

DIRECTIVE: RECOGNITION OF STUDENT ORGANISATIONS AND STRUCTURES

1. PREAMBLE

The University of South Africa (UNISA) is a public higher education institution that offers its qualifications through open distance learning. As part of its development of students it supports and recognises the role and function of student organisations in student governance within UNISA. This directive serves the UNISA objectives as outlined in its 2015 Strategic Plan – An Agenda for Transformation and is particularly informed by the following:

- 1.1. The Constitution of the Students' Representative Council recognises the existence of student organisations. These organisations will cooperate with the SRC on general student matters.
- 1.2. The broader participation of students in the activities of the University which is necessary for the improvement of its services and transformation of the institution in general.
- 1.3. The nature of a distance learning institution is a challenge for the general student population to participate in Student Representative Council (SRC) activities and to hold it accountable on general student matters. The existence of student organisations serves as one of the key platforms from which the SRC can seek a mandate and ensure accountability to its constituency.
- 1.4. There is a growing number of young and non working students who require the support of the institution to organise themselves for activities that can enhance their development.
- 1.5. Participation of students in matters of the University improves the relationship between students and various departments of UNISA.

2. DEFINITIONS

Student organisation	refers to an organisation that is established by external persons/entities and that is recognised by the SRC subject to the SRC Constitution and other policies.
Student structures	refer to internal student related structures that are recognised by the SRC subject to the SRC Constitution and other policies.

3. DIRECTIVE OBJECTIVES

This directive has the following objectives:

- 3.1 To create a procedure and system through which students can establish and affiliate their organisations to the SRC.
- 3.2 To provide a framework through which a relationship between the SRC and the recognised student organisations can be regulated and support provided.

- 3.3 To encourage and support the establishment of student organisations to strengthen student governance.

4. PRINCIPLES

This directive is informed by the following principles:

- 4.1 All student organisations are given equal status.
- 4.2 A student organisation that is affected by a decision should be consulted.
- 4.3 Both the SRC and student organisations are accountable to the general student body.
- 4.4 The relationship between the SRC and student organisations is on a basis of goodwill.
- 4.5 The SRC and student organisations work towards the improvement of academic support and quality services.
- 4.6 The SRC with the assistance of student organisations strive for the democratisation of student governance within UNISA.
- 4.7 The SRC and student organisations have an open and honest working relationship.
- 4.8 All student organisations are student controlled structures, which act in the interests of students and rely upon the active participation of their members.
- 4.9 The SRC is responsible to create opportunities as well as an environment conducive for student organisations to operate.

5. POWERS AND RELATIONSHIP

- 5.1 The SRC is the highest body within student governance and therefore has the powers to regulate applicable activities of recognised student organisations within UNISA.
- 5.2 The SRC is responsible to regulate relationships within student governance in UNISA without compromising the independence of a student organisation.
- 5.3 A student organisation is entitled to define its mission and destination.
- 5.4 Any SRC support to recognised student organisations will not interfere with the operations of such a structure, but support and recognition can be terminated if the organisation contravenes the conditions of recognition.

6. CLASSIFICATION OF STUDENT ORGANISATIONS OR STRUCTURES

For the purpose of the SRC elections, student organisations/structures whose main purpose and existence are for the advancement of the interest of students in relation to the mission and vision of the University.

The following categories of student organisations/structures will be considered for recognition:

- 6.1 College student structures
- 6.2 Student political organisations
- 6.3 Religious student organisations
- 6.4 Cultural, recreational student structures and other relevant organisations.

7. CONDITIONS FOR RECOGNITION

For a student organisation/structure to be recognised, the following substantive conditions should be complied with:

- 7.1 The student organisation's or structure's annual programme concentrates on students enrolled at UNISA.
- 7.2 The independent organisation maintains membership records of not less than fifty UNISA students and a college structure of not less than hundred members.
- 7.3 The organisation/structure has a constitution and policies which are in line with those of the SRC.
- 7.4 The organisation/structure is of such a nature that the continuity of its internal and external activities is sustainable.
- 7.5 The organisation/structure has a proper financial administration system and is able to produce financial reports of its activities annually.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SRC

The SRC is primarily responsible to administer the activities of student organisations/structures and in particular:

- 8.1 receiving and processing applications for recognition and ensuring that only recognised student organisations/structures are allowed to operate within UNISA.
- 8.2 making financial resources and other support mechanisms accessible for the activities of recognised student organisations/structures.
- 8.3 supporting activities of recognised student organisations/structures and ensuring that the Management Committee and relevant departments of the University are supporting student activities.

