



**Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council
Quarter 1, 2023**

30 March 2023

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1. INTRODUCTION

As a university in the service of society, our core mandate is to provide transformative, lifelong learning experiences that liberate human potential through innovative and student-centred experiences. Part of this is promoting equity of access and opportunities that provide our students with the best chance at success, which is the key theme in this first quarterly report to Council for 2023. This year has already presented challenges such as the difficulties with the provision of a secure supply of water due to persistent drought conditions, as well as energy security challenges caused by loadshedding. In addition, the University has faced student protests over, among other issues, the funding shortfalls, and delayed finalisation of funding decisions, mainly for NSFAS applicants. This report will outline how we are attempting to address these and other challenges while delivering on our mandate.

2. VISION 2030 AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Many great strides have been made over the past five years. Vision 2030 will continue to guide our strategic directions, for the next five years. This period will see the consolidation of our gains in our key strategic areas including Ocean Sciences, the Medical School and revitalising the humanities. The work that continues to define our character as a university in service of society in areas such as transformative engagement, humanising pedagogies, women and gender studies, sustainability science, to name a few, will also continue to receive attention. Following the last strategy session of Council in 2022 which set the tone for the Vice-Chancellor's re-statement lecture, we will, from the Q2 report to Council, outline particular priority projects that we will be focusing on going forward.

2.1. Ocean Sciences

Ocean Sciences is continuing to grow at Mandela University, with a new Science Centre on Ocean Science Campus nearing completion. The installation of a digital dome, currently being manufactured in the United States, is due in the second quarter of 2023. Once the on-site dive tank is complete, the Research Dive Unit will resume offering various diver, swimmer, supervisor and skipper training courses.

The appointment of the new director of the Institute for Coastal and Marine Research (CMR) is in the final stages. The new director's first priority will be to apply for large collaborative research grants to sustain the work of the institute.

Through its FishForce academy, Nelson Mandela University has established itself as a world leader in the training of fisheries law enforcement agencies, and in research and advocacy aimed at combating organised fisheries crime. FishForce has launched an innovative virtual game, for cell phones or computers, that hones the skills of fisheries control officers in bridge inspections.

2.2. Medical School

Developing a functional, high-quality medical programme, supported by a thriving faculty, remains an ongoing strategic priority for the University. It is therefore gratifying that we have received the long-awaited report for the accreditation of up to four years of the six-year medical programme. The Medical School continues to fill new posts to support the delivery of its programme, with the appointment of a Medical Director being a priority.

Demand continues to increase with more than 8 000 applications received for 100 places for this academic year. The 2022 first-year class registered a pass rate of over 97%, while the second-year class achieved a 100% pass rate. This is commendable since, in most medical programmes, the second year is one of the most demanding.

On 15 March, the University received a 22-seater bus as a donation from Bestmed Medical Scheme. This will ensure that students are provided with much-needed transport to engage in practical training at clinics and hospitals in the Metro and throughout the Eastern Cape. This will, in turn, contribute to providing continued access to quality healthcare for marginalised communities.

2.3. Revitalising the Humanities

The Faculty of Humanities deploys its revitalisation as a lens to focus its learning, teaching and scholarship on decolonisation, an Africa-purposed curriculum and transdisciplinarity. To this end, the focus in 2023 will be on the question of how we rethink and redesign our curricula to better reflect the needs, aspirations, and contexts of African societies.

To this end, the first Curriculum Conversation is planned for 27 March, in collaboration with Faculty of Law. It will be anchored by Prof Barney Pityana and Adv Thembeke Ngcukaitobi, both of whom are associates of the University, and will focus on *African Indigenous Jurisprudence*. Furthermore, given the diversity of our students, and the dominance of isiXhosa, the Faculty of Humanities is also pioneering multilingual pedagogies where isiXhosa is used to support effective learning. The goal is to develop an inclusive pedagogic culture by acknowledging and nurturing students' linguistic experiences.

