

Vaal University of Technology (VUT)

Strategic Plan 2033+

'leading innovation for a digitally-smart industrial transformation'

- Strategic Plan 2020-2024 Reviewed & Consolidated -

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

APP	Annual Performance Plan
CSIR	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
dtic	Department of Trade, Industry and Competition
DVC	Deputy Vice Chancellor
EMF	Extended Management Forum
ESG	Environmental, social and governance
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework
HR	Human Resources
IPAP	Industrial Policy Action Plan
4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
5IR	Fifth Industrial Revolution
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
IT	Information Technology
JOEF	Joint Operations Enhancement Forum
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MANCOM	VUT Executive Management Committee
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NDP 2030	National Development Plan 2030
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
O&L	Operations & Logistics (division)
PMO	Programme Management Office
PG	Post-Graduate
PQM	Programme Qualification Mix
R&D	Research and Development
RIC	Research, Innovation and Commercialisation
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDGs	UN Sustainable Development Goals
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
T&L	Teaching and Learning
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN	United Nations
VUT	Vaal University of Technology

1. Foreword by the Chairperson Council

Among the fortuitous consequences of an otherwise tumultuous and painful history of South Africa, was an advanced industrial state inherited at the dawn of the new democratic era close to thirty years ago. The post-1994 democratic government has sought to build on and further this legacy, now with an expansively benevolent purpose of ensuring that the well-being of all citizens, and not merely a select section of the population, is equitably served.

Over a period spanning at least a century to date, the Vaal region has historically been one of the significant industrial nodes in our country. It is host to industrial hegemony such as ArcelorMittal and Sasol. In addition to these industrial giants, the Vaal could also be claimed to have birthed our present-day Eskom, as well as the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC).

With its prominence and fortunes as an industrial hub having somewhat waned over the past four decades, a decline whose onset preceded the dawn of the post-1994 democratic South Africa, the Vaal region is now set for an ambitious resuscitation through most prominently the establishment of a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), a project led by the IDC on behalf of the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (dtic).

Set to boost the region as a veritable industrial hub converging the ambitions of state, innovators and industry, the designated Vaal SEZ has among others re-inspired the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) to carefully reconsider its utility to the nation's industrial project. This is what lies at the heart of the reconsidered institutional strategy of VUT presented here – the advancement of an innovative, digitally-smart and ethically-grounded techno-industrial state that VUT seeks to be an integral part of as knowledge, research and innovation partner.

Installed in August 2021 at the end of a period of two years during which the university had been placed under the care of an Administrator, the Council of VUT is committed to seeing to it that the institution is strengthened to make its expected contribution to the growth of the Vaal as an industrial innovation zone, this in addition to our primary mission of developing graduates who will contribute to the betterment of society, industry and commerce.

In a process mandated by Council and driven by the management of the university, extensive consultations were undertaken, and views as well as inputs were canvassed from stakeholders inside as well as outside VUT. These culminated in the *VUT Strategy 2033+* presented herein.

This strategy re-emphasises a vision and mission comprehensively embracing of the core purposes of a university of technology that is cognisant of its strengths to build on as well as weaknesses to address, is sensitive to its environment and its unique positioning to make good on opportunities, and is committed to grander developmental aims¹ to which VUT seeks to make a meaningful contribution.

We seek no less than to grow the Vaal University of Technology to a reputable and sustainable institution whose mission is to *'develop techno-entrepreneurial graduates and innovators who will drive a vibrant transformation of a flourishing and sustainable society, industry and commerce'*. Towards this end we –

- envisage a university prominently nested within an industrial innovation zone to whose attractiveness we will be making a felt contribution as trusted knowledge partner;
- seek to strengthen the institution's utility to industry, government, surrounding communities and society at large;

¹ These are encapsulated most prominently in the nation's National Development Plan (NDP 2030) and the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013).

- envisage, and will work determinedly to build and strengthen an institution that will be sought after by students, academics, researchers and innovators who will be drawn to its quality programmes, services, as well as vibrant environment conducive to study, work and live in;
- aim for improved efficiencies in our support systems that shore up the core business of the institution;
- aim to grow harmonious relations between key stakeholders across the institutions, as a well as a culture of collaborative cross-accountable work, and
- aim to ensure that we grow a sufficient resource base to sustain the university into the long term.

The revised institutional strategy is set to be implemented with full effect from 2024, with the year 2023 dedicated to important preparatory activity to ensure effective implementation. Towards this end, Council is making a commitment to the VUT community, as well as stakeholders and partners in government, industry and society at large that it will be deliberate and firm in ensuring that those charged with the successful implementation of the strategy play, and are accountable for their expected roles. We are committed to ensuring that we deliver on the designs of the strategy, and that this task will be carried out with a high degree of professionalism, diligence and ethical conduct. For our part as Council, as we hold management for the implementation of the strategy as planned, we in turn also commit to lending management our unwavering support.

.....
Prof M Radebe

Implementation working paper

2. Commitment by Vice Chancellor

Following a thoroughgoing process of workshops, consultations and inputs from all stakeholders at the Vaal University of Technology (VUT), as well as a number of strategic stakeholders outside of the university, the Council of VUT adopted a revised institutional Strategy in December 2022.

The approved VUT *Strategy 2033+* refocuses VUT's vision, strategic goals and objectives, and maps out strategic milestones along a ten-year development path for VUT. This frames the marching orders from Council for the VUT community going forward.

The revised VUT strategy is consolidated around two strategic goals – one focused on getting the core business of teaching, research and innovation right, while the second is focused on the efficacy of support systems and the sustainability of the institution into the long term. The strategy is also consolidated around six maikemisetso (strategic objectives) built against the strategic goals, as well as a set of success drivers that will ensure the realisation of the strategic objectives and goals. The ultimate intended impact is nothing less than *'an attractive, sustainable university of technology that produces high-impact research and innovation, as well as entrepreneurial and employable graduates who can also contribute to solving society's and industry challenges.'*

It is expected that the implementation of the revised strategy will maintain the same spirit of commitment from, and inclusivity of all stakeholders who were part of the preparation of the strategy, It is also intended that the implementation, especially over the first two years, will be a well-coordinated process that will lay firm ground for key habitual shifts that are expected from all stakeholders committed to the success of the institution. Over this time, is also envisaged the development and consolidation of systems and tools that will make for a caring, transparent, agile, efficient, sustainable and accountable VUT. This is a commitment that the leadership of the institution across its constituent parts is making to Council, the internal community, external partners and the greater public.

We thank the university Council for the guidance it has provided in the development of this strategy. We would like to also thank all members of the VUT community who have made valuable contributions – in discussions, in written inputs and in constrictive critiques, in the development of the strategy. We also would like to thank external institutional partners and other stakeholders for their contributions and expressions of commitment to support VUT along the journey to achieving its goals as articulated in the revised strategy.

3. Part A: OUR MANDATE

Underpinning VUT's vision and strategy is a mandate embracing the following:

3.1 International Obligations

- *UN Sustainable Development Goals*, whose priorities for development and international cooperation South Africa subscribes to. Importantly, the UN SDGs inter alia impose obligations on the university to ensure that its strategy, plans, programmes, outputs and operations are sensitive to internationally subscribed commitments to environmental, social and governance (ESG) frameworks, an obligation that applies equally to public and private sector entities.
- The *Africa 2063 Development Agenda*, and its promise on continental cooperation as well as knowledge, innovation and commercial exchanges.

3.2 Constitutional and Legislative Mandate

- *Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997)*, which is the overarching act regulating higher education in the Republic of South Africa
- *Regulations for Reporting by Public Higher Education Institutions* in terms of section 41, read with section 69 of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No. 101 of 1997)
- *South African Qualifications Act (No. 58 of 1995)*, which regulates the *National Qualifications Framework (NQF)* and the related *Higher Education Qualifications Sub Framework (HEQSF)*.
- *National Qualifications Framework Act (No. 67 of 2008)*, which sets out the responsibilities of the Ministers of Education and Minister of Labour, provides for the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA); provides for Quality Councils; repeals the South African Qualifications Authority Act, 1995; and provides for matters connected therewith.
- *Higher Education Qualifications Sub Framework (2014)*, which provides a single qualifications framework for a diverse higher education system to enable qualification pathways that promote progression and articulation within the system, with the key objective of enabling the transfer of students between programmes and higher education institutions.
- *National Student Financial Aid Scheme Act (No. 56 of 1999)*, which establishes the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and provides for its financing, operations and management, governance, and accountability.

