



2021-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

ENGAGEMENT & TRANSFORMATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Patterned motifs

Rachel Larkin - inspired by the pattern work of Xolela Madlanga

Plan layout & design

Neil Honeycomb

Photos & images

Cover image: Design motif - adapted from the work of Xolela Madlanga

Photo 1: Engagement Excellence Awards, Creche X3 Project (p. 3)

Photo 2: Emancipatory Imaginations, ACUS Winter School (2019) (p. 4)

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Photo 4: South Campus, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha (p. 16)

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Text & Editing Support

ETP Office Staff; CriSHET Office Staff

Vision

To be a dynamic African university, recognised for its leadership in generating cutting-edge knowledge for a sustainable future.

Our Mission

To offer a diverse range of life-changing educational experiences for a better world.

Our Values

Diversity

Excellence

Ubuntu

Social Justice
and Equality

Integrity

Environmental
Stewardship

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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

CANRAD	Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy
CCC	COVID-19 Coordinating Committee
CCW	Community Convergence Workstream
CIPSET	Centre for Integrated Post-School Education & Training
<i>Cri</i>SHET	Chair: Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation
CWGS	Centre for Women & Gender Studies
CYUEE	Chair: Youth Unemployment, Employability & Empowerment
DVC	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
E&T	Engagement & Transformation
EO	Engagement Office
ETP	Engagement & Transformation Portfolio
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HAU	HIV & AIDS Research Unit
HoC	Hubs of Convergence
NRF	National Research Foundation
TIMS	Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies
TVET	Technical Vocational Education & Training
TO	Transformation Office

I. HOW TO READ THIS PLAN

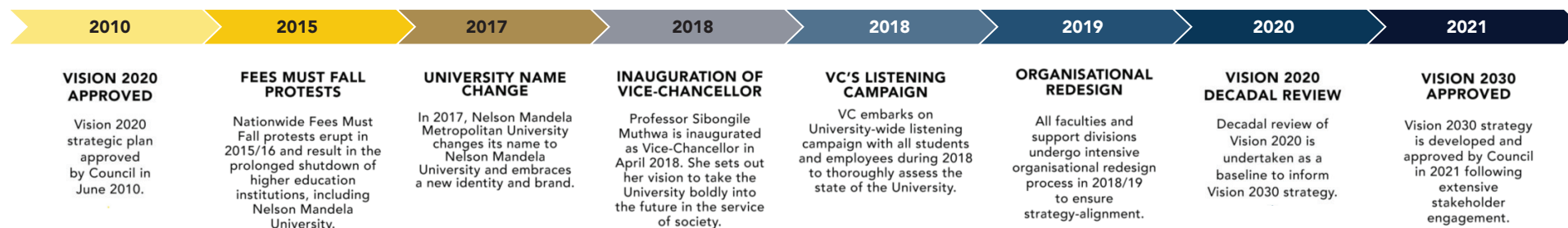
This is the 5-year plan (2021-2025) of the Engagement and Transformation Portfolio (ETP) which is located in the broader framework of [Vision 2030](#). Please read it against the wide backdrop of both the history, present and future of the University. See timeline for Vision 2030 on p. 2.

The plan is an *invitation* for continuous critical reflection and unburdened conversations to make collective sense of what a dynamic African university in service of society may look like, and how it can be advanced through the work of this portfolio. Our work is open and incomplete and we welcome ideas, collaborations, and initiatives from across the university, the sector and society.

Representing a 'high-level-blend' of the strategy plans of divisions and entities within this portfolio, this plan is an integrated formulation of the key goals we are working towards. The individual programme and entity plans are available upon request of portfolio directors who have worked to integrate Vision 2030 into their workplans.



Figure a. Vision2030 Strategic Framework.



The plan should be read against the [report](#) on building the portfolio over the past two years (2020-2021). The sketch of the portfolio is being collectively drawn by countless engagements across the University and its publics, with first-rate support and guidance from the Council, colleagues, partners, collaborators, communities and our associates, critics, and friends.

“‘Community engagement’ is the over-arching phrase used to denote a range of frameworks of praxes at the university-community-society nexus. Given the wide-ranging typology of practices, there is general agreement on an inclusive classification of engagement activities and orientations^{5,6}: from scientific innovations, knowledge transfers and socio-economic development, to advancing social and solidarity economies across a range of contexts. These may, in a variety of ways, align with the ‘triple helix’ model (university, business and government), the added fourth helix (media- and culture-based publics) and the enlarged fifth helix (society and the natural environment)⁷.”

The ETP “cultivates a vibrant intellectual culture that promotes critical consciousness and creates spaces for the open sharing of diverse knowledge paradigms and ideas”. It does so within its research focus areas, as well as working to create the necessary underlying conditions for scholars, students and community-stakeholders to feel comfortable sharing ideas across knowledge domains. As already mentioned, addressing discrimination and promoting social inclusion is key to creating a vibrant intellectual culture, as well as being an imperative of upholding the human rights and dignity of all those who engage with the University.

Figure b. ETP Report: 2020-2021.

II. WHAT SHOULD BE THE DEFINING SPIRIT OF OUR UNIVERSITY THROUGH THE PRAXES OF THE PORTFOLIO?

This key question has been animating discussions across and beyond the university since the *Mandela* name change in 2017 and the inaugural address of the Vice-Chancellor in 2018 and guided the organisational redesign processes and development of Vision 2030 (2021-2030).

