awards Committee</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>
Assurance	Governance; basis of preparation and presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee</li> <li>• Finance Committee</li> <li>• Senate</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>
Stakeholder relationships	Stakeholder engagement and relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social and Ethics Committee</li> <li>• People and Culture and Employment Equity Committee</li> <li>• Transformation Oversight Committee</li> <li>• Student Oversight Committee</li> <li>• Institutional Forum</li> <li>• Student Representative Council</li> <li>• Convocation</li> <li>• Board of Donors</li> <li>• Council</li> </ul>

## Governance structures of the NWU



## Committee work supporting Council

As indicated earlier, the Council committees assist us with our performance as Council.

All these committees are formally constituted, have terms of reference and consist of a majority of Council members who are neither employees nor students of a public higher education institution. They are chaired by external independent members with the necessary expertise and skills.

Click [here](#) for meeting dates and attendance, and [here](#) for the composition of the committees.

## Self-evaluation of Council

Over time we, as NWU Council, have established a practice of self-evaluation of Council and Council committee activities at the end of each year.

In preparing for the review, we oversaw the development of a quality manual based on the norms prescribed by the DHET Governance Scorecard. The manual documents all aspects relevant to achieving, sustaining, monitoring and quality-enhancing all levels of activity of the NWU Council and was approved on 19 March 2020.

## External review of Council

An external review panel interviewed persons and groupings over a period of two days. The panel members were Professor Jairam Reddy (chairperson and external evaluator), Mr Hugh Amoore (external evaluator), Professor Mandla Makhanya (external evaluator) and Dr Joe Tshifularo (internal evaluator/ former member of NWU Council).

The external evaluation panel focused on various relevant matters and made commendations and recommendations. On 19 November 2020, we adopted the final external review report.

The recommendations flowing from both the self-evaluation process and the external review would be considered at the Council workshop in March 2021. As Council we expressed our view that adopting the report would not mean agreement with all recommendations, some of which would be easy to implement while others would require serious engagement.

Discussion of the external evaluation report's recommendations and the development of an improvement plan is one of our priorities for 2021.

## COUNCIL STATEMENT ON SUSTAINABILITY

"At the NWU we define sustainability as the ability of the university to create value in the short, medium and long term by promoting a stakeholder-inclusive approach to developing a strategic response to the risks and opportunities faced. We consider material matters, whether financial or non-financial in nature. (Refer to our materiality determination process.)

"Material matters of a social and environmental nature are as important as financial and economic issues in determining the overall value created by the NWU.

"The five-year strategic plan and the business plan for implementing the strategy are integral to ensuring our sustainability. The five long-term goals and the four enablers of the NWU strategy 2015 to 2025 underpin the commitment of the university in this regard."

Statement approval obtained from NWU Council on 17 June 2021.

## Ethics in action at NWU

## COUNCIL STATEMENT ON ETHICS AND VALUES

"The NWU Code of Ethics commits the university to the highest standards of integrity, behaviour and ethics in dealing with all its stakeholders and society at large.

"We expect Council members and staff to observe the NWU's ethical obligations in order to conduct its business through the use of fair and commercially competitive practices.

"The values statement in the NWU Strategy 2015 to 2025 determines that the NWU will foster engaged and caring staff and students and will embed the following foundational values that are based on the constitutional values of human dignity, equality and freedom:

- Ethics in all endeavours
- Academic integrity
- Academic freedom and freedom of scientific research
- Responsibility, accountability, fairness and transparency
- Embracing diversity."

Statement approval obtained from NWU Council on 17 June 2021.



## Ethical leadership and corporate citizenship

In line with our values statement, the university's leadership at all levels of governance and management is based on integrity.

While we remain fairly confident that all governance and management structures at the NWU continue to strive for sustainable economic, social and environmental performance, we are also aware that negative consequences might arise from decisions taken at the university.

This necessitates that we create an environment conducive to countering any possible negative outputs on financial, societal and environmental practices.

The Social and Ethics Committee of Council fulfils an important role in advising Council on all matters relevant to ethical leadership and corporate citizenship. This approach positions the NWU to fulfil its responsibility in terms of the environmental impact of its behaviour and supports value creation to its stakeholder communities.