3.3 Policy and Development Mandates

- *The Education White Paper 3 – A Programme for Higher Education Transformation (1997)*, which laid the founding framework and outlined a comprehensive set of initiatives for the transformation of higher education, through the development of a single, co-ordinated system with new planning, governing and funding arrangements.
- *The White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013)*, which extends the vision of the founding 1997 White Paper by embracing all institutions in the post-school education and training (PSET) ecosystem, setting out expectations for how the PSET sector should contribute to building a developmental state with a vibrant democracy and a flourishing economy. Its main policy objectives are:
 - A post-school system that can assist in building a fair, equitable, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa;

- A single, coordinated post-school education and training system;
 - Expanded access, improved quality and increased diversity of provision;
 - A stronger and more cooperative relationship between education and training institutions and the workplace, and
 - A post-school education and training system that is responsive to the needs of individual citizens and employers, in both public and private sectors, as well as broader societal and developmental objectives.
- *The National Development Plan – NDP 2030 (2013)*, which sets out a comprehensive long-term vision for the development of the South African society, state and economy. In setting out its vision, the NDP identifies the role different sectors of society need to play in reaching that end-goal. For higher education, the NDP has prioritised the following goals among others:
 - Increase in student enrolment;
 - Increase in the percentage of PhD-qualified staff;
 - Increase in the production of doctoral graduates; and
 - Expansion of science, technology and innovation outputs, sensitive to ESG considerations.
 - *Industrial Policy Action Plan* – which sets out a framework for the development of the industrial landscape nationally, and has particular relevance for VUT as a university of technology seeking to establish itself as the go-to knowledge partner in the Vaal innovation zone
 - *Reimagined Industrial Strategy (2019)* – which outlines priority sectors (15) for economic growth through refocused industrial development, and provides strategic guidance around planning, integrated collaborative action by the state and private sector, as well as other implementation imperatives
 - *Growing Gauteng Together 2030*, which is a long-term development plan that sets out a vision, priorities and action plans of the Gauteng City Regions 2019 to 2030
 - *Sedibeng Growth and Development Strategy*, which is a more localised strategy for the development of the Gauteng south region within which VUT is located.

3.4 VUT's mandate as a University of Technology

Within the higher education context, the universities of technology have a specific role and mandate expected of them, namely:

- To promote teaching and learning which, through the use of technologically advanced education, prepares graduates for either employment or entrepreneurship;
- To promote innovation and the commercialisation of new and existing knowledge by undertaking basic and applied research and the promotion of technology as well as technology transfer, and
- To be an engaged institution through an engaged scholarship with industry and its local community.

VUT's strategy is thus principally built around the foregoing three pillars that characterise the shared mission of a university of technology, while also seeking to realise the ambitions of the other legislative and developmental mandates that have been cited above.

4. Part B: OUR STRATEGY

4.1 Vision

Learning and Innovation for a Digitally Smart and Sustainable Industrial Progress and Socio-Economic Transformation

4.2 Mission

The Vaal University of Technology's mission is to develop techno-entrepreneurial graduates and innovators who will drive a vibrant transformation of a flourishing and sustainable society, industry and commerce.

4.3 Values

VUT subscribes to the following values:

<i>Excellence:</i>	We strive for high achievement from the whole VUT community, and encourage a culture of going beyond normal expectations in the pursuit of our mission
<i>Creativity:</i>	We promote initiative and innovative practice in the pursuit of our mission and the greater objective of enhancing human flourishing
<i>Ethic of Care:</i>	We are enjoined to not only be considerate in our treatment of one another, but are called to exercise great care in how we regard and safeguard the greater good we all strive for through the university project
<i>Collegiality:</i>	We promote a culture of comradeship, cooperation, partnership and mutual respect in the pursuit of common cause
<i>Integrity:</i>	We adhere to, and hold one another accountable for ethical and conscientious conduct in work, word and deed, this to infuse our interactions and programmes, as well as other actions in all features of operations and university life
<i>Diversity:</i>	We thrive on difference as an asset, promoting equitable recognition and acknowledging that all can contribute positively in different ways in the pursuit of the university's vision and mission

4.4 The Strategic Operating Environment

The Vaal University of Technology carries an important characteristic that should favour it in the greater landscape of higher education institutions in South Africa:

As one of a number of universities of technology, the qualifications offered at VUT include undergraduate diplomas that privilege VUT students and graduates an upward articulation in qualifications, a feature not easily available at the traditional university². With such advantage, the institution is also well-positioned to make good on the designs for meaningful institutional collaborations and articulation as envisaged in the *White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013)*.

Against the foregoing, however, the Vaal University of Technology (VUT) faces a dual challenge at a macro level that this strategy and its implementation must address purposefully:

- The first challenge pertains to VUT's perceived attractiveness as one of twenty-six public universities in South Africa. Against the backdrop of a highly competitive higher education landscape, the institution currently may not stand out as a first choice for prospective students who would prefer more "prestigious" institutions renowned for established strengths in certain niches. The competitor institutions may also be known to offer different attractions in living and study environments. And yet another feature may be felt differentials in certain distinct advantages offered post-study³.

The challenge of attractiveness may also extend to staff: VUT may not currently be perceived as an institution offering distinct advantages and incentives that will attract sought-after academics and researchers who would enhance its attractiveness by lifting the quality of its programmes, innovation and research outputs, and thereby, its renown in the higher education and post-secondary schooling sector.

This strategy demonstrates how these perceptions will be banished to the past as VUT repositions itself to play to its strengths, while taking advantage of opportunities presented by its location in particular, as well as creatively appropriating other opportunities availed by a number of other environmental factors.

- The second key challenge, part-influenced by the first, pertains to VUT's current almost exclusive dependence on state funding – student financial aid, subsidies and grants from government and state-funded bodies. The institution is presently in a weak position to secure commercial, extra-governmental grants and investment funding. This impacts the financial viability of the institution and its ability to – (i) provide quality infrastructure and services that will offer an attractive environment for study and research, as well as a conducive living environment for students and professionals; (ii) establish quality support systems, and (iii) be able to recruit, competitively incentivise and retain rated academics, scientists and researchers.

The combination of the above two key challenges and a range of related sub-challenges compromises the ability of the VUT to increase its academic and research renown, as well as its sustainability.

The challenges reflecting the operating environment may to a significant degree, have their genesis in the strategic posture and conventional practices of a traditional academy for higher learning and research.

² This articulation also applies to comprehensive universities, and a number of them have already played this to good advantage.

³ At a recent engagement between the VUT student leadership and management the following call was issued by one student leader – “FIX OUR FUTURE”, i.e. (paraphrased) ‘*correct the issues we are bringing to your attention in order to deliver a positively memorable experience for us as students, as well as enhanced prospects for our future us as graduates of VUT*’.

Let us first consider the issue of research and innovation, a key function that should be the focus of a university of technology: A more traditional posture toward research tends to tilt the emphasis towards producing articles for scholarly publication, a posture that characterises VUT's current predominant practice towards research. Expectations held of universities of technology should instead open up opportunities for a dynamic balance between traditional research and research applicable to innovation, patents and other related intellectual property with commercial value or other societal impact. Going forward, in order to strike such balance, VUT is resolved to put to strategic utility certain advantages of leverages available to it (more on this later), and intends to expend some greater dedicated energy towards producing high-impact innovations that will capture the attention of industry, government and other potential users and investors. This will in turn draw in material support from these stakeholders.

Secondly, the limited ability for VUT as a university of technology to generate demonstrable innovations that address real-world social and industrial challenges, also leads to a situation where such lack may impact the evolution of a curriculum of dynamic and transformative value, as well as high market utility. Thus, the university's ability to produce students with quality academic and practical experience in driving innovation and commercialisation may be compromised, which in turn reduces their attractiveness to industry and felt value to society. Related to this, the compromised ability to produce students that can develop innovations and benefit from their commercialisation in turn impacts the potential of the alumni network to grow in stature and produce industry leaders, as well as economic and social agents who can support VUT's further growth.