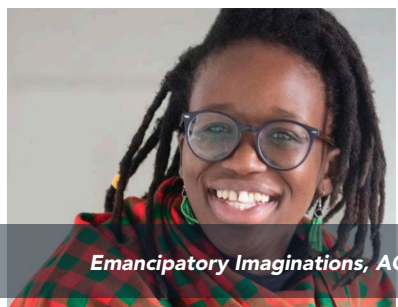
The answer to this question, rooted in the self-reflexive struggles of the University since the merger in 2005, is not static. It evolves through various generative phases over the past 17 years and is at present framed as a *transformative-responsive* university with a commitment to *social embeddedness* to advance our vision of a dynamic African university in service of society.

"We argue that there is an inherent connection between the engagement and social and cognitive justice, linked to co-agency, the co-creation of knowledge¹, and action. We propose to think of engagement as 'convergence'², which we link to the aspirational permeability and porosity of the university 'walls', or the breaking down of its 'fences'³. That is, we view engagement as the equalising coming-together of university and community, to enable the emergence of something new and more just - "a space for inventing the unprecedented"⁴. The principle of 'equalisation' is key, as it reframes the argument and approach away from the traditional notion of charity."

Engagement Excellence Awards, 'Creche X3 Project'



The envisaged spirit of the university can be defined around the following principles:



Emancipatory Imaginations, ACUS Winter School 2019



I
A 'radical' re/reading of the *Mandela* institutional identity and values that allows the university to see itself clearly (a critical ontology of ourselves) as the basis on which to further shape *the transformative, responsive university*.

II
Social embeddedness and convergence and its implications for our ongoing becoming and re/formations of our professional selves to align better with our shared vision of the university.

III
Productive relationalities and solidarities across the university rooted in the idea of an integrated and interactive network of staff, students and society oriented towards the expansion of human capabilities.

IV
Leveraging university expertise, from the work directly embedded in people's daily struggles for survival to our top-notch scientific and engineering innovations, in service of society to co-create a sustainable, socially just world.

V
The conceptual and programmatic coupling of *engagement and transformation* – an interplay that argues for quickening the pace of deep transformation to further unburden the university's engagement potential *and to drive catalytic engagement projects and programme that advances the transformation of the University*.

The ETP aims to produce proactive, agenda-setting research outputs in the following thematic areas: Key research themes in the portfolio are Higher Education Transformation, Decolonisation, Youth Unemployment, Non-racialism and Democracy, HIV & AIDS, Women and Gender, Community Education, TVET, and Convergence. Indicators of the achievement of this goal are multiples forms of outputs including books, book chapters, and journal publications; colloquiums, webinars, seminars, public lectures and book festivals; and successful supervision of postgraduates.

The portfolio aims to "leverage the expertise of the HEAVA appointees and research associates for postgraduate student supervision, co-authoring of publications and joint applications for external grant funding" to grow the research capacity of its research entities. CriSHET remains a model of a proactive approach to recruiting and retaining diverse HEAVAs and research associates within Higher Education Transformation, Critical University Studies and other related fields who produce substantial numbers of research outputs, provide supervision expertise, collaborate on network-building and present expertise in the form of seminars and public lectures.

III. WHAT ARE OUR GOALS?

The portfolio, and its work, is a key 'architectural' or 'design' expression of Vision 2030; and the 'new' direction of the university. It is facilitative and coordinative 'mechanism' is to stimulate and activate existing resources across the university's divisions to advance the idea of a transformative, responsive university.

The ETP's commitment to co-constructing a University in service to society is based on three tenets:

Strong postdoctoral and postgraduate cohorts and good relationships with HEAVAs and RAs are essential to producing research subsidy for sustainability. Essential here, however, is to pursue external funding for collaborative, interdisciplinary projects within the ETP and across institutional entities. The entities in the portfolio have already shown capacity to conceptualise such projects and attract funding, such as the CYUEE's work with the merSETAs, CriSHET's NRF-funded project on Critical University Studies, and the NRF-funded SARCHI Chair in African Feminist Imaginations.

The ETP offers a number of Short Learning Programmes (SLPs). These include SLPs on GBV for First Responders, the Solidarity Economy with a specific focus on co-operatives, community-based research, and Higher Education Transformation professionalisation. The Engagement Office is also involved in the administrative side of SLPs and is embarking on a process to modify the ITS SLP administrative procedures to accommodate the stackable credentials proposed. 2023 should also see the launch of the Women's Leadership Programme in collaboration with the Faculty of Humanities.

A

We believe that, in order to provide a diverse range of life-changing experiences for a better world, the University needs to be both socially responsive and socially embedded; to be achieved through institutional transformation.

B

We believe that a critical, engaged scholarship and the transformation of our knowledge project is essential if the University is to pursue impactful research, innovation and internationalisation to promote sustainable futures.

C

We believe that internal and external convergence within and beyond the University will facilitate engagement with all publics in equalising partnerships that advance agency and promote the co-creation of African-purposed solutions.

In order to advance Vision 2030, over the next 5 years, the Portfolio aims to pursue the following goals:

The portfolio has a number of distinct areas of scholarship, aligned with transformation imperatives: gender studies, community and worker education, TVET, Critical University Studies, Higher Education Transformation, HIV & AIDS.

Support, through the orientation of the transformative-responsive university, the national and institutional developments to advance the science, technology and innovation system; promote transdisciplinarity; and further the revitalisation of the humanities.

Advance the scholarship and praxes of an engaged, transformative university - locally responsive, nationally active, regionally alive, and globally aware - to advance the social value of research and learning and teaching.

Align engagement and transformation with the vision and strategic priorities of the University; including oversight of the institutional transformation plan and the engagement strategy and philosophy.

Embed engagement and transformation across the University's portfolios for socio- economic impact and in the interest of the public good.