9. APPLICATION PROCEDURE FOR RECOGNITION

Any student organisation/structure that would like to be recognised in terms of this directive:

- 9.1 applies in writing for recognition to the office of the Secretariat of the NSRC (application period is from 1 January – 31 March every year) and attaching the following documentation:
 - constitution of the student organisation,
 - list of registered members within UNISA,
 - supporting documentation for the conditions listed in paragraph 7 above.
- 9.2 Upon receiving the application the NSRC considers the application and forwards its recommendation to the Director: Student Development for approval. The Director: Student Development informs within a month the SRC and the said student organisation of the outcome of the application.
- 9.3 When the application is approved such a student organisation/structure signs a memorandum of agreement with the SRC containing the conditions and period of recognition.
- 9.4 The SRC maintains record of all applications and its recommendations (including reasons) and provides the Director: Student Development with the data of all the organisations/structures that applied for recognition.

9.5 The Dean of Students deals with appeals from student organisations/structures that appeal in respect of the manner in which the application was dealt with and/or the outcomes of the application.

10. PROVISION OF SUPPORT TO RECOGNISED ORGANISATIONS/STRUCTURES

When a student organisation/structure is recognised, the following criteria will be considered by the SRC for support of the student organisation:

10.1 It must be aligned with the SRC Constitution.

10.2 Focus on transformation, disadvantaged students and communities.

11. STUDENT ORGANISATION/STRUCTURE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Every recognised student organisation/structure has the right to:

11.1 operate freely within UNISA and run activities free from any interference provided that such activities are not prejudicial to the integrity of the SRC and UNISA.

11.2 participate in SRC organised events, University wide and external activities to promote transformation, advance quality of education and represent members' interests.

11.3 have access to financial resources as determined by the applicable University policies and the availability of funds during the recognition period.

11.4 have access to University buildings, infrastructure, equipment, etc as regulated by the policy governing such resources.

11.5 seek approval and permission from UNISA Foundation and Alumni Relations before approaching any external organisation for financial resources to augment its allocations.

12. MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN RESPECT OF RESOURCES

The SRC ensures that all student organisations/structures recognised according to this directive will manage and account for resources as determined by the SRC Finance Policy. Notwithstanding the provisions of such policy, student organisations/structures regulated by this directive will:

12.1 keep record of their financial activities and submit periodic reports as may be required by the SRC,

12.2 adhere to policies of UNISA and of the SRC in respect of the use and management of resources, and

12.3 are expected to make their members accountable for resources provided to such organisations.

12.4 Any failure to comply with paragraphs 12.1, 12.2 and 12.3 above may jeopardise the standing of such organisations/structures.

13. DURATION AND TERMINATION OF RECOGNITION

Where the SRC has a reason to believe that the recognition of a student organisation/structure should be withdrawn, the privileges provided by this directive are terminated by the Director: Student Development on recommendation of the SRC, taking the following into consideration:

- 13.1. Recognition for any student organisation/structure is for one year. It is expected of all student organisations/structures to resubmit applications for recognition annually by the end of the month of July of the year preceding the year for which recognition is applied for. Failure to re-submit an application will be regarded as an automatic termination of recognition.
- 13.2. Where the student organisation/structure deliberately brings the name of the SRC and UNISA into disrepute and does not change its conduct after being alerted by the SRC.
- 13.3. Where the organisation/structure does not comply with the provisions of the SRC to adhere to its requests of accountability and records verifications.

14. DIRECTIVE AMENDMENT

- 14.1 Only the SRC and/or UNISA Management Committee can propose amendments to this directive.
- 14.2 The SRC will present proposed amendments to recognised student organisations/structures for consultation.
- 14.3 All SRC directives and amendments should be recommended by the National Congress to the Management Committee for approval.