Thirdly, let us consider the relative lack of adequate infrastructure: The teaching and learning situation, and the overall university experience of students, is negatively impacted by an inadequate provision of student infrastructure and related services. This not only negatively impacts the success of students, but can lead to a dissatisfaction with university life that increases conflict within the university, resulting in low morale, reputational harm and the institution's reduced ability to attract and keep a diverse and quality pool of students. Over and above students, the lack of adequate infrastructure and related material wherewithal can compromise a quality experience and productivity of staff.

Next, turning to operational inadequacies and inefficiencies: It cannot be gainsaid enough that ill-fitting structures, inadequate systems and policies, as well as an under-capacitated operations leadership and support cadre, or a collective with weak cohesion, can hamper the functioning of the institution and make for a non-conducive working environment for both staff and students. Another effect is an institution lacking in agility to respond to opportunities emerging from its operating environment to further the university's mission. Yet another effect may be an invitation to opportunistic tendencies that may exploit these weaknesses in operating systems, towards profiteering and other destructive abuses. VUT thus needs to pay attention to all these concerns as it re-sets itself to create a dynamic, efficient operating environment.

The foregoing challenges combine to render an institution and operating environment of compromised ability to groom quality graduates and innovators, produce and demonstrate innovation of commercial value and social relevance, and offer an attractive destination for rated academics, scientists and innovators. As already mentioned, the compromised attractiveness of the institution for rated academics, scientists and innovators can exacerbate the funding difficulties and sustainability of the institution. It also compromises its ability to establish value-adding partnerships and networks as an institutional partner that can inspire confidence and trust.

At the same time, however, as already mentioned, the strategy of the university recognises, and seeks to build on a number of strengths and opportunities that VUT currently has. We summarise these in the presentation below, juxtaposed against challenges and threats:



This strategy of the university seeks to respond systematically to the above set of challenges and opportunities, alternatively summarised in Figure 1 below:

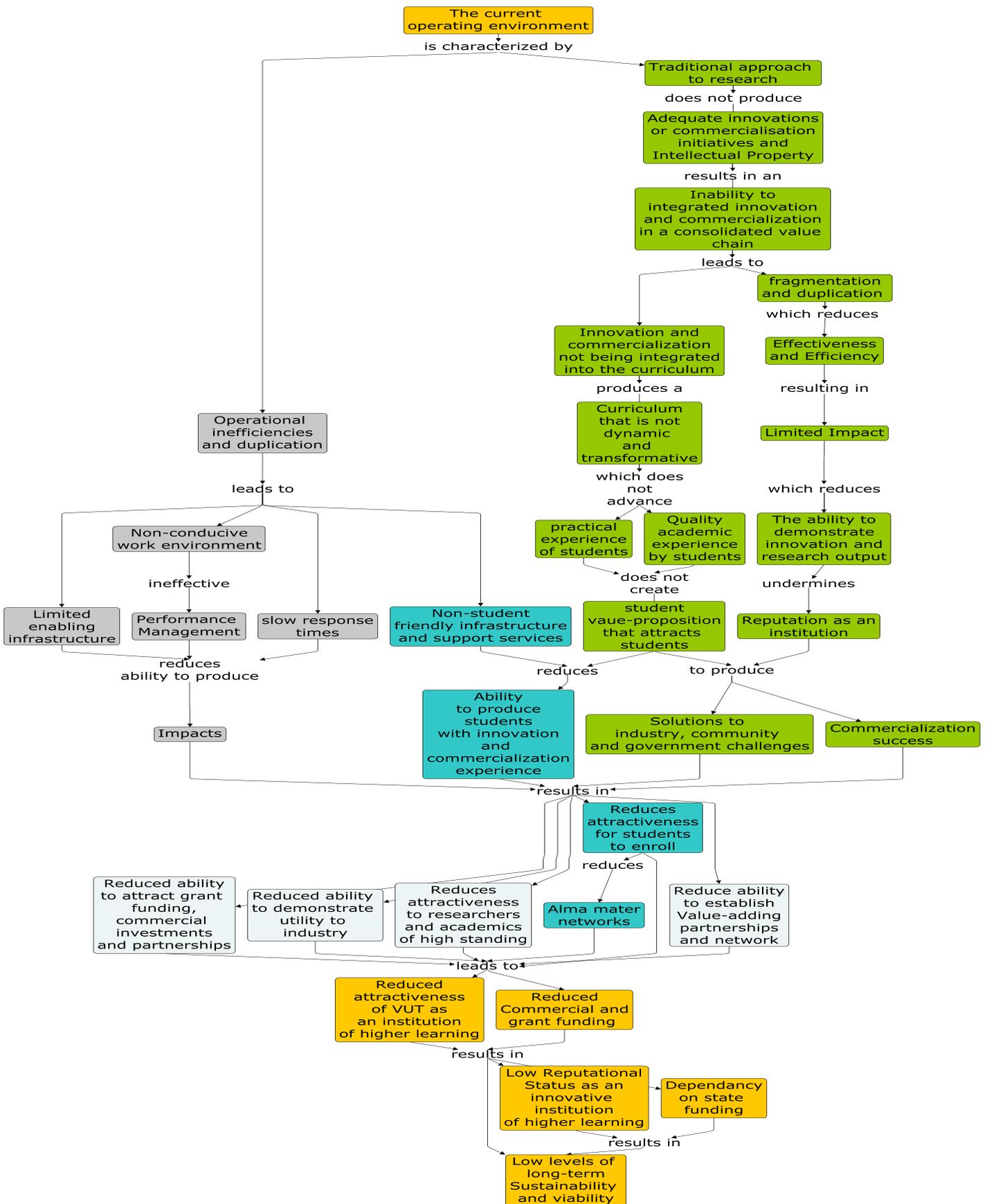


Figure 1: Current Strategic Operating Environment Summary

4.5 Leverages and Exploitable Initiatives

Against the foregoing, there are a number of leverages and exploitable initiatives to which VUT could attach its future development and growth, as in the table below. Some of these are within the control of the institution, while others are dependent on the extent to which the institution is adept at developing, maintaining and growing strategic partnerships.

Table 1: Leverages and exploitable initiatives

Leverages and Exploitable Initiatives		Implications for Strategic Action
1. <i>Industrial Ecosystem Habitat</i> surrounding VUT	<p>a) <i>Historical <u>Industrial Zone</u></i> – host to SASOL, AccelorMittal and a host of manufacturing establishments across the industrial value-chain.</p> <p><i>The future of existing establishments needs to be carefully assessed for relevance and viability, and careful choices need to be made on partners that are not discordant with the vision of VUT.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VUT carefully assesses the techno-industrial landscape – extant and potential, and smartly re-gears and repositions itself to be dependable knowledge partner and propeller for Vaal techno-industrial ecosystem, fitted for contemporary industry challenges of the fourth and fifth industrial revolution (4IR & 5IR), and with impact reaching beyond the Vaal • Techno-industrial complex provides demand for innovation and commercial solutions that VUT should carefully mine to inform agenda for R&D, innovation and commercialisation, as well as learning and training programmes • Research, Innovation and Commercialisation (RIC) portfolio at VUT leads engagement on research and innovation agenda-determination with government and key establishments in the industrial complex • RIC, Teaching & Learning and Community Engagement portfolios also engage government at all levels, institutional, and community stakeholders to establish and align training programming – <i>integration into mainstream programmes, as well as bespoke training</i> • VUT establishes facility for engagement with government on priority areas for industrial development to be translated into research, innovation and commercialisation agenda, as well as human development and training programmes • VUT outfits itself appropriately – material, human resources, systems and services – to provide a sought-after location where innovations can be demonstrated, incubated and commercialised • VUT facilitates a scientifically robust understanding of the opportunities, needs and key connects of the techno-industrial value-chain in the area – <i>a thoroughgoing compilation of the relevant information repository implies a close multidisciplinary collaboration between the natural, applied and engineering sciences, as well as the business and social sciences</i>
	<p>b) <i>Vaal Special <u>Economic Zone</u></i> – a certainty already under establishment, with serious ambitions by government to recharge the Vaal area as an industrial hub</p>	