The SARChI Chair on *Identities and Social Cohesion in Africa* (Prof Andrea Hurst) completed its five-year term in 2022 and was renewed for another five years. The faculty has also appointed a Professor in the Centre for Philosophy in Africa who will assume duty on 1 April to provide intellectual leadership to this work.

In collaboration with the South African Human Rights Commission, the social media charter was launched at the University on 14 March. This charter seeks to promote the responsible use of social media platforms. It guides social media users by explaining what is unacceptable as it relates to issues such as harmful expression, defamation, harassment and bullying, and cyberbullying. It further provides the steps a person can take if their rights or the rights of others are violated.

3. DISTINCTIVE EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY THAT CONTRIBUTES TO STUDENT ACCESS FOR SUCCESS

3.1. Readiness for the 2023 Academic Year

Online registration opened on 11 January 2023, which ensured that first-year and returning students were provided with firm offers to register. Student enrolments increased once NSFAS funding statuses were approved in various tranches.

Although the start of lectures and academic administrative processes were slightly delayed by student protests in February, pressing issues affecting students' access to the 2023 academic year (AY2023) were systematically dealt with. The Enrolment Management Committee (EMC) met weekly during the registration period and continuous engagement with student leadership through joint task teams was key in addressing many of the bottlenecks. The interventions of the EMC this quarter have led to fewer enquiries and no on-campus queues as students could register remotely and access online support services.

A delegation of Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) officials visited Mandela University as part of a countrywide oversight visit to universities on 17 February. Our representatives, led by the Registrar, brought various registration challenges to the attention of the DHET delegation, who undertook to follow up with the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, NSFAS and the Department of Home Affairs (for international students) respectively.

After the close of late registrations on 15 March 2023, the University had registered a total of 30 691 students, which is close to the 2023 target of 31 380. Of this, 28 901 are undergraduate students while 2 673 are postgraduate students. The 2023 target for first-time entering students (i.e., those that have registered for the first time at a university) is 7 185 and 6 918 students have enrolled to date.

The AY2023 will be characterised by a responsive mix of campus-based and online learning and teaching (LT) activities along the blended learning continuum. Assessments will largely be proctored in on-campus venues, with some piloting of e-assessments in supervised on-campus and accredited off-campus venues. Quality advancement activities will largely focus on equality of learning experiences across the different LT modes and e-assessment enhancement, ensuring students have access to computers and connectivity so they can engage in online learning activities.

Challenges being attended to include developing a timetable that includes on-campus and virtual classes, finding spaces on campus where students can work on online activities and attend virtual classes, increasing facilities for students to charge devices, and assessing whether wi-fi density is adequate or needs boosting.

3.2. LT Collab

The LT Collab places access for success for both academic staff and students at the centre of all its functions.

Lecturer readiness

Lecturers need opportunities to develop their pedagogic expertise across face-to-face and online delivery modes as part of their continuing professional development. Access to e-technologists, digital coaches and learning experience designers supports lecturers to develop expertise and confidence in digital spaces. Digital hubs in faculties for pre-recording lectures assists lecturers to advance the quality of learning material and experiences. Since many lecturers have not been teaching on campus for three years due to the pandemic, they have been re-orientated to the learning and teaching technologies available in our LT venues. Given increased student: staff ratios, faculties need to monitor the impact of the blended learning approach on workloads and interventions may be needed during the year.

Student readiness

The Learning Development Cluster supports students transitioning from high school to higher education with services that include First-Year Success (FYS), Student Success Coaching (SSC), tutor and mentor training, targeted student support workshops, Supplemental Instruction (SI), and Academic Literacy and Writing Support. Academic support for students from quintile 1-3 schools will be prioritised through the implementation of the Siyaphumelela mentoring project, which was piloted in 2022. The development of multilingual resources, listening to the student voice, and the expanded use of digital platforms and resources are important focus areas over the next five years.