### Behavioural manual for staff

The NWU is committed to harmonious workplace relations, fair labour practices, mutual respect, fairness and effective operations. To give effect to this, the NWU has a Behavioural Manual which is governed by the Behavioural Policy.

#### What happened

Disciplinary action was taken against 36 employees across the NWU in 2020. 25 cases were of such a serious nature that university hearings were held where dismissals could be the appropriate sanction.

Only four employees had their services summarily terminated while a mutual separation agreement was reached with one employee who resigned. In the rest of the cases, written warnings were imposed.

Eleven CCMA cases were dealt with successfully.

### Ombud office for language

The approach of the Language Directorate is to resolve language matters directly or as close as possible to the point where they originate and not to allow them to escalate.

Reporting can be done to the Ombudsman in the Language Directorate via any of the NWU reporting channels or directly via email to the Ombud. Reported matters are investigated, resolved and reported on.

### Dealing with sexual harassment

The NWU is committed to creating a safe working environment free from the fear of sexual harassment.

#### What happened

One case of sexual harassment was reported. Disciplinary action was taken against the employee and will be finalised early in 2021.

### Matters reported by employees or the public

In line with the Policy on the Reporting of Maladministration and Irregularities and the Protection of Disclosure, a number of reports were received via reporting boxes placed on the campuses.

#### What happened

Five reports were received via the reporting boxes, and for all these cases, an official case was opened in each instance for further investigation by Internal Audit. This compares to the six cases opened in 2019 after reports of alleged irregularities. The other investigations were received via internal requests and/or referral.

### Ongoing investigations

Internal Audit plays an important role in the ongoing investigation of suspected irregularities.

#### What happened

Of the investigations reported in 2019, 31 were completed, while 13 were in progress. In 2020 a total of 11 investigations were completed and 20 are still currently being investigated.

Over the year, there has been a significant increase in procurement-related matters reported.



## Fighting fraud

After the verification of facts, Internal Audit handed several investigations over to prosecuting authorities, and various fraud awareness sessions were held on the campuses.

#### What happened

During the past two years, investigations about personal expenditure/misrepresentation of invoices/changes of bank details were handed over to the South African Police Service (SAPS). In 2019, the amount/estimate involved was R70 563.

During the pandemic of 2020 there have been challenges in reporting cases to law enforcement, as well as with the progress of cases reported. These challenges were as a result of the hard national lockdown, after which various law enforcement offices were repeatedly closed owing to positive Covid-19 cases among personnel.

Challenges were also encountered with the handover/delegation of cases to new responsible officers, and with files that went missing. In 2020 investigations, the cases handed over to SAPS had an estimated value of R51 000.

In line with the university's Anti-Fraud Strategy and given the Covid-19 regulations, online anti-fraud awareness sessions were held. One of these sessions took place during November 2020 in support of Fraud Awareness Week and was presented by the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners (ACFE).

The Anti-Fraud Strategy calls for a specific focus on Internal Audit's proactive and continuous monitoring of transactions relating to procurement. Various tests are run and continually reported on to operational managers for follow-up. This has to a large extent assisted to mitigated the risk of fraud in this regard.

## Promotion of Access to Information Act requests

The NWU subscribes fully to the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA), 2 of 2000

#### What happened

In 2020, the information manual was updated for the 16th time and copies were sent to the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC).

As per PAIA, the manual is available in three languages (English, Afrikaans and Setswana) and published on an NWU web page. The manual provides information about the promotion of access to information and the protection of personal Information.

## Compliance with laws and regulations

The Compliance Committee, which is a subcommittee of the University Management Committee (UMC), coordinates and reports on all compliance activities. The UMC then submits reports to the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee whose duty it is to report accordingly to Council.

#### What happened

During a compliance assessment in 2020, compliance with the following pieces of legislation was self-assessed:

National Student Financial Aid Scheme Act 56 of 1999; Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No 75 of 1997; Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act, No 53 of 2003 and 2014 Code; Copyright Act, No 98 of 1978; Electronic Communications Act, No 36 of 2005; Financial Intelligence Centre Act, No 38 of 2001; National Building Regulations and Building Standards Act, No 103 of 1977; Occupational Health and Safety Act, No 85 of 1993; Promotion of Access to Information Act, No 2 of 2000; Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act, No 12 of 2004; Prevention of Organised Crime Act, No 121 of 1998; Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, No 130 of 1993; Electronic Communications and Transactions Act, No 25 of 2002; Trade Marks Act, No 194 of 1993.