Leverages and Exploitable Initiatives	Implications for Strategic Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Existing partnerships are realigned, and new ones established to underpin the re-determined research, innovation, commercialisation and training agenda Re-imagined research and innovation agenda, together with new relevant and demand-driven learning and training programmes, attract resources that can support VUT and reduce resources-burden on the institution, while increasing exposure and relevance.
<p>2. <i>Established Institutional relations</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The forward-looking strategy builds on a foundation of good relations with a number of institutional partners. Key existing local and international partnerships in the research and innovation community, as well as academic sector, will need to be consolidated and extended to align with the re-set vision and strategic goals.
<p>3. <i>Inland Waterways – with the Integrated Vaal River System and Dams as anchor</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunity for research and innovation in the water sector, with smart partnerships with the provincial and local government, Rand Water and the Water Research Commission, as well as other relevant partners Opportunities too for building partnership connects between maritime and inland-waterways innovation – e.g. cross-learning and innovation in water-management technologies and systems, in small vessels-engineering for cargo-barges and leisure-vessels, aquaculture and tourism (partnership with Nelson Mandela University – leading in ocean sciences and maritime studies, is advised, plus relevant international partners) Opportunity for VUT to extend cross-provincial and cross-border reach across networked inland waterways within the Integrated Vaal System, as well as other systems, e.g., reach to the Gariep Opportunity too for VUT to contribute to addressing critical skills shortages that continue to plague the water sector
<p>4. <i>Townships in the Vaal</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With land in Sebokeng available for expansion, VUT is in a strong position to ensure that expansions in infrastructure and the institutional re-design accommodate plans to systematically take townships along in its refocused development agenda VUT can host joint-incubators for research, innovation, commercialisation, and training focused on the development of the <i>township industrial economy</i> as well as the promotion of an inclusive industrialisation

Leverages and Exploitable Initiatives	Implications for Strategic Action
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The location in close proximity to townships also provides an opportunity for research and innovation sensitive to the peculiarities of economies spatially and culturally peripheral to the mainstream economy, as well as promoting innovative ways of establishing a workable and sustainable connect of the reconsidered apartheid-disfigured city, town and township in the South African political economy. • A dedicated <i>Township Economy</i> unit/institute be set up to drive and coordinate the comprehensive praxis-driven project outlined above, towards establishing VUT as a centre of excellence in the field.
5. South African and Foreign Embassies on home soil and abroad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides targeted access to international networks – institutions, adjunct innovators and corporates – and resources

4.6 Problem Statement

The foregoing description of VUT’s strategic operating environment, with its challenges and opportunities, leads to the following summary problem statement to which the strategy seeks to respond:

VUT's current strategic posture, reputation, operational inefficiencies, resource-lack and performance hamper the institution's ability to operate as a sustainable dynamic knowledge ecosystem that produces high-impact innovations and highly sought-after graduates who can significantly contribute to solving societal and industry challenges.

4.7 Future-State, Impact Statement and Outcomes

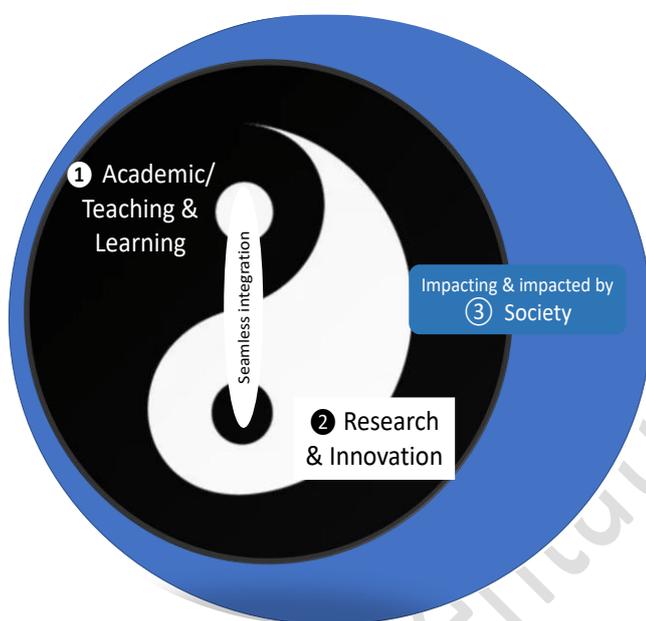
Against the above problem statement, VUT has formulated an impact statement to guide its strategic response and development trajectory over time, towards the outcomes and desired future-state articulated below. The future state is framed against a projected term of reasonable length to realise the desired impact, with progress or otherwise towards the future-state tracked, measured and reported at least annually.

It is also expected that, in the more elaborate articulation of the institutional strategy into portfolio, divisional and unit strategies as well as operating plans, the university community will engage in a coordinated process to establish synced and strategically sequenced priorities, actions and targets to operationalise the institutional strategic plan. These will among others be guided by the sequenced logic of evolution of the institution over various stages of its development and growth as outlined under 4.7.3. The process of articulating priorities and plans aligned to the institutional strategy is also anticipated to happen as follows:

<p>1</p> <p>Portfolios, divisions and directorates develop strategies and plans aligned to the institutional strategy.</p> <p>Sub-strategies and plans also articulate priorities as interpreted by component constituents of the university system</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Sub-strategies and plans are submitted to central planning-consolidation process that will –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish priority-setting, both medium-term and annualised, with trade-offs negotiated and rationalized • Determine performance targets and indicators, for medium-termed phases of strategy-term, plus annualized for APPs (not set in institutional strategy) 	<p>3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-strategies and plans are consolidated post-collective consolidation stage • Representative Annual Performance Plan (APP) and Institutional Implementation Plan (IIP) are developed and agreed across portfolios, divisions and directorates • Aligned performance agreements are developed and concluded • All strategies, plans, APP and IIPs presented to Council via relevant committees
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4.7.1 Future-State

Informed by the strategic operational environment, the future⁴ envisaged state of VUT is one where –



- Silos and an artificial separation of the core portfolios no longer exist; there is a clear conceptual and practical co-dependency between the academic teaching and learning function on the one hand, and the research and innovation function on the other. The structure (*realisable in the short to medium-term*), work and relational culture (*realisable in the medium-term*), as well as operating systems of the institution (*realisable in the short to medium-term*), manifest and support this relationship.

There is also a more purposeful, ethical, practical and reciprocal engagement with communities and broader society as an integral component of the university project.

The integration of the three pillars of the core business is thus informed by a praxis logic that should

permeate the consciousness and work of the VUT community, this to include how support operations are arranged to support the core business.

- VUT operates as a productive and efficient trans- and multi-disciplinary integrated learning, research and innovation ecosystem that delivers demonstrable value and acclaim for the university and its environs (*realisable in the longer term*).

The integrated learning and innovation ecosystem is driven by a multi-sectoral research agenda that enables the university to address societal and industry challenges in a systematic and focused way (*realisable in the medium to longer term*).

- The research agenda informs and is informed by, as well as leverages partnerships and networking platforms to secure funding and establish local and international collaborations to

⁴ The *future* commences with the introduction of the implementation of the strategy, with propositioned characterisations of *future* manifest at different relevant points of the evolution of the strategy.

produce the required innovations and solutions (*realisable in the short, medium and longer terms*).