First-Year Orientation

Student orientation started through Pre-Uni Connect, and more than 1 800 members joined the FYS Telegram channel. The VC's Welcome was hosted as a standalone in-person event on South Campus on 4 February, with 1 245 people registered to attend the event and a further 1 675 views on YouTube. The Deans' welcoming addresses and faculty meet-and-greet sessions were held from 31 January to 3 February, on all campuses, for the first time since the pandemic. The introduction of the DigiReady course and app in 2023 will ensure that students are assisted with technology-related challenges.

Student Success Coaching (SSC)

The research focus for the first quarter centred around identifying re-entering students who have less than 100 credits, to facilitate early interventions. The research team will also flag potentially-at-risk first years based on matric results regarding admissions requirements and school quintile grouping.

4. ENGAGED, INNOVATIVE SCHOLARSHIP CULTURE THAT GENERATES KNOWLEDGE RECOGNISED FOR ITS CONTRIBUTION TO SUSTAINABILITY

4.1. Research

The research outputs of our academics and associates have been increasing over the past five years. There are currently 850 entries on the system and online capturing of outputs for the 2022 DHET cycle will close in May 2023.

There has also been a pleasing increase in the number of applications for NRF rating, increasing to 28 in 2023, of which 14 are new, compared to nine in 2022. A total of 46 annual progress and financial reports (APRs) were submitted to the NRF for the established researcher programmes in March. We are pleased to inform Council that the SARChI Chair in Microfluidic and Biochemical Processing (Prof Paul Watts) has been awarded NRF funding for a further five years at Tier 1.

The Faculty of Science successfully hosted the seventh African School of Fundamental Physics and Applications (ASP) in-person at Nelson Mandela University from 28 November to 8 December 2022. Teams of leading physicists from U.S. national laboratories and universities and other institutions across the U.S., Europe, Asia, and Africa introduced more than 70 African graduate students to physics theories, experiments, and technologies. Participants explored the role physics plays in a variety of careers and interacted with educators and policymakers with the goal of broadening interest in science throughout the African continent.

4.2. Postgraduate funding

Nelson Mandela University will be implementing a new postgraduate funding policy in 2023 which seeks to advance social justice and inclusion. Citizenship, gender, and disability are considered in the allocation of funding, with transformation of the postgraduate cohort being the core objective.

As of 3 March 2023, 92 Honours, 260 Masters and 188 Doctoral scholarships were awarded with funding from Council, the National Research Foundation (NRF) and other external funders. This represented a total of 540 awards comprising of 81% Black (African, Coloured, Indian and Asian) and 61% female students. Uptake of the awards is ongoing with 165 (31%) of the 540 scholarships taken up. It is worth mentioning that the number of Honours awards will increase over the next quarter when the NRF is expected to announce Honours scholarship recipients.

The projected investment in postdoctoral and research fellowships for 2023 is R14.8m. The number of fellowships awarded in this quarter was 124 and of these 69% are black while 40% are women. A total of 110 (89%) fellowships have been taken up (as of 3 March 2023) of which 69% were Black and 41% were women. Going forward, it will be important to increase the proportion of women who take up postdoctoral training opportunities.

Postgraduate student and academic staff support

The first postgraduate orientation programme took place from 15-17 March as a hybrid event to enable the participation of part-time and off-campus postgraduate students. The University is committed to transforming the equity profile of academic staff with doctoral degrees and has leveraged funding from the NRF and DHET towards this. There are 14 active Thuthuka grant holders, of whom 93% are black and 69% are women. The Black Academics Advancement Programme (BAAP) currently funds three academics, while the DHET-funded New Generation of Academics Programme (nGAP) cohort at Mandela University consists of 17 Black academics, of whom ten are women. Active recruitment is underway to fill four nGAP vacancies which will increase the cohort to 21.

Research ethics

The customisation of the Mandela Ethics Online System (MEOS) has been completed and a phased approach to introduce and test it is underway. This is an important step towards enhancing the efficiency of ethics review processes, which remains a source of concern for academics.