The risk and compliance coordinator, a staff member who is part of the Corporate and Information Governance Services Department monitors compliance on an ongoing basis. EXCLAIM compliance software is used for compliance assessment and monitoring.

A Risk and Compliance Policy was finalised and approved by Council on 19 March 2020.

The compulsory section 32 report was also delivered to the South African Human Rights Commission.

The section 32 report covered the period April 2019 to March 2020, during which 45 requests were received and 29 granted in full. 11 requests were refused in full. Three requests were refused on the basis of the mandatory protection of the personal information (section 34); one was refused based on the mandatory protection of commercial information of a third party (section 36(1)(b)); one was refused on the basis of an unreasonable diversion of resources (section 45(2)); one was refused on the basis that the records could not be found or do not exist (section 23), and five requests were refused based on the requester not using the correct platform or the request being unclear.

## Providing integrated assurance

A Combined Assurance Forum (CAF) has existed at the university since 2012 and has aligned its functioning with King IV. The intention of the committee is to manage and limit the risk exposure of the university, and to provide assurance.

### What happened

The NWU CAF provided an adequate and effective control environment and ensured the integrity of reports for better decision-making, while also establishing an assurance model. A risk assurance map was tabled during 2020 and will be finalised during 2021. The forum also assisted the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee to fulfil its responsibility in giving assurance to Council.

Specifically, it provided assurance that the university's risk management, risk control and governance processes are adequately addressed. CAF also provided a platform for discussions on optimising risk management at the NWU and addressing management concerns about the processes for managing risks.

## Human rights matters

The Human Rights Committee did not deal with any human rights infringements during 2020. It reviewed the various matters that were reported to it but referred these back to the various departments involved because it did not deem them to be human rights infringements.

The committee discussed various awareness initiatives and noted that the SRC leadership structures had received training regarding human rights.

Further, the committee discussed and noted the Sexual Harassment Policy and the revised Code of Ethics of the NWU.



## Institutional Forum: custodian of good governance

Together with Council, the Institutional Forum serves as the custodian of good governance and, by advising and assisting Council, helps to safeguard stakeholder value creation.

The Institutional Forum may have up to 25 members representing a broad range of internal stakeholder constituencies. Members include representatives from Council, the University Management Committee, Senate, academic staff, a recognised union, support staff, the campus student representative councils, the NWU Convocation and members with special expertise.

### What happened

The Institutional Forum discussed and gave input on the draft NWU five-year Employment Equity (EE) plan and NWU Gender Based Violence Policy.

The forum (as a whole or represented by some of our individual members) advised on the appointment of four university management members. They are Prof D Kgwadi (Vice-Chancellor), Ms E de Beer (Executive Director: Finance and Facilities), Prof M Verhoef (Registrar) and the Vice-Principal and Prof L du Plessis (Vice-Principal), all of whom were being appointed for a second term.

The forum also advised the selection panels constituted to consider the appointment of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation, executive deans and deputy executive deans of NWU faculties, whose appointment was a key step in the implementation of our strategy.

## Council statements

The following Council statements can be accessed [here](#):

- Council statement on going concern
- Council statement on financial controls outside financial statements
- Council statement on financial health and viability
- Council statement on tenders
- Council statement on contract management, SLAs and monitoring of suppliers' performance
- Statement on penalties, sanctions and fines

The Institutional Forum's full report is available [here](#).

DR BISMARK TYOBeka  
CHAIRPERSON OF COUNCIL

“

*“It is of the utmost importance to appoint individuals in governance bodies who are properly equipped. Ethical values and good corporate governance principles remain core aspects of how these bodies conduct their business.”*

”



## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### They give NWU students a voice on Council

The Student Representative Council (SRC) leaders have their work cut out for them. Their challenge has been to **extend** their vision of student life and **explore** creative ways to lead, communicate and engage with students around the restrictions posed by Covid-19.

The leaders elected in 2020 are Siyabonga Hlophe, chairperson of the SRC and the Vanderbijlpark Campus Student Council (SCC); Danielle Giorgi, SRC deputy chairperson and chairperson of the Potchefstroom Campus SCC; and Thabang Tlale, the SRC secretary-general and Mahikeng Campus SCC chairperson.