- VUT produces high-impact and acclaimed research and innovations that promote VUT-owned intellectual property, drive thriving commercial partnerships across the techno-industrial value-chain from small enterprise to large corporates, and enhances the university's financial sustainability. **The reputation of the university is enhanced as a centre of excellence, making it more attractive to prospective students, researchers, academics, innovators and funders.** The success of the university creates a feedback loop that further grows its productivity in commercially viable and socially relevant innovation and learning (*realisable in the longer term*).
- VUT operates an enabling student ecosystem with a dynamic curriculum underpinned by transformative research and innovation, enabling links to industry, community and the world of work, as well as enabling infrastructure and support services (*realisable in the medium to longer term*). The institution develops techno-entrepreneurial students and graduates with the ability to problem-solve, as well as produce commercially viable Innovation and societally-relevant solutions (*realisable in the medium to longer term*).
- VUT operates in a conducive environment that rewards efficiency and effectiveness and, conversely, has a manifest cultural ethic that is intolerable of inefficiencies and related systemic inadequacies (*realisable in the medium to longer term*). Effective and efficient operations are enhanced by incentive schemes, optimally enabling infrastructure, effective governance frameworks and practices, as well as strong enabling systems(*realisable in the medium term*). In this environment, community, student, staff, industry and government engagements and collaboration thrive, which in turn drives the production of demonstrable impacts. VUT thus functions as the nerve-centre and animator of an *innovation commons* joining up this industrial and economic stakeholder community (*realisable in the medium to longer term*).
- VUT is thus an institution that has –
 - Increased its attractiveness to a diverse clientele of enrolled students;
 - Increased its attractiveness to researchers and academics of high standing;
 - Improved active alumni networks that support and fund VUT interventions;
 - Enhanced its attractiveness to value-adding partners and networks, inclusive of international partners;
 - Increased its ability to attract grant and commercial funding as well as investments;
 - Increased its ability to demonstrate the VUT's utility to society and industry;
 - Enhanced its standing in the higher education, science and innovation (HESI) sector.

(See Figure 2 for a summary of the future envisaged state.)

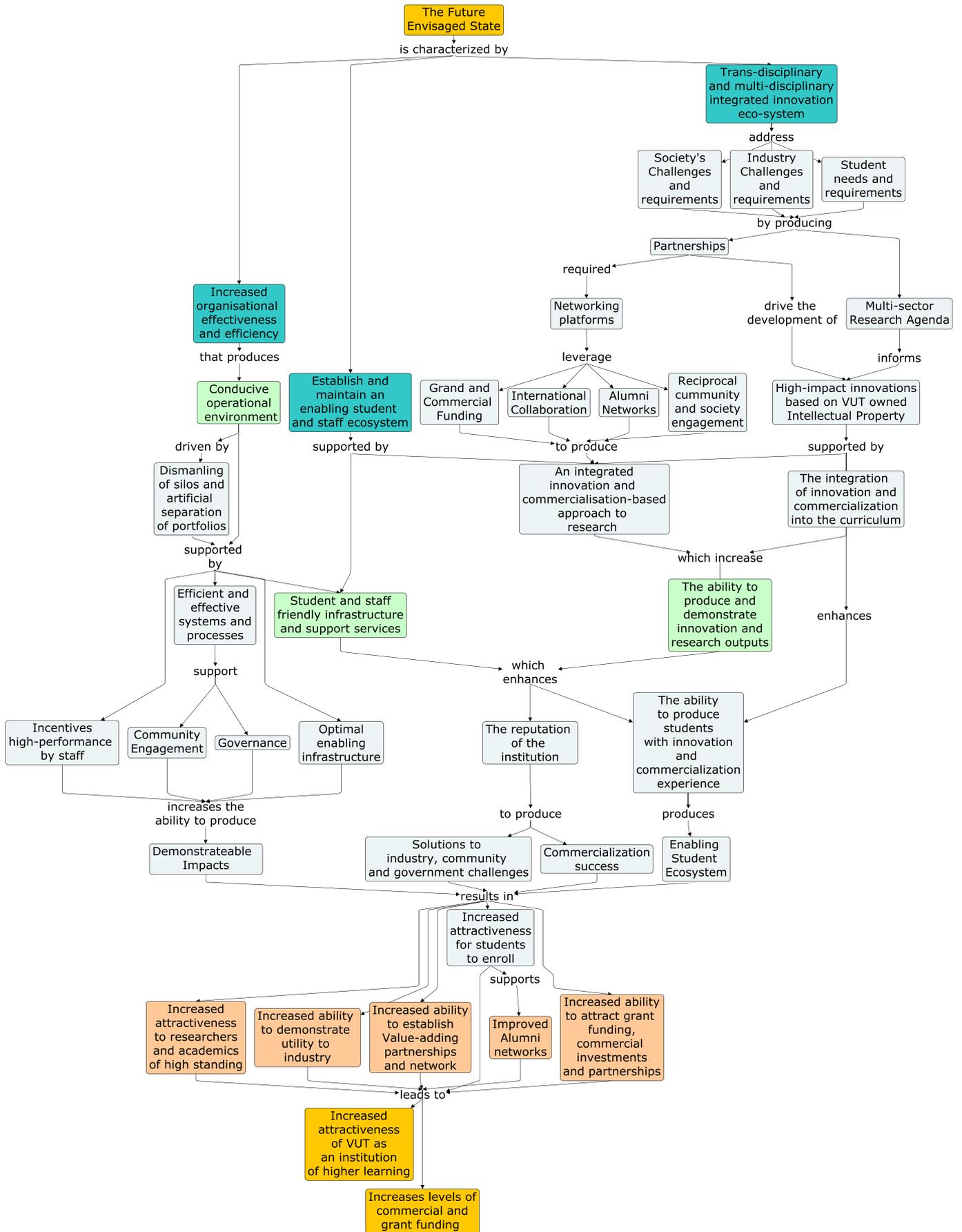


Figure 2: VUT Future Envisaged State

4.7.2 Impact Statement and Goals

In the pursuit of our vision and mission, and in response to the strategic operational environment, leverages and future envisaged state, the VUT impact statement, strategic goals, *maikemisetso*⁵ ('strategic objectives'), and related success drivers are presented below:

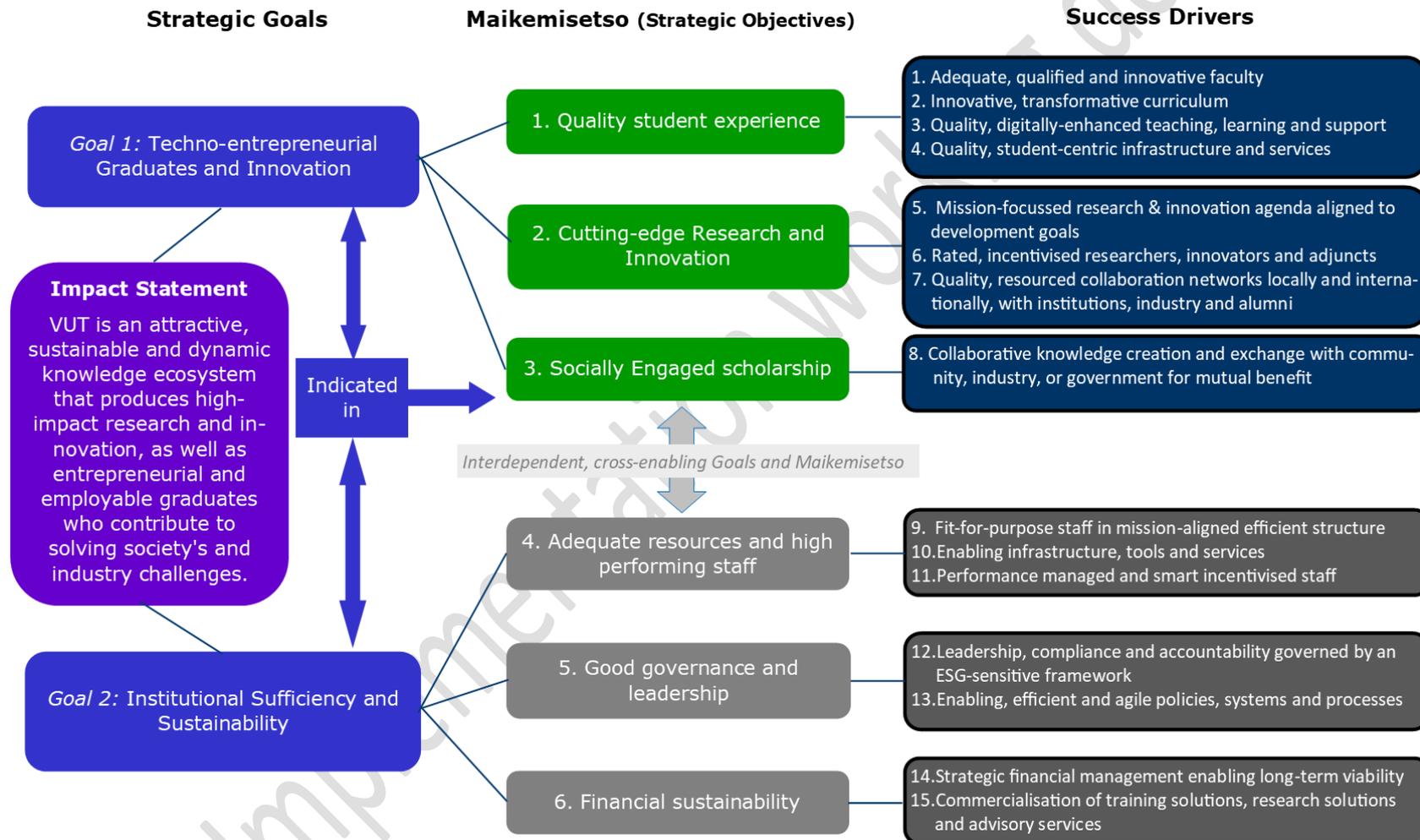


Figure 3: Impact Statement, Goals and Maikemisetso

⁵ 'Maekemisetso' is an expression of a deep intentionality and integrity of determination – tantamount to a commitment to oath.