4.3. International Office

International student enrolments

As of 15 March 2023, 673 international students had enrolled at Mandela University, but these numbers are expected to increase further as master's and doctoral students continue to enrol until the end of April. In addition, 56 study abroad and exchange students from the United States, Germany, France, and Norway were welcomed during the period under review.

Overall numbers of international students have declined over the past five years due to various factors, including delays in issuing study visas. The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has confirmed that it is currently dealing with a high volume of study visa applications but has committed to finalising all pending visa applications by 31 March.

International partnerships

Nelson Mandela University is fostering an increasing number of partnerships on our continent through the African Engagements and Partnership Programme (AEPP). In 2022, the University conducted the first leg of AEPP through a visit to East Africa led by the Vice-Chancellor. In January 2023, there was a follow-up visit to Kenya and Uganda to consolidate and expand relationships with universities in the region. The team facilitated signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with St Paul's University in Kenya and met the Ugandan Management Institute to explore collaborative possibilities.

Work is ongoing to finalise an MoU to facilitate collaboration in indigenous knowledge systems with Great Zimbabwe University, National University of Lesotho, University of KwaZulu-Natal, and Walter Sisulu University. The University is also working on signing MoUs with Ba Isago University, Botswana, and Ghana Institute of Journalism, Ghana.

In February 2023, the Vice-Chancellor led a delegation to the United Kingdom and MoUs were signed with the Universities of Sussex and Southampton respectively. Discussions focused on Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL), co-supervision of master's and doctoral students, implementation of joint degrees, joint research, and the creation of a virtual humanities laboratory.

During this quarter, the University hosted international delegations from the University of Utrecht and Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU), Wuerzburg University and Ostfalia University from Germany, Ostfalia University from Poland, and St Cloud State University from the United States.

The South Africa-Sweden Universities Forum (SASUF) has awarded a Virtual Exchange Grant to Mandela University's Professor Ronney Ncwadi and Dr Palesa Makhetha-Kosi from the University of Fort Hare to partner with their counterparts at two Swedish universities. In addition, Professor Darelle van Greunen and her team represented the University and the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) at the G-STIC Rio Conference in Brazil in February.

4.4. Library and Information Services

The library budget has grown from just under R35m in 2022 to close to R38m for 2023. Electronic resources have become the dominant format of library information resources and more funds have been allocated towards subscriptions and access to electronic resources. There are still obstacles to fair access due to the high cost of academic textbooks. Our stakeholders need to be more proactive in interacting with Open Educational Resources (OERs), which ensure fair access to educational materials.

5. TRANSFORMATIVE INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE THAT PROMOTES DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL COHESION

5.1. Engagement Office

The realignment of the Engagement Office remains a priority, with the Hubs of Convergence and Engagement Office Strategic Projects seeking to develop coherence around the concept of engaged scholarship. The Office supports academics in converting their work into publishable outputs and is collaborating with Bath University to create a video documentary to showcasing their work.

The Indigenous Knowledge Hub pilot project, Khoisan First Nation Programme, in collaboration with EBET, has adopted a programme of action for 2023. It has also met representatives of the House of David Stuurman and the Griqua Nation.

The Zwide Development Forum continues to receive support from the Engagement Office, with a leadership retreat hosted this quarter. The Office is also working with the Dean of Students to support the *New Brighton: Celebrating 120 Years* project.

5.2. Transformation Office

The Transformation Office plans to expand efforts towards promoting equality and social inclusion through advocacy, awareness, and training interventions. The Office also aims to develop a Policy for Inclusive Gender Identities, Expressions, and Sexual Orientation for approval by Council. Related activities planned for 2023 include the Yellow Whistle Campaign during the Campus Life Festival and a Kraal Activation event to advertise Transformation Office services. A Transgender Day of Visibility Awareness will be held on 31 March in partnership with Wits University.