**IN THE
SERVICE
OF SOCIETY**

**CO-CREATE A
SUSTAINABLE,
SOCIALLY JUST WORLD**

Provide transformative, lifelong learning experiences that liberate human potential

Pursue impactful research, innovation & internationalisation to promote sustainable futures

Engage with all publics in equalising partnerships that advance agency & promote the co-creation of African-purposed solutions

Cultivate socially conscious, globally connected citizens who serve the public good

Contribute to changing the world through discovery, scholarship & innovation

Foster a more equal, inclusive & just society through action & stewardship

Lead creative and innovative engagement and transformation projects; positioning Nelson Mandela University strategically within the national and global higher education sector.

IV. HOW ARE WE ORGANISED & WHAT DO WE DO?

The Portfolio consists of the following entities, Research Chairs, and programmes whose activities aim to dynamise and embed engagement and transformation praxes across the University's functional areas. The current structure and components of the ETP are provided in the organogram below.

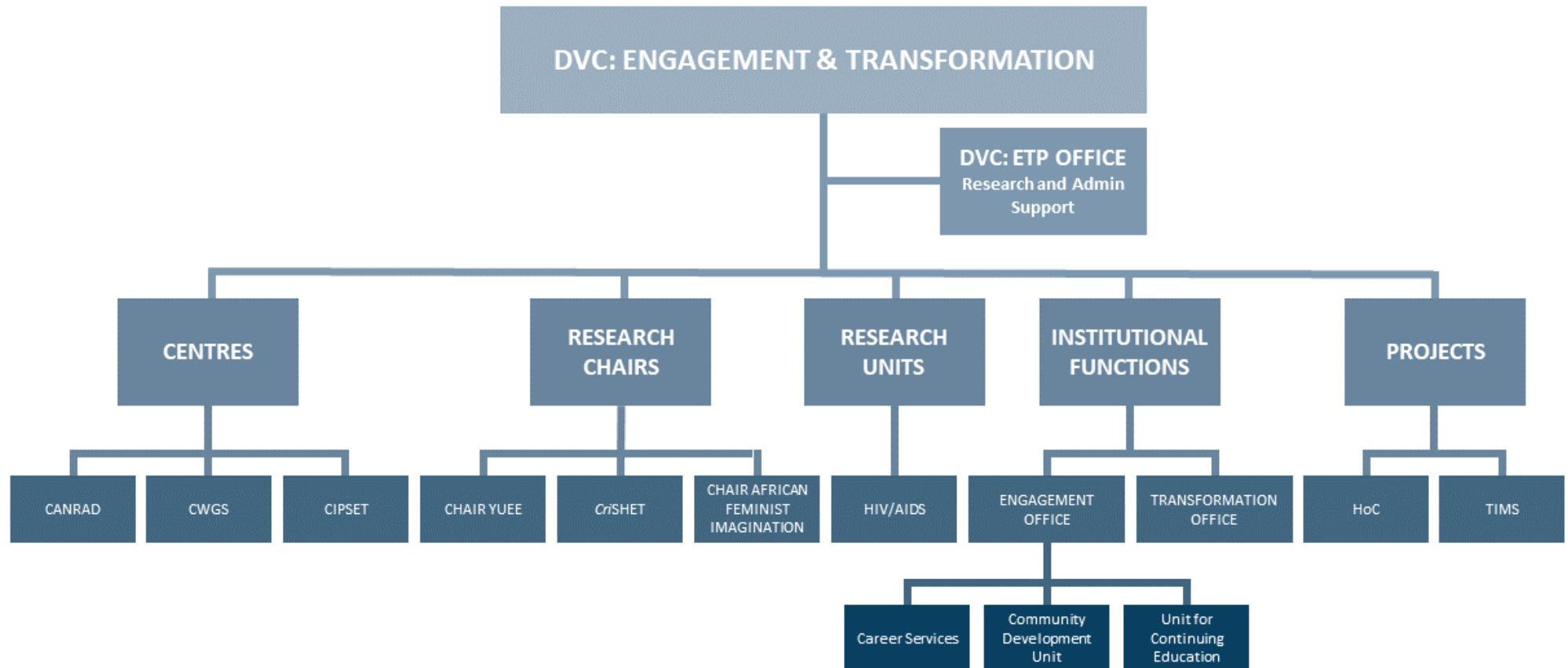


Figure c. Engagement & Transformation Portfolio: Organogram.

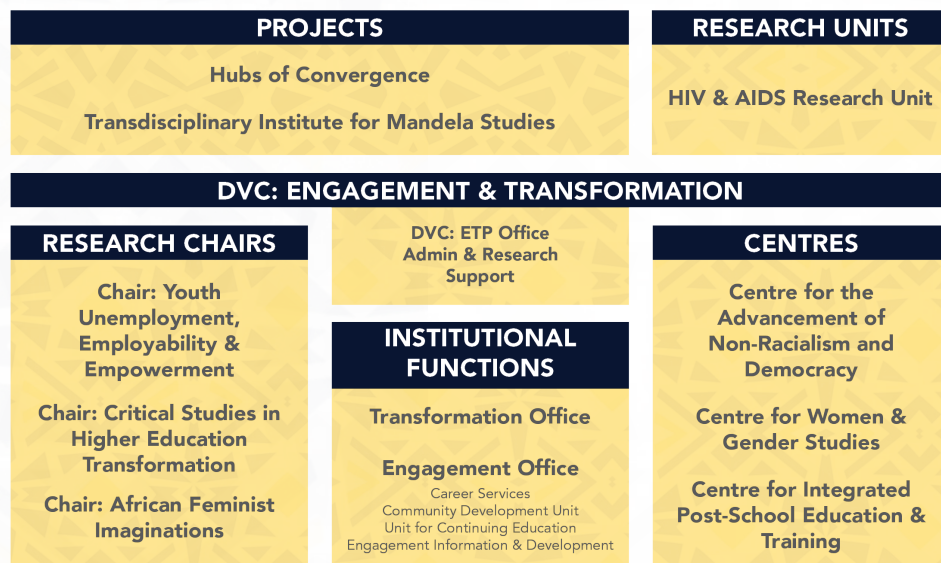


Figure d. ETP Programmes, Entities & Research Chairs.