Achieving the impact statement requires the achieving of two **strategic goals**, namely –

Goal 1: Techno-Entrepreneurial Graduates and Innovation, and

Goal 2: Institutional Sufficiency and Sustainability

It will be observed that the first strategic goal in particular is consistent with the praxis-driven integration logic advocated under 4.7.1 (p17), namely, the non-separation of key elements of the core business of the university – a teaching and learning on the one hand, and research and innovation on the other, together with their application in an engaged scholarship. These are framed as strategic objectives (*maikemisetso*) that will underpin the manifestation of the strategic goal. This is an important culture-shift that the university is making, where there will be a conscious and practical balancing and development of these co-dependent pillars of the university's core business over time.

Against this, it becomes important for instance to empirically establish the degree to which such integration is manifest through the dedication of effort and resources to and across the portfolios of the core business – appropriate indicators will be determined to measure this. Later on in the evolution of the implementation of the strategy, the measures shift to establishing the impact of the investments of the early years of the strategy term, still mindful of how the product has been impacted by a systematic balancing of the key elements of the core business.

Achieving the two strategic goals in turn requires the achievement of six strategic objectives (*Maikemisetso*), namely –

Goal 1: Techno-Entrepreneurial Graduates and Innovation

To provide technology-enhanced teaching and learning, quality living and learning communities, high-impact research and innovation that contributes to solving society and industry challenges.

(1) A Quality Student Experience, which will be ensured by –

1. Adequate, qualified and innovative faculty
2. Innovative, transformative curriculum
3. Quality, digitally-enhanced teaching, learning and support
4. Quality, student-centric infrastructure and services

(2) Cutting-edge Research and Innovation to be underpinned by appropriate ESG frameworks and enabled by –

5. Mission-focused research & innovation agenda aligned to development goals
6. Rated, incentivised researchers, innovators and adjuncts
7. Quality, resourced collaboration networks locally and internationally, with institutions, industry and alumni

- (3) Socially engaged scholarship, which will be enabled by –
8. Collaborative knowledge creation and exchange with community, industry, or government for mutual benefit

Goal 2: Institutional Sufficiency and Sustainability

To create an enabling environment through resourcing, good governance and administration for sustainability and quality service

- (4) Adequate resources and high performing staff, attainable through –
9. Fit-for-purpose staff in mission-aligned efficient structure
 10. Enabling infrastructure, tools and services
 11. Performance managed and smart incentivized staff
- (5) Good governance and leadership, realisable through –
12. Leadership, compliance and accountability governed by an ESG-sensitive framework
 13. Enabling, efficient and agile policies, systems and processes
- (6) Financial sustainability, realisable through –
14. Strategic financial management enabling long-term viability
 15. Commercialization of training solutions, research solutions and advisory services

The above strategic goals and strategic objectives (maikemisetso), supported by an integrated portfolio of programmes, projects and actions carried out across the various divisions and units of the university, will serve to increase the attractiveness of VUT as an institution of higher learning, research and innovation, as well as ensure its long-term viability and sustainability.

4.7.3 Strategic Mapping to Future-State

Moving from the current state to the future envisaged state is guided by a three-phased strategic mapping as in the following self-explanatory presentation:



Figure 3: Strategy Mapping

Figure 5 below represents the above simplified, with a graphic representation of flow and dependencies:

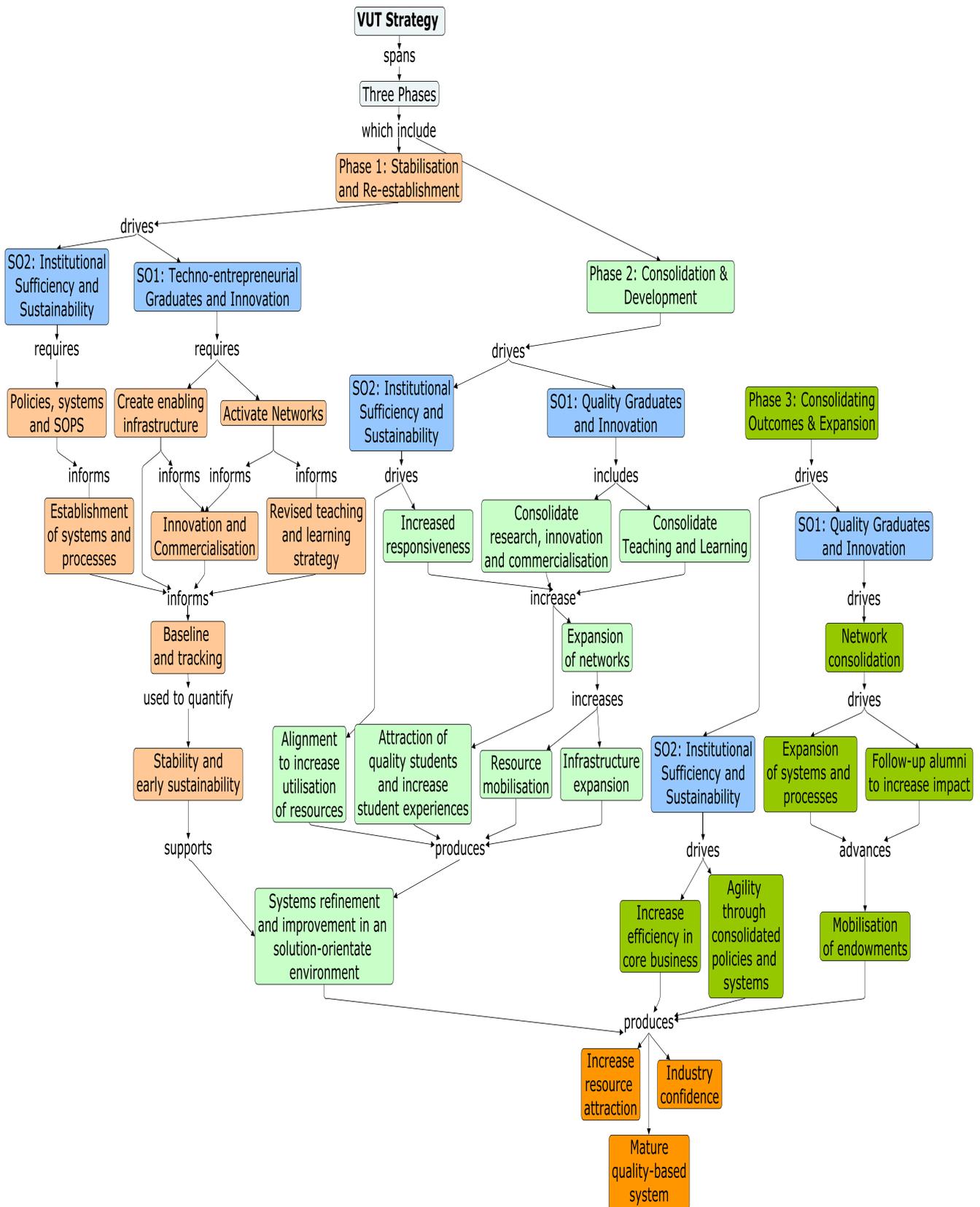


Figure 5: Flows and dependencies over time

4.8 Chokepoints and consolidating resources in time and space

The table below lists some of the critical junctions in the execution of the strategy that might require more focused attention and resources to ensure their success. These elements present ‘chokepoints’ in the implementation process, which, if not addressed, can compromise or inhibit further implementation.