Ongoing advocacy promotes equality-related policies and addresses issues of gender-based violence (GBV), harassment, and discrimination, with several cases reported to the Transformation Office in the first quarter. The Alumni-in-Action@Mandela initiative, started at the University of Cape Town in 2022, was launched at Mandela University on 8 March to fund advanced psychological support for registered GBV survivors.

5.3. Centre for Women and Gender Studies and SARChI Chair for African Feminist Imaginations

In this first quarter, the Centre for Women and Gender Studies (CWGS) and DSI-NRF SARChI Chair for African Feminist Imaginations focused on the gender intellectual project, highlighting books and scholarship around African women's biographies. The Centre and Chair are nearing completion of the Gender Mapping project, which will be used to enhance short learning programme (SLP) offering in gender and facilitate curriculum interventions. The Centre is also running gender clubs in selected schools.

5.4. HIV and AIDS Research Unit

The HIV and AIDS Research Unit has a new research project titled *Exploring the convergence of traditional and orthodox models of managing communicable and non-communicable diseases in selected countries in the South African Development Communities (SADC) region*. The Unit has designed three SLPs, namely HIV & AIDS Curriculum Integration, Workplace Wellness, and Gender-Based Violence. The Unit participated in a workshop organised by the Southern Africa Development, Research and Training Institute (SADRAT) on healing the wounds of manhood and masculinities, as part of the prevention of GBV and femicide.

5.5. CriSHET and TIMS

The Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation (CriSHET) plans to consolidate and deepen the work on student-driven projects revitalised in 2022. The Transdisciplinary Institute for Mandela Studies (TIMS) has welcomed Professor Norman Duncan from the University of Pretoria as a visiting professor. Intra-university discussions around the adoption of the Mandela identity in various fields will be catalysed through an "insights" document of programmatic work over the past few years. CriSHET and TIMS will

continue to strengthen relations with academic networks such as Critical University Studies – South Africa and the Advancing Critical University Studies Across Africa Network.

The Africanisation-Decolonisation Working Group will invite interested University parties to the group to broaden ownership of its work. The *Decolonisation Indaba* in May 2023 will further promote decolonisation and Africanisation within Mandela University.

5.6. CANRAD

Professor Bheki Mngomezulu joined the University as the Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Non-Racialism and Democracy (CANRAD) in January this year. On 28 February 2023, the inaugural Black History Month celebration was held with the seminar topic *“Why is racism still an issue in South Africa after 29 years of democracy?”* On 9 March, CANRAD presented a community dialogue in Bethelsdorp exploring anti-racism, discussing the topic: *“Why is the concept of nonracialism of little use in ongoing struggles for an anti-racist and just South Africa?”* The Centre is also building a relationship with the Nelson Mandela Museum in Mthatha to work together on common interests.

5.7. CYUEE and CIPSET

The Research Chair for Youth Unemployment, Employability and Empowerment (CYUEE) and Centre for Integrated Post-School Education and Training (CIPSET) are reorganising their mandate and focus areas into a combined entity. This is key to developing a funding proposal for the emerging entity that advances a transformative agenda in post-school education and training.

6. ENHANCING STUDENT LIVING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES

6.1. Student Governance and Development

The SRC was inducted on 17 and 18 January 2023. Student Governance and Development has created a platform for student organisations and the SRC to collaborate on common issues in response to start-of-year challenges including student protests, with working task teams established for financial aid, concessions oversight, migration of academic programmes to online platforms, and student housing.

6.2. Student Housing

Student housing has managed to process applications and placements for first-year students. It has also been able to accommodate about 300 unfunded postgraduate students at on-campus residences as well as several undergraduate students. Continuing efforts to assist and accommodate non-funded students in response to demands from the SRC are continuing, and a series of engagements have been held with student representatives in this regard.