The Portfolio houses a number of new and established centres.

The Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD) pursues transformation towards a new non-racial and democratic social and economic order. In 2021 they celebrated their ten-year anniversary with a conference entitled “The State We’re In: Democracy’s Fractures, Fixes and Futures”. The breadth and depth of this conference illustrated the footprint of the Centre and the deep significance of its work.

The Centre for Women and Gender Studies (CWGS), established in 2019, works towards building an inclusive ‘gender agenda’ informed by the broader transformation project of the University towards a more human and equal society, with a particular focus on unearthing African women’s intellectual histories. Their work draws on international connections, but has a specific focus on establishing an Eastern Cape ‘gender corridor’. The Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training (CIPSET) focuses on transformative educational praxis in the field of community, adult, and worker education, with particular focus on TVET college education. It also coordinates some important work on solidarity economies and food sovereignty.

Central to the institutional function of the portfolio are the Transformation Office and the Engagement Office.

The work of the Transformation Office is to advance the transformation work in the University and includes the renewal of the University’s equality policy regime, their advocacy work on social inclusion, and their oversight of discrimination and gender-based violence complaints in the University.

The Engagement Office oversees various units (Career Services, the Community Development Unit and the Unit for Continuing Education) and is a vital cog in the University’s machinery to not only reimagine and renew its engagement impetus, but to do so against the backdrop of furthering engaged scholarship.

The Hubs of Convergence (HoC) project is the practical manifestation of the University’s commitment to reimagining engagement, and serves as a hub for various converged initiatives with community-stakeholders. It will be repositioned within the Engagement Office.

There are also a number of research chairs, driving research in various specialised areas.

The Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CrSHET) serves as strategic support for the transformation mandate of the University. It furthers research in the field of Critical University Studies and other alternative approaches to studying the University.

The Chair for Youth Unemployment, Employability and Empowerment (CYUEE) works to establish Mandela University as a leader in cutting-edge and engaged research in skills and livelihoods. It is also involved in driving the mandate of the TVET working group across faculties, entities, and divisions.

The portfolio “invest[s] in the attraction, development and retention of socially diverse, research active postgraduate students, post-doctoral fellows and early career academics to promote talent continuity, research productivity and academic excellence”. This takes the form of increasing the research capacity of research entities within the portfolio through the hosting of national and inter-national postdoctoral fellows and growing a diverse cohort of post-graduate students in collaboration with faculties in the key research areas of the ETP.

The DSI-NRF SARCHI Chair in African Feminist Imaginations is housed under the CWGS and is designed to study the creative arts (literature, visual arts, film, theatre, dance, music), popular culture, and other expressions of African feminist energies while expanding African feminist theory and scholarship and training future generations of African feminist scholars.

Exploring a Mandela academic posture and identity within the renamed University also falls within the ambit of the ETP. As such, the Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies (TIMS) has been established in close collaboration with the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF), which is the primary custodian of the *Mandela* legacy. TIMS is intended to drive the University's pursuit of becoming the pre-eminent academic expression of *Mandela*, and has hosted a variety workshops and events over the past two years.

The HIV & AIDS Research Unit works on educational resources, publications and advocacy with the aim of contributing to positive social behavioural change regarding the perceptions, discrimination and stigma related to HIV & AIDS and related challenges in South Africa. They also work on anti-GBV advocacy.

The ETP coordinates working groups with members from across the University: the Equality Working Group, the Universal Access Working Group, the Gender Transformation Working Group, the TVET Convergence Working Group, the Institutional Culture Working Group, and the Food Systems Working Group. These working groups are facilitative spaces to allow for the sharing of ideas in relation to university transformation in the areas of equality, universal access, gender, institutional culture, and engagement; in order to embed transformative ideals across the institution. The Engagement Forum will soon be established, and the Working Group on Decolonising the University/Curriculum will take shape in 2022.

WORKING GROUPS / COMMUNITIES OF PRAXES

Institutional Culture Working Group

Gender Transformation Strategy Working Group

Equality Working Group

Universal Access Working Group

Food Systems Working Group

Engagement Forum
- Faculties, Entities, Divisions and Communities / Stakeholders
e.g. BES (E&T Committee)

TVET Coordinating mechanism / TVET Convergence Working Group

Decolonising the University / Decolonising Knowledge Working Group

COVID-19 Coordinating Committee (CCC)

Hubs of Convergence (HoC)

Figure e. ETP Working Groups & Communities of Praxes.



In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the University established a COVID-19 Coordinating Committee (CCC) chaired by the DVC: Engagement and Transformation. This committee coordinates the University's external response to the pandemic, including the ETP's Community Convergence Workstream, which initiated various projects that are now located within the HoC.

Over the past two years the ETP entities, projects and programmes have worked to establish new and revitalised affiliations, systems of working and means of accountability. Together, they represent a wide range of expertise, knowledge and approaches to research and praxis, but with a shared commitment to building a transformative, responsive university.

V. COMPLEMENTARY INSTITUTIONAL STEERING MECHANISMS

The University's 2019 organisational redesign process allowed its architectures to align with its recalibrated strategic goals; and with the emerging strategic priorities of Vision 2030. Through clustering existing and new programmes, units and entities, the executive portfolio of Engagement and Transformation was established.