Table 2: Choke & Focus Points for Consolidating Resources

Choke & Focus Point	Reason for special attention & consolidating resources
The creation of a zone of Innovation to locate innovation and commercial initiatives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without innovation zones, creating an enabling innovation ecosystem to drive and maintain Innovation and commercialisation is impossible. <p>The SEZ initiative led by government and the private sector in the region, however, is aimed at just this, needing the university to – (i) properly acquaint itself with the requirements of being an effective knowledge partner within an innovation zone, and (ii) gear itself up to fuse this ambition into its core business and make its expected contribution to a thriving innovation and learning ecosystem.</p>
Establishing networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Networks ensure access to resources and leverage support for initiatives.
Establishing commercial entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The inability to establish and support commercial entities can compromise the financial sustainability of VUT. This includes the capability to operate own enterprises, or ensuring the right support to entities in which VUT may have a vested stake.
Creating enabling student ecosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating an enabling student ecosystem is essential to ensure support from the student population and to be able to provide them access to a quality learning experience, as well as innovation and commercialisation opportunities.

4.9 Risk and Mitigation

The university has and continues to enhance its risk management system to ensure effective management of identified institutional risks, improve its risk maturity and centralise risk intelligence to support decision-making across all levels of the institution. Thus, for each risk identified, the university has defined measures to mitigate such risks. On the other hand, the university also intends to seize opportunities that provide a basis for creating a competitive advantage in the market.

The constant change in the environment and our intention to adapt requires continuous review of the university risk profile and the risk mitigation strategies to ensure that the related plans are not only implemented, but deliberately contribute to the desired strategic goals. The following key risks to strategy implementation are identified:

Table 3: Risk & Mitigation

Goals	Key Risks	Risk Mitigation
<p>Strategic Goal 1:</p> <p>Techno-Entrepreneurial Graduates and Innovation</p>	<p><u>Quality Student Experience</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to provide and maintain an attractive student value proposition • Increase in the staff workload due to insufficient instructional staff members, in addition to ageing staff compliment • Inability to retain staff members who are pursuing Masters’ and PhDs’ • Capabilities of leaders of the core business – teaching and learning, research and innovation, and socially-engaged scholarship/ community engagement to lead curricula reforms towards reconsidered vision and strategic goals • Inadequate availability and poor maintenance of infrastructure for learning and student living, which can reduce the attractiveness of the institution, and thereby compromise its sustainability. • Compromised safety on campus and student residences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthen and expand outreach activities, based on rigorous evaluation of their effectiveness of existing student recruitment processes, to recruit and support students of outstanding potential at all levels, whatever their background. • Enhance undergraduate and post-graduate admissions processes to ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants, and to improve efficiency and quality of service. • Strive to provide opportunities, through and outside the curriculum, for our students to develop the personal and transferable skills to succeed in the global workplace and entrepreneurial spaces. • Ensure that teaching and assessment approaches are diverse and provide an equal opportunity for all students to achieve and demonstrate their full academic potential. • Encourage the development of new and innovative courses and fields of study to ensure that the PQM reflects advances in knowledge and meets the needs of today’s students. • Empower academic staff and researchers to innovate, staff to use IT systems effectively, and students to improve their digital literacy for discovering, evaluating and creating information using digital technologies. • Prioritise the roll-out high-impact infrastructure, and ensure that procedural red-tape and bottlenecks which slow down the pace of implementation are addressed • Prioritise the attraction of rated scientists and academics to enhance the teaching experience • Improve systems and processes to increase the quality of engagement experiences by students with the university and external stakeholder environment

Goals	Key Risks	Risk Mitigation
	<p><u>Research and Innovation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to integrate with government initiatives such as the SEZ, as well as other local development initiatives • Inability to attract innovation funding • Inability to develop commercially viable innovations • Inability to attract rated scientists and innovators, without whom the required expertise to produce research and innovations that can elevate the university's profile and attractiveness, would not be possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a conducive environment for conducting research, with advanced facilities and infrastructure, appropriate support for staff and students, and investment in the training, support and wellbeing of our staff • Create an appropriate incentive scheme to attract and keep researchers, academics and innovators • Embed the VUT eco-system in the planning and implementation protocols of the SEZ, plus development plans of the area, and promote VUT as the integrator of an innovation commons • Secure and leverage funding to support SEZ-related and other initiatives • Develop an agile and dedicated funding identification, access, attraction, and application systems to grow the volume and value of private-sector funded research on a sustainable basis.
	<p><u>Socially engaged scholarship</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to attract rated researchers and academic which are leaders in their fields • Inability to operationalise societal research and innovation requirements into functional solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an incentive scheme to attract researchers, academics, and innovators • Work in partnership with communities and industry to increase our cultural, societal and economic impact at both local and regional levels. Consider partnership with key stakeholder for the co-development of the research agenda. • Leverage the research and innovation agenda to secure additional funding and technical support • Develop and showcase technology and innovation demonstrators to increase interest and support for innovation, research, and teaching.

Goals	Key Risks	Risk Mitigation
<p>Strategic Goals 2</p> <p>Institutional Sufficiency and Sustainability</p>	<p><i>Adequate resources and high performing staff</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective and inefficient systems which compromise the functionality of the core business of the institution, and reduce the ability to produce strategic outcomes and outputs. • Inefficient systems can also negatively impact the ability to attract, apply and report satisfactorily on resources (not mere accounting, but evidence of utilisation and effect), thus undermining funder, donor and investor confidence. • Dependence on government subsidy and tuition fees, and paucity of diverse income streams • Rising student debt • Organisational structure inadequately aligned to support achievement of VUT strategy • Unaffordable staff establishment • Challenge of attracting and retaining suitably qualified and experienced staff across all levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and grow our income streams by diversifying income sources and pursuing an ambitious financial strategy which seeks to fund our core long-term academic activities. • Prioritize organizational refinement aligned and geared to facilitate the achievement of VUT strategy • Properly define and sequence the delivery of supporting infrastructure and supporting systems (trade tools) to improve operational effectiveness through increased staff productivity and morale. • Prioritise the development and implementation of a staff retention strategy and performance management system supported by incentive and reward systems for staff and researchers

Goals	Key Risks	Risk Mitigation
	<p><i>Good governance and leadership</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-compliance with laws and regulations • Negative public perception • Misalignment between organisational culture and strategy • Misunderstandings and conflict between and among key stakeholders • Insufficient planning capabilities, and implications for implementation management, reporting and accountability systems and processes • Inefficient operations • Functional silos that do not share data • Outdated policies and poorly defined business processes • Ageing information systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance the effectiveness of governance structures through a performance and accountability management system • Promote institution-wide ownership of the strategy among all staff members at all levels of the organisation. • Strengthen the institutional risk and compliance management capability through resourcing of related offices, maintaining and attracting of the relevant skills and expertise, deployment of risk management infrastructure • Align organisational culture to strategy through an interactive change management process • Prioritise the development and implementation of an institution-wide reputation management strategy, including an engagement plan • Intensify implementation of stakeholder engagement programme, inclusive of student formations – stakeholders have among others called for establishment of <i>Joint Operations Enhancement Forum</i> comprising management, and the leadership of students as well as organised labour. • Enhance and consolidate planning and programme/project management capabilities across the university system – from apex office down to unit and personal levels. • Develop and consistently implement an integrated performance and consequence management system • Leverage internal research and student resources to develop systems and processes. • Enhance capability of Policy Management Offices to strengthen internal control internal control systems • Invest in information technology in order to increase research capability, enhance teaching and learning, and deliver efficiencies in support of administrative functions. • Review and improve our current policies to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enable effectiveness and efficiency of operations - support the personal and career development of all staff.