6.3. Student wellness

Emthonjeni Student Wellness (ESW) has introduced an online counselling request form, and a standardised triage system across all campuses to provide timely assessment of a student's level of clinical acuity. To further address mental health and wellbeing challenges, ESW has trained off-campus residence leaders on peer-helping skills, to empower them as first responders in a crisis. In February, as part of Reproductive Health Month, Student Health Services (SHS) conducted the First Things First campaign at five campuses, focusing on sexual reproduction, family planning, HIV testing and monitoring non-communicable diseases.

6.4. Madibaz Sport

The University has launched a Campus Sport League in the codes of netball, football and rugby, starting on 23 April and with final matches on 14 October. It is also revitalising the TrimPark around the South Campus student residence block. These initiatives contribute to Vision 2030's strategic goal to promote a vibrant student life through sport and recreation.

In partnership with the Engagement Office, Madibaz Sport is establishing a Madibaz Sport Hub of Convergence to house engagement activities initiated by various sporting codes. Madibaz Sport will also offer self-defence classes and use sporting events to advance our anti-GBV and anti-discrimination messaging. Madibaz Radio will air a 45-minute monthly podcast on this topic.

6.5. Universal Accessibility and Disability Services (UADS)

Senate has approved the Reasonable Accommodations Policy to help level the playing field for students with disabilities. In the 2023 academic year, there are 185 registered students with disabilities, with six first-year students having disclosed a disability. The unit is planning different programmes to facilitate the transition of these first-year students, including a dedicated orientation programme to convey relevant information.

7. ENABLING SYSTEMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE THAT PROMOTE AN EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCE FOR STUDENTS, EMPLOYEES AND KEY STAKEHOLDERS

7.1. Venue readiness, digitalisation, and cybersecurity

A total of 30 large venues have been equipped with technology to enable a hybrid of synchronous online and contact delivery modes, while 15 mobile video-conferencing units will be installed in smaller venues to support blended learning and teaching. The Learning Management System (Moodle) has been upgraded, and users now have access to technical and functional support.

The University ICT network, which now connects to the teaching hospitals Dora Nginza and Livingstone, has a 98.9% uptime, a respectable figure given the effects of loadshedding.

The current focus is on improving off-campus connectivity. Cybersecurity has been designated as a key institutional priority and awareness campaigns are ongoing, with numerous cybersecurity solutions implemented.

7.2. Energy and water

Securing and ensuring a reliable supply of energy and water continues to be an ongoing challenge for the University. Mitigating the impact of loadshedding through a network of generators includes procuring diesel and refuelling at the rate of 3 000 litres per day during stage 6 loadshedding. The energy efficiency plan hopes to enhance the networking of about 95% of critical facilities by remotely monitoring and controlling their on-and-off switches. In addition, the tender for a R65m photovoltaic renewal energy project that will provide 30% of energy consumption of all campuses combined closed on 13 March 2023.

The Metro water supply is rapidly running alarmingly low with Day Zero estimated to be between June and August 2023. Due to its connection to the Nooitgedacht water scheme, Missionvale is the only campus not at risk. Water tanks have been installed on all campuses. However, South Campus remains vulnerable, and two boreholes are being commissioned to ensure that the campus does not run dry.

7.3. Infrastructure projects

Construction of the 1 800-bed new student residence project is nearing completion, with the final 1 000 beds set to be handed over for the 2023 academic year. Construction of the Science Centre on the Ocean Science Campus, which began in November 2021, is expected to be completed by May 2023. Infrastructure Efficiency Grant projects to enhance the digital transformation strategy are collectively funded to the tune of more than R131-million by the DHET.

7.4. Staff appointments and wellness

Over this quarter, the University appointed 52 staff members (16 Academics and 26 PASS) and lost 86 employees (32 academics and 54 PASS). Dr Lynn Biggs was appointed as the new Executive Dean of Law.

In 2022, 684 employees used the Wellness@Work services, a concerning increase of 38% from the number of staff using the service in 2021. Issues ranged from stress and anxiety, to bullying and victimisation in the workplace. Stress-related complaints due to lift entrapment during loadshedding were also reported and are a concern.