This 'new' portfolio co-constructs the stage for a reimagined understanding of the *university*; its relationality and responsibility to the complex contexts in which it manifests and resides.

The four-part complement of institutional portfolios, in a vast number of ways, diverge and coalesce. The reality of multiple sites of engagement, multiple agencies and communities – compounded with multiple outcomes at multiple levels – no doubt find root in the multiplicity of causal strands and non-linearity of an operational and sustainable institution.

Through the many collaborative efforts towards a shared vision, the myriad of knowledges and methodologies among roleplayers within the University are woven together. The Engagement and Transformation Portfolio works integratively with the institutions other portfolios – *Learning & Teaching*; *Research, Innovation and Internationalisation*; and *People & Operations* – to advance the University's responsive, transformative imperatives.

Learning & Teaching

To realise Mandela University's goal to be a dynamic African university that responds to local, national and global requirements, the Learning & Teaching Portfolio endorses the continued focus on transformation within the University. In particular, in curriculum renewal, pedagogy, assessment, and the creation of a learning environment that is conducive to teaching and learning, and which supports and enables student success "for life and work".

Its faculties have contributed immensely to curriculum transformation and the decolonisation of higher education through its academic and intellectual project. The approach of the L&T has been to engage in interdisciplinary curriculum conversations, which provide guidance and inspiration for the decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum. Further, the Decolonial Project is being interrogated by all faculties, to develop a unique approach which could enlarge and diversify the knowledge sources of the various disciplines. This is in order to offer a multifaceted curriculum that is grounded in local and global contexts, and represents a diversity of philosophical and ideological orientations and worldviews.

At Mandela University, L&T has embraced the philosophy and praxis of a humanising pedagogy, as the portfolio believes it addresses, underpins and advances the purpose and manner in which it cultivates our humanness, the ways in which we are best able to learn, and critical ways in which we seek to put our learning to use.

Research, Innovation & Internationalisation

The Research, Innovation & Internationalisation portfolio aims to create and sustain an environment that encourages, supports and rewards a vibrant research, scholarship and innovation culture. The RII portfolio comprises of several divisions:

The Research Management division boasts a number of Research Chairs which endeavour to pursue key institutional research themes, notably: *Ocean & Coastal Sciences; Social Justice & Democracy; Environmental Stewardship & Sustainable Livelihoods; Innovation & the Digital Economy; Origins, Culture, Heritage & Memory; and Humanising Pedagogies.*

RII's Office for Research Development contributes to an enabling environment for research by supporting emerging researchers, facilitating all aspects of postgraduate student funding and offering development programmes for staff and postgraduate students. It further offers training and consultation for statistical needs of researchers, and manages ethics processes at the institution.

The International Office is the first port of call for international students, from the time they express interest to study at Mandela University, to seeking support and assistance with any aspect of their academic or residential life when they commence with their studies. It, together with the rest of the university, is responsible for the implementation of the Internationalisation Strategy and the expansion of Nelson Mandela University's African and global footprint.

The Innovation Office is committed to changing the world by actively driving innovation in our city, region and nation. It aims to nurture innovation, foster creativity, embrace technology, and develop people to meet the challenges of the world of tomorrow. It assists researchers with innovation support and technology transfer.

The Library and Information Services division aims to facilitate access to quality information resources and services for excellence in research, teaching and learning and to provide physical and virtual spaces to the University community.

People & Operations

The architectures of Institutional Support are dispersed across the University's campuses, both in Gqeberha and George. The portfolio comprises of several key divisions that are crucial to the functioning of the University on multiple fronts.

The Communication & Marketing Department provides a range of services aimed at enhancing the University's strategic position. It is largely responsible for *positioning* the University in the Higher Education sector as well as to create, maintain and co-ordinate the ways in which the Mandela University name is showcased.

The University's ICT Services further navigates the digital and technological space, providing support through accessible Helpdesk services for both staff and student cohorts. Beyond this, its division provides capacities for printed academic material of functional quality through the design and typesetting capacities offered.

Mandela University's Human Resource Directorate provides a crucial nexus for the University's staff. HRD aims to become a centre of excellence by providing leading HR solutions; complementing the institution's broader Support Services.

The department of Support Services provides essential facilities and services to support the core business of teaching and learning, and the creation of an exceptional living and learning experience on all campuses. Its services extend to health and safety, as well as catering, cleaning and commercial services, and postal services.

Infrastructure Services division works to provide Mandela University stakeholders with the best teaching and working facilities by optimally utilising existing facilities; and to provide new infrastructure and upgrade facilities in line with the sustainable principles.

The George Campus focuses on becoming a world-class knowledge catalyst for a green economy and a more sustainable future and plans to realise this through cutting-edge research and engagement, quality teaching and learning; as well as competitive innovation and entrepreneurship.

The Missionvale, Bird Street, and Second Avenue Campuses fall under the ambit of this portfolio. The multi-campus structure enables the University to be closely involved with, and geographically closer to, the communities it serves. Its close proximities allows for academic development partnerships and engagement with colleges, schools, civil society, and more.

VI. COORDINATIVE, FACILITATIVE FUNCTION OF ETP

Engagement and transformation efforts span across Mandela University and its networks – working groups and communities of practice create corridors of knowledge and skills transfers between faculties, disciplines, campuses and modes of working. Transdisciplinary collaborative efforts in the form of engaged research and teaching projects, as well as service and support relationships with our community-stakeholders, enrich our transformative and responsive University. Expertise from across the institution demonstrates its dynamic and diverse ability to respond to the critical challenges of our time.