Goals	Key Risks	Risk Mitigation
	<p><u>Financial sustainability</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependence on government subsidy and tuition fees, and paucity of diverse income streams • Declining enrolments • Rising student debt and drop-out rate • Rising litigation resultant from SCM and employee relations shortcomings • Critical infrastructure shortfall • Inadequate safeguarding of university assets (vandalization of infrastructure, theft and damage of assets) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the operationalisation and management of a <i>finance strategy</i> that sharpens strategic decision-making, promotes and ensures fiscal prudence across all aspects of the university system, facilitates creative resource-mobilisation, and ensures an overall operational efficiency of the institution • Manage core divisions and units to function as sustainable cost/revenue centres • Protect and grow our income streams by diversifying income sources and ensuring that our core long-term academic activities and areas of growth are funded to push further growth and financial consolidation. • Strengthen the student recruitment function and operation at local and international level • Enhance alumni, business and social networks to strengthen our internationalisation and resource-mobilisation agenda • Increase strategic partnership and enhance level of collaboration with other public universities as well as other institutional collaborators • Enhance security and internal control measures to curb financial risk exposure

4.10 Portfolio Integration and Unity of Command for Implementation

Ensuring that the strategy is implemented effectively and efficiently requires unity of command through establishing a capability to coordinate, account for and take responsibility for a holistic, integrated implementation of the strategy across key portfolios. Towards this end, it is critical to establish a facility that will ensure standardised processes, systems and procedures for the operationalisation of the institutional strategy, as well as derivative sub-strategies and plans. Such facility will be a Programme Management Office/centre in – preferably – the office of the Vice Chancellor, or relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The purpose will be to consolidate programme and project management functions centrally and provide support to ensure a successful implementation of the strategy.

4.11 Implementation Arrangements and Process

In keeping with our value ethos, and in the interests of ensuring co-ownership and the effective implementation of the institutional strategy, the following diagram sets out the arrangements, processes and habits of action to be established and/or consolidated:

Arrangements and process for the implementation of the Strategy

1. Setting up for success - 2023

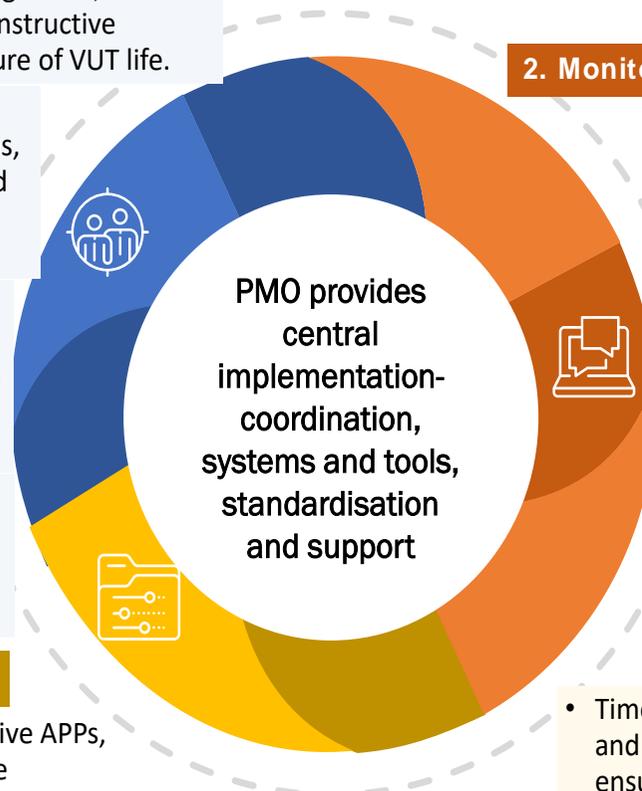
- Portfolio and divisional leaders – DVCs, Executive Deans, Registrar and Executive Directors ensure the development and annual review of portfolio, divisional and unit strategies and plans that elaborate, and are aligned to the institutional strategy. All divisional and unit strategies are presented to relevant Council committees
- Divisional leaders confirm *Strategy Champions* across portfolios, faculties, divisions and units. Their task is to ensure cohesion in planning to avoid non-alignment and silos, as well as inculcate a collaborative work culture. Champions also ensure continuous monitoring and periodic reporting.
- A *Joint Operations Enhancement Forum (JOEF)* – of management, labour and students - is established to ensure accountability, constructive dialoguing and shared problem-solving as a cultural feature of VUT life.
- Target-setting and KPIs – in 2023 for strategy-term, and annually, is generated from the level of units and divisions, and consolidated at the level of APP and IIP; harmonized for synchronicity and effective delivery through a structured process involving champions and leaders.
- Champions ensure that all responsible and affected in particular strategic outcomes, maikemisetso and success drivers are represented. PMO facilitates a rationalization and strategic sequencing of negotiated priorities, inclusive of resources allocated to plans.
- Aligned M&E plan and system set up for Council
- Where aligned divisional strategies and plans are already in place, starting implementation action will commence in 2023 (to be captured in divisional and unit plans).

3. Evaluation for Re- set – annually

- Annualised evaluation undertaken to inform successive APPs, IIPs, unit plans, personal workplans and performance management agreements
 - More comprehensive evaluation and impact analyses conducted bi-annually, as well as at mid-term of strategy

2. Monitoring, reporting & managing implementation

- Against plans and set targets, relevant admin support officers, who are part of the cadre of champions and are trained and supported in information-management and performance-reporting, collect performance data and evidence, and feed into user-friendly performance-tracking and reporting dashboards
- Implementation performance information and analyses are reported on monthly within units, and fed into consolidated analyses for reporting to various structures – Mancom, EMF, JOEF, Senate, Council, etc. on at a quarterly basis to inform management and governance decisions and action
- Timely, consistent and quality reporting to DHET and information-sharing to other stakeholders is ensured



4.12 Strategic Priorities Summarised

The foregoing sections of the revised institutional strategy suggest careful attention to be paid to a number of strategic priorities by key elements of the university system in the implementation of the strategy. Read in conjunction with the strategic goals, strategic objectives and success drivers, the articulation of these priorities will need to be manifested in the strategies, plans and projects of portfolios, divisions, departments and units, aligned to the institutional strategy (sections 4.7 and 4.11 in particular are key reference points). Importantly, the sequencing of priorities and actions from below, as well as at the level of consolidated APP and IIP planning, should also be mindful of the logic of the strategic evolution mapped out under 4.7.3 – getting the first phase right is key.

Over the short to the medium term, with likely recalibrations at each point of planned reflection on the strategy through the implementation term, the following summarised priorities are important to pay attention to:

Priority #1: Integration of Core Business – This is a project that should commence with the careful articulation of this integration intent in the strategies of the relevant portfolios, to obviate the silo approach discouraged in this document. As indicated in this document, the integration is also in order to deliver an enhanced quality of the service offered to students, against enhanced staff capabilities in the technical navigation of co-dependent portfolios in a university of technology of quality. The consistency of integration should be carried throughout the strategy period and beyond, as an institutional habit. The integration should also find expression in the articulation of targets and performance indicators that will be consolidated from the portfolio and divisional plans. Lastly, it should also find expression in the plans and projects of supporting divisions and departments.

Priority #2: Improvement of Digital Capabilities – This is about the hard infrastructure, as well as soft capabilities in an increasingly digitised world, which are critical to ensure success of the university's mission and the efficient conduct of its core business as well as support operations.

Priority #3: Getting the organisation and its primary resource, Human Resources, right – This is among the immediate priorities to ensure alignment of human resources to the revised strategy and the operational needs of divisions, departments and units of the institution. This, and other important relevant features of refitting the organisation, should of course be encapsulated in the revised HR strategy and refined organisational structure.

Priority #4: Improvement and consolidation of Institutional Culture – This relates to the improvement of consciousness for collectivism and a desire for shared wins in approaching engagement and tasks indicated in the strategies, plans and operations of constituent elements of the university system. It also means a conscious and manifest embrace of the values encapsulated in the strategy. Lastly it implies a deliberate effort to establish and maintain structures and systems that will promote the desired institutional culture.

Priority #5: Resources Mobilisation – This concerns the activation of strategic networks and partnerships, as well as the crafting and