They all **evolved** in their leadership roles during the pandemic by using social media to communicate with students, rethinking the format of their events and programmes and helping students adapt to online learning. ([Read more](#))



These three student leaders represent NWU students on the university's Council. They are from left Siyabonga Hlophe, Danielle Giorgi and Thabang Tlale.



# Incentivising for achievement

The NWU creates an environment that motivates and reinforces superior performance on the part of our staff. In this way, we encourage high performance and harness the energies of our staff towards realising our strategy and goals.

Performance incentives are attractive and sustainable and are applied fairly and consistently.

Through integrated performance management, we recognise superior organisational, team and individual performance.

Through this approach, our staff are encouraged to explore career and learning opportunities, expand their capabilities and evolve individually and collectively.

## Remuneration mix to attract and retain scarce and critical skills

Market-related remuneration is essential if we are to succeed in recruiting and retaining the best staff. Our remuneration mix has variable and fixed elements and includes monetary and non-monetary rewards. All these elements are aligned to our strategy, business-specific value drivers and the NWU values, ensuring a good skills and culture fit.

Annually, we do benchmarking to ensure continued competitiveness of guaranteed pay. Employees contribute 7,5% to the pension fund and can choose an employer contribution of 12%, 15%, 17,5% or 20%.

Variable pay includes performance bonuses and various value-adding allowances, and is paid according to the results of individual remuneration reviews.

## Remuneration governance and management

The NWU Council fulfils its oversight function for remuneration through its Remuneration Committee.

This committee understands how the income differentials affect fair and responsible remuneration and contribute to the positioning of the NWU as a value-adding institution for employees and other stakeholders.

It is important to close the income differentials between the higher and lower salary bands, and also to address the enhancement of salaries of academic staff. The outcome of the collective bargaining process for salary increases for 2020 supported this by introducing a differentiated increase to cater for academic staff and staff at the lower income bands.

## Executive contracts

The appointment of senior officer bearers is driven by Council, in line with our Statute and the Council's Rules on the appointment of office bearers. The Council process applies to the appointment of the vice-chancellor, deputy vice-chancellors, the registrar, executive directors and deputy vice-chancellors for assignable functions and campus operations.

## Current year incentives: University Management Committee

	Basic salary R'000	Employee benefits R'000	Other allowance payments R'000	Total cost to NWU 2020 R'000
Prof RJ Balfour	1 847	436	486	2 770
Prof DM Balia	1 860	346	203	2 409
Dr JS Chalufu	1 564	258	-	1 822
Ms E de Beer	2 094	446	541	3 087
Prof LA du Plessis	1 951	388	805	3 144
Prof ND Kgwadi	3 243	612	738	4 593
Mr NC Manoko	1 619	382	371	2 371
Prof MN Phaswana-Mafuya	1 795	184	1 634	3 613
Prof BMP Setlalentoa	1 812	396	487	2 695
Prof V Singh	1 875	257	195	2 326
Prof MM Verhoef	2 100	457	540	3 097
Prof FB Waanders	1 500	-	21	1 521

## External members' fees

As reported in the section on the remuneration of members of Council and Council committees, these members receive an honorarium as a token of our gratitude for their time and efforts. The honorarium, paid in August and December, is linked to our annual cost of living adjustment (COLA) process and approved by Council's Executive Committee. (The honoraria members received for each meeting attended is mentioned on page 93.)

Honoraria payments (gross remuneration to Council members) in 2020

Council member	R-value
Ms UA Davey Baravalle	R3 307
Prof AL Combrink	R33 070
Mr JDS de Bruyn	R57 075
Rev PD Dinkebogile	R48 010
Mr XV Hadebe	R4 163
Mr WG Human	R23 149
Mr TC Kgomo	R120 836
Mr I Klynsmith	R61 238
Mr CS Mabe	R47 289
Mr BCO Manyapelo	R20 815
Mr SM Mohapi	R20 815
Mr TV Mokgatla	R6 614
Mr OE Mongale	R45 559

Council member	R-value
Mr CP Mulder	R39 684
Mr A Redelinghuis	R56 336
Mr LE Seliane	R20 815
Ms T Semane	R33 070
Mr MSJ Thabethe	R39 801
Dr MB Tyobeka	R189 069
Dr K van der Walt	R4 163
Mr WA van Rooy	R6 614
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>R881 492</b>

*"A comprehensive talent management strategy will be critical in distinguishing the NWU from other institutions competing for talent. Components of this strategy are an employee value proposition that increases engagement and belonging, competitive compensation and a programme for the recruitment and retention of scarce and critical skills."*



## See how we explore, expand and evolve

### Project on values kept staff on their toes

The joy of music, song and dance binds people together. This was plain to see when a group of NWU staff on the Potchefstroom Campus danced to Master KG's now famous song, "Jerusalem".