The ETP serves a substantial coordination and facilitation role within the institution, co-travelling with the University's seven faculties in a wide variety of projects, programmes and other activities. A number of engagement entities are situated, and function, within faculties across seven campuses. Institutional and faculty research themes and engagement activities form the basis for the creation of entities, with the aim of encouraging interdepartmental and inter-faculty collaboration, thereby enhancing research and engagement relevance and excellence.

Faculty of Humanities

Faculty of Education

Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Technology

Faculty of Law

Faculty of Health Sciences

Faculty of Science

Faculty of Business and Economic Sciences

VII. TRANSVERSAL ENGAGEMENT ENTITIES

Engagement entities are intended to develop and strengthen existing engagement and scholarly activities through the advancement of mutually beneficial partnerships with external communities that are consistent with the University's strategic direction and priorities. Activities enrich the educational environment of staff and students, the curriculum and the scholarly activities of the University. Engagement entities are spread across the university's faculties and campuses, with many housed under key departments and schools, and form part of the University's broader engagement activities within the local community and beyond. The below entities are faculty-situated, and are registered with the Engagement Office. Engagement activities fall within the following categories of the University's Engagement Conceptual Framework:

- Community Interaction, Service and Outreach;
- Professional/Discipline-Based Service;
- Teaching and Learning; and
- Research and Scholarship.

Centre for Law in Action (CLA)

Advanced Mechatronic Technology Centre (AMTC)

Southern Africa Cisco Academy Support Centre (SACASC)

University Psychology Clinic (UCLIN)

InnoVenton

Unit for Biokinetics and Sport Science (UBSS)

Centre for Community School (CCS)

Govan Mbeki Maths Development Centre (GMMDC)

Marine Robotics Unit (MRU)

Labour and Social Security Law Unit (LSSLU)

South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI)

eNtsa

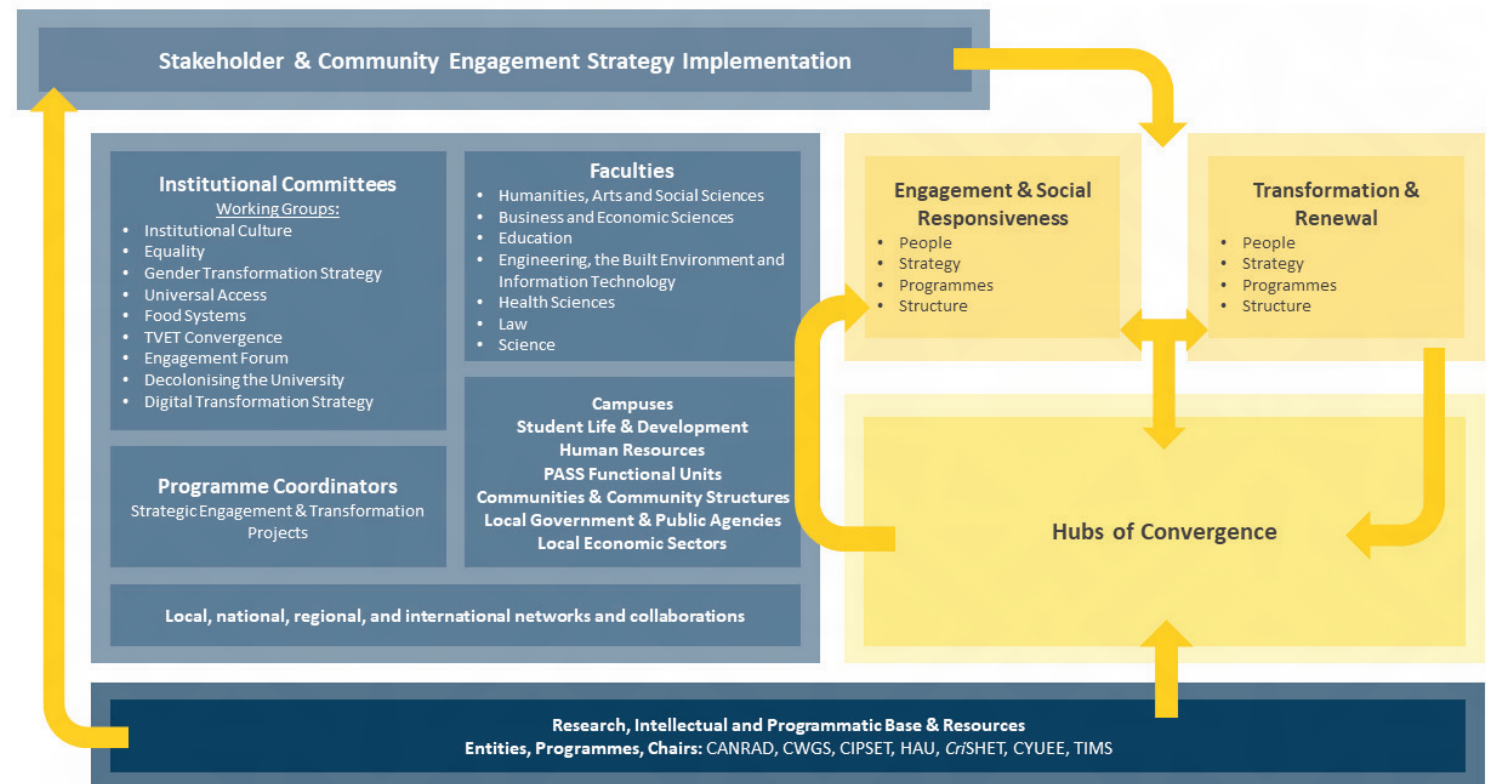
VIII. HOW DO WE WORK?

Entities, Chairs, Programmes (TO & EO) and Working Groups are networked into engagement & social responsiveness and transformation and renewal, as per the diagram.