7.5. Safety and security

Following an increase in breakages, computer thefts, vandalism and theft of copper pipes and wire at the University, several safety and security interventions are being implemented.

8. ENHANCE LONG-TERM FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH EFFECTIVE RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND RESPONSIBLE RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP

8.1.Strategic Resource Mobilisation and Advancement (SRMA)

The target for bursary fundraising in 2023 to support student access is R95m. Following the recent student protests and the attention this drew to shortfalls in funding for postgraduate diplomas and Honours degrees, the SRMA is increasing its focus on this area in its resource mobilisation activities. University management is addressing this by subsidising accommodation for this cohort to the value of R2.5-million. Assistance will also be extended through the R800 000 pledged by the SRC from the R1.3-million donation from the Motsepe Foundation.

Sectoral challenges include growing policy uncertainty on funding students due to annual changes to the NSFAS eligibility criteria. As of AY2023, students who are studying less than 60 course credits towards their qualification, only qualify for the learning materials allowances. Other areas of concern include the 55% progression rate being applied, up from 50%. In addition, the risk associated with the N+1 rule will escalate as we reach this timeframe for the second cohort of NSFAS bursary students funded since 2019.

NSFAS has also introduced an accommodation cap of R45 000, which is presenting funding challenges across the sector. This has a potential R13-million impact on the University, mainly for new residences commissioned. The University has appealed this decision and it has been taken up by Universities South Africa.

We have recently been given three months' notice that NSFAS will take over direct payment of allowances to NSFAS students. The University is assessing the impact this will have, and actions that will be required. For example, it may affect financing for the laptop initiative, due to be offered to more than 1 200 first-time entering (FTEN) NSFAS students in March.

The DHET has publicly committed to the finalisation of the proposed comprehensive student funding model for the post-school sector which will hopefully be finalised in time for the start of the 2024 academic year. We are engaging NSFAS on proposed changes that will have a negative impact on our student support model, especially with regards to funding students whose average performance is below 60%, our emerging integrated student housing model, and student transportation.

8.2.Short-term financial planning

The subsidy allocation letter from the Minister appears to be in line with the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework budget allocations and Appropriation Bill. This would result in a 0.45% increase on the 2022 block grant subsidy. The fee compact was approved by Council and was settled at 5.1% increase in tuition fees and 7.1% increase in student accommodation fees. However, we cannot expect CPI, let alone real growth increases, in

the mid-term and our most significant streams of funding will be limited. This calls for great care when allocating resources.

8.3. Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE)

The B-BBEE verification for 2021 has been concluded, and the certificate issued on 15 December 2022 with a final score of Level 7 discounted to Level 8. After involvement of a B-BBEE consultant, a re-evaluation is likely to bring our final score near a Level 6, discounted to a level 7. The appeal and re-evaluation are worth the effort as we establish baselines and verify claimable projects. The current certificate expires on 14 December 2023. Executive Management has considered a five-year B-BBEE strategy, which will be tabled before Council as a separate report.

8.4. Long-term financial planning

There are significant pressures on universities nationally and internationally which makes it imperative to always assess the long-term implications of short-term decisions. Under the auspices of the Sustainability and Institutional Viability Task Team (SIVTT), the University is embarking on various sustainability interventions to guide resourcing and investment priorities as we implement our Vision 2030 Strategy. Members of executive management have developed strategic plans which will inform the annual budgeting process at institutional level from 2024 onwards. The three-year financial and cash flow projections in the 2023 Annual Performance Plan will continue to be closely monitored and reported on.

9. CONCLUSION

Despite an unfavourable economic environment and other challenges such as water and electricity crises, Nelson Mandela University is committed to advancing student access for success. We look forward to a productive and successful 2023. On behalf of our management team, we thank Council for its continued guidance and oversight of our work.