These colleagues had fun while taking part in the university's Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Project.

"The project explores how each of us can play a role in shaping our institutional culture. Dancing together is a way to celebrate our diverse backgrounds and build an inclusive NWU culture where everyone feels at home," explains Prue Mohoto, People and Culture's director for talent management and recruitment.



These colleagues enjoy themselves while participating in the Jerusalem dance challenge and setting the scene for sharing good news stories as part of the Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Project.

\* Mr Sorgdrager did not claim honoraria and requested that it be donated to one of the university's entities. As at year end, the remuneration due to him had still been in the university's account.

## Organisational culture

Organisational culture is a vital enabler of our strategy to transform and position the university as a unitary institution of superior academic excellence, with a commitment to social justice and an ethic of care.



A critical first step was to conduct a **dipstick assessment** among staff and students to identify the desirable and undesirable elements of the current culture, and define the desired culture. We then held so-called Culture Conversations to facilitate inputs on what changes were needed to achieve the desired culture.



The **Culture Conversations** saw randomly selected participants providing their lived experience of the NWU culture. Staff and students used these conversations to express their views on issues around transparency, trust and frustration, and to reflect on the identity and history of each campus, strengthening their sense of belonging.



The NWU desires to build an inclusive, enabling and welcoming environment, the vehicle for which is **the NWU Way** journey, involving the co-creation of desired culture and behaviour descriptors. The insights gathered during phase one of the NWU Way project are informing the next phase, shaping balanced, viable and authentic organisational values.



The **NWU Culture Baseline Report** was finalised in February 2020, after all the role-players had perused and given inputs into the draft document. Owing to the limitations and restrictions brought on by the COVID-19 international pandemic, phase two of the NWU Way project was put on hold.



However, in July 2020, as part of the joint venture project in developing the organisational culture of NWU staff members and students, the **Organisational Citizenship Behaviour Project (OCBP)** was launched. Its aim is to complement and support the establishment of the "To Be" culture of the institution (phase two of the NWU Culture Project).

The project functioned as a stocktaking exercise on how both staff members and students understand the values of the university and, more importantly, how they experience the values in their everyday lives.

The addition of the OCBP to the initial NWU Culture Change project plan sought to build hope and optimism and was used as a platform from which the NWU will encourage and demonstrate care and pacify concerns.

The OCBP informed employees which behaviours are encouraged and implored each employee to commit to do something different to make the NWU a better place for all. Employees were encouraged to show up with a different spirit and energy to enhance the values we espouse.

## Future outlook for the NWU

LANGUAGE BUTTONS

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SET

Looking ahead, we anticipate that the worldwide pandemic and the severe impact on the economy are the biggest factors in our external environment that will impact our ability to achieve our strategic objectives.

Keeping this in mind, we need to equip ourselves to respond to challenges and uncertainties that are likely to arise, affecting our capability to achieve our goals and targets in the future.

One way to prepare for unforeseen crises, is to be ready and willing to **explore** new approaches to problems, **expand** the tactics we use to address challenges, and **evolve** to become even more flexible and adaptable when faced with unprecedented circumstances in our external environment.

Reflecting on the NWU's future, we distinguish between the short term (up to two years), the medium term (two to seven years) and the long term (more than seven years).

These are the developments that may affect our future performance:

### An unstable environment

#### - Short-term expectations

The lessons learned from Covid-19, as well as our digital business strategy and the improvement plans resulting from the national PhD review, will inform our processes and priorities for 2021.

The provision of data to students is a priority, as is finding ways to ensure that all students have access to a device.

Our financial risk mitigation strategy will be carefully implemented going forward.

#### - Medium-term expectations

We need to continually learn and update our skills in order to stay relevant. Work in the digital economy will, not surprisingly, consist increasingly of knowledge work. More jobs will require substantial interaction with technology, shaped by technological disruption, labour automation and more flexible and fluid employment.