Although there are diverse thematic and scholarly areas at play, the feedback into the model is pivotal.

With the emphasis on the feedback model and the key function of the ETP being a facilitative and coordinative 'mechanism' to stimulate and activate existing resources across the University's divisions to advance the idea of a transformative, responsive university. A baseline-study to determine ETP engagement projects involving collaboration within the portfolio and across faculties was undertaken in support of the ETP Strategic Plan.

The findings of this baseline mapping study is available here.



"We thus regard responsiveness as that which responds to the needs of communities as articulated by themselves; and co-constructed with universities. But, to be able to 'hear' these articulations in their authenticity requires deep institutional transformations within the university and its academy – hence our proposition of the transformative, responsive university. We argue that, for a university to have the dexterity and capacity to be civic and responsive, it has to strive to be a transformative university; and that the transformative university will develop a more productive capacity for responsiveness. If this principal predisposition (of an institution prepared to step back from itself, so that it sees itself clearly) is accepted, even if at face value, we should then be deliberate about marshalling our thoughts and efforts to ensure that the catalysing precondition for responsiveness is further explored and nurtured."

Four organising principles of working, Strategic and Programmatic Invitations

Organising Principles

1.

The transformative, responsive university acknowledges itself as steered by a modern-colonial imaginary that is deeply implicated in the inequalities of the local and the global.

2.

To challenge this imaginary is to unravel assemblages⁸ (undoing the academic self) and thereby changing the character of the university through a critical ontology of itself.

3.

In order to engage with the academic self, the transformative, responsive university is rooted in an interrogating self-reflexivity; which is associated with three premises⁹: the *university as plastic*; the *university as porous*; the *university as placed*.

4.

The transformative, responsive university aligns with plural conceptions of social justice. In a sense, the notion of social justice is intrinsically connected to our idea of the transformative, responsive university within which these four iterative principles can find practical expression.

Strategic Invitations

Knowledge Democracy - epistemic freedom and equality, university-society (knowledge nexus) – which steer engagement philosophy

Convergence Praxes – experimentations on the porous, responsive university; work with and in ‘real communities’

Social Justice & Social Solidarity – recognitive justice within and beyond university, and within ourselves (challenging racism, sexism, ableism, discrimination, everyday fascisms and dogmatisms, etc.)

Intimate scholarly, practical, affective and emotional connection with social suffering (disaffiliation, poverty, inequality, exclusion, discrimination, violence and crime, corruption and leadership dysfunction, and so on)

Programmatic work – robust, elegant and intelligent, rooted in rigorous scholarship; and collaborative praxes

Social Justice and the question of digital transformation

Programmatic Invitations

A critical ontology of ourselves ... Who are we actually? How do we really work? What are the implications and consequences of our work, our styles, our ambitions, our egos? Do we know ourselves: the mental templates, the assumptions, our working self-image ... colonial habit of being that makes us deeply invested in the privileges of the university as it is.

Tangible connections with communities and stakeholders/ not as engagement projects, but as an inner orientation

An integrated university machinery and eco-system ... unburdening its latent resources / across the academic and operations divisions ... shared parameters of the ‘public good’

Further advancing a vibrant, critical intellectual culture across the various sciences

Build internal social solidarities and relationalities ... for a more productive authentic outward reach

Perpetual redesigns ... building transformation and engagement architectures, praxis and communities of practice; and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms

A collectively developed strategic direction, folded into Vision 2030

‘Smart’, flexible coordination and facilitation processes and practices within and beyond the university

Deployment of engagement and transformation technologies

V2030 - Strategic Focus Areas

1.

Liberate human potential through humanising, innovative lifelong learning experiences that prepare graduates to be socially conscious, responsible global citizens who serve the public good.

2.

Pursue impactful, pioneering research, innovation and internationalisation to address grand societal challenges and promote sustainable futures.

ETP Goals

1.

Advancing the scholarship and praxes of an engaged, transformative university - locally responsive, nationally active, regionally alive, and globally aware - to advance the social value of research and learning and teaching.

South Campus, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha

Objectives / Milestones (2021-2025)

To grow strong, measurable, intellectual and programmatic cultures to facilitate conditions that can liberate human potential and advance the social value of research by:

- Steering, intellectually and pragmatically, discussions, research and debates around the meanings and praxes of engagement and transformation.
- Facilitating platforms and interventions to innovate institutional engagement and transformation praxes.
- Guiding the expansion of engagement and transformation praxes and interventions within the contexts of the local, national, regional, and global interconnectedness of the university.
- Overseeing the development of a culture of scholarship as an intellectual resource base that buttresses the engagement and transformation approaches and programmes of the University.
- Initiating projects that build the relationships between engagement, transformation and research and learning and teaching excellence.

Activities (2021-2025)

As per the strategic plans of programmes and entities and inclusive of:

- Seminars and discussions across the programmes and entities.
- Postgraduate activities across the university.
- Executing research projects around the idea of 'social value' of research.
- Dissemination of research reports; by animating the intellectual environment.
- Social justice related research programmes.
- Expansion of scholarship of engagement.
- Colloquia, indabas and winter/summer schools.
- Furthering projects the number of projects that build the relationships between engagement, transformation and research and learning and teaching excellence.
- Document work for reflexive and research purposes.
- Incubate 'special projects'.

V2030 - Strategic Focus Area

3.

Engage with all publics in equalising partnerships to co-create transformative, contextually responsive solutions in pursuit of social justice and equality.

ETP Goals

2.

Aligning engagement and transformation with the vision and strategic priorities of the University; including oversight of the institutional transformation plan and the engagement strategy and philosophy.

3.

Embedding engagement and transformation across the University's portfolios for socio-economic impact and in the interest of the public good.

4.

Leading creative and innovative engagement and transformation projects; positioning Nelson Mandela University strategically within the national and global higher education sector.

Objectives / Milestones (2021-2025)

To shape, collaboratively, the idea of a civic, socially embeddedness university that is immersed in society by:

- Overseeing the cultivation of links between engagement, transformation, and local socio-economic development from a variety of paradigms and approaches.
- Facilitating, flexibly and creatively, the development and implementation of a range of engagement approaches within the context of the triple helix model (university, business, and government); the added fourth (media- and culture-based publics and the enlarged fifth (society and natural environment) helix.
- Facilitating interconnections with the various academic and non-academic portfolios to broaden and deepen community engagement as a defining representation of the University's strategy.
- Leading the further integration and embeddedness of engagement and transformation as core functions of the learning and teaching and research activities of the university.

Activities (2021-2025)

As per the strategic plans of programmes and entities and inclusive of:

- Project co-created with communities; and within which communities play the central roles.
- Programmes that demonstrate the ideals of equalizing partnership.
- 'Real work' in and with communities, industry, the state, etc.
- Growing the energy and functionality of the working groups.
- Initiatives to foster university-wide ownership of the ITP and engagement strategy and philosophy.
- Hosting of and participation in key colloquia.
- Publication and research outputs related to social justice and equality.
- Reporting of activities to key internal and external stakeholders.

V2030 - Strategic Focus Area

4.

Catalyse dynamic, student centric approaches and practices that provide life-changing student experiences within and beyond the classroom

ETP Goals

1.

Advancing the scholarship and praxes of an engaged, transformative university - locally responsive, nationally active, regionally alive, and globally aware - to advance the social value of research and learning and teaching.

2.

Aligning engagement and transformation with the vision and strategic priorities of the University; including oversight of the institutional transformation plan and the engagement strategy and philosophy.

3.

Embedding engagement and transformation across the University's portfolios for socio-economic impact and in the interest of the public good.

4.

Leading creative and innovative engagement and transformation projects; positioning Nelson Mandela University strategically within the national and global higher education sector.

5.

Support, through the orientation of the transformative-responsive university, the national and institutional developments to advance the science, technology and innovation system; promote transdisciplinarity; and further the revitalisation of the humanities.

Objectives / Milestones (2021-2025)

To, in all programmes and activities, advance student-centric approaches by:

- Deliberate collaborations and projects with student life and development.
- Opening up spaces for students and staff to participate in the work of the portfolio and its programmes and entities.
- To mobilise community assets through our students for the better immersion of the university in society.
- Establishing working relations with student associations.
- Adapting and improving on activity and process flow to best serve the needs of students in key units.
- Improving student participation and use of services in key units.
- Identifying and facilitating work integrated and service learning opportunities to enhance the readiness of graduates.
- Expansion of advocacy, awareness and training activities.
- Advancement of transdisciplinarity across portfolios, and divisions.
- Collectively implement projects to advance the University's science, technology, and innovation systems, pursuing transdisciplinary efforts, and the revitalisation of the Humanities.

Activities (2021-2025)

As per the strategic plans of programmes and entities and inclusive of:

- Inclusion of student voices in programmatic and intellectual work (book projects, student journals).
- Student-oriented advocacy programmes to promote equality.
- Grow student and ETP capacity through research assistant and intern appointments.
- Initiatives to expand student involvement in working groups and other institutional bodies.
- Promotion of student success through work-to-learn and graduate placements.
- Maintain involvement in key committees.
- Introduce required interventions to improve student centredness and service provision.
- Maintain and develop new partnerships with external partners.
- Development and implementation of various projects within several divisions in People & Operations.

IX. FORWARD-THINKING BIG-IDEAS

The Engagement and Transformation Portfolio held a strategic workshop which sought to review and discuss: i) strategic priorities; ii) programmatic work; iii) strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats; and iv) working cultures, communication, reporting and linkages. From these discussion a number of 'big ideas' emerged that illustrate potential avenues of interrogation and practice, building on the existing relationalities and imperatives within and outside of the University. The following conceptions were developed.

1) A collaborative project that focuses on social fractures (patriarchy, racism, xenophobia). Such a project attends to the need for education inside and outside university in response to the ever-increasing violence in civil society and the rise in xenophobia.

2) The opportunity to unpack needs associated with discourses and interrogation into how we understand skills and livelihoods; with relevance to communities and TVET colleges.

3) Bolstering existing community wellbeing work through improved efforts towards equalising access to health and wellbeing, through robust community engagements.

4) The Medical School and Ocean Sciences Campus offer unique potential 'case studies' of a Mandela University-borne exhibit.

5) A deep interrogation into themes of 'disengagement' within the University and its communities, by unpacking the complexities of why and how disengagement manifests and informs the work that is currently underway.

6) Through the engagement mandate, there exists the potential for developing a community engagement model that seeks to address the challenge of articulation of qualifications and recognition of prior learning (RPL) at Mandela University.

7) The establishment of a proposed think-tank which produces alternative research methodologies that could produce immediate results; with a focus on heterodox economic theory working in food, energy, health and water, where Chair(s) would conduct grassroots research with communities.

8) Integrating the proposed catalytic projects (such as the Greenhouse Project, Community Kitchens and Student Hunger) could become a basis to support some of the work ETP entities are doing.

9) A bolstered drive to understand trauma and its complex manifestations and implications, and how this could inform the re-orientation of the University and its purpose and further inform scholarship and praxis going forward.



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Change the World

**PO Box 77000,
Nelson Mandela University
Gqeberha, 6031**

info@mandela.ac.za



mandela.ac.za