The outdated industrial-age mind-set where people received an education early in life to be ready for a lifetime of work no longer reflects the individualised and unexpected trajectories of modern careers.

The idea of lifelong learning is nothing new. But in a world that has become much more non-linear, the conditions for lifelong learning have changed significantly since the concept was first introduced.

The need for lifelong learning to enable individuals to access learning opportunities – in different ways, for different purposes and at various career stages – has never been greater. We need to build education models that reflect this change and a culture that promotes it.

#### - Long-term expectations

The long-term financial sustainability of the university is paramount if the NWU is to remain a value-creating asset for future generations.

### Using opportunities and addressing challenges and uncertainties

It will always be important to measure the applicability of technology against a set of explicitly determined and agreed-upon criteria concerning the university's core business.

Questions such as the following continue to guide our thinking about the future: Does the technology enable better operational support and offer a congenial human experience (given our focus on diversity, inclusion and access for success)? Does technology optimise our functioning in teaching and learning that enables student feedback which is more focused, nuanced and enabling of improvement (when it comes to e-assessment, for example)?

ICT innovation will play an increasingly important role in the offering of teaching and learning and support throughout the student life cycle and agile systems are required with seamless integration between the various stages of the student life cycle.

### Our most important targets and plans for the future

#### - In the short to medium term

Lessons from Covid-19 and the work of the 21-Futures Task team that the NWU has appointed, will guide us to improved blended teaching and learning approaches.

These will provide students with the opportunity to benefit from the flexibility and innovation that online learning platforms provide, complemented by well-structured face-to-face sessions.

This reconfiguration of service delivery methods will also have implications for our different infrastructure and student support services. Strategic success factors are: (i) to provide cutting-edge and relevant resources and



services to fulfil academic expectations and (ii) to create an enabling and value-based, transparent and engaged organisational culture.

The plans directly aimed at meeting these strategic success factors are:

- Provide collaborative teaching and learning support and professional development opportunities towards the scholarly development of academics as university teachers to enhance student retention, success and throughput.
- Collaboration between the Unit for Open Distance Learning (UODL) and the Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), to narrow the gap between asynchronous and synchronous modes of distance education and thereby improve access for students using low technology with high immediacy.
- Adopt and develop technology that enhances the enabling teaching and learning environment, informed by the strategic drivers and indicators in the Teaching and Learning Strategy in lieu of blended learning.
- Establish and maintain well-functioning campus structures involved in the communities.
- Develop social consciousness and responsiveness in students by encouraging participation in community work.

- Develop student and staff capacity to effectively engage with technology-enhanced teaching and learning.
- Improve partnerships with reputable international institutions so that collaborative research, joint degrees and co-publications can be increased.
- Access new sources of funding for technology development and commercialisation.

#### - In the long term

The phenomenon of unbundling universities and online learning has made its appearance globally as part of what 4IR offers higher education.

Like any other business sector, the changing demands of our stakeholders (students and potential employers and industry) drive change in the education sector. The student population is constantly changing and as a result there are new expectations for seamless higher education and lifelong learning experiences that fit different lifestyles, individual circumstances and preferences.

Younger generations entering higher education have a completely different point of departure than previous generations. As digital natives, they have always had technology fully integrated into most aspects of their lives, and after Covid-19 they would expect the same when it comes to their educational experience.

### In summary

The higher education sector, including the NWU, has proven its ability to **adapt** to change and focus on research and innovation efforts in contributing towards combating a global pandemic. With our focus on the implementation of our digital business strategy, we will continue to differentiate ourselves from other players.

We believe that differentiator is our ability to **explore** new ways of doing things, **expand** our horizons and evolve to become even more than we were before – all while imbuing everything we do with an ethic of care.



Click on the links below to access several annexures to this report.

- **Annexure 1:** 2020 Performance Assessment Report
- **Annexure 2:** List of committee meetings
- **Annexure 3:** Composition of committees
- **Annexure 4:** NWU Risk Register
- **Annexure 5:** Financial Overview
- **Annexure 6:** Consolidated Financial Statements as at 31 December 2020



# Acknowledgements



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<http://www.nwu.ac.za/content/nwu-annual-reports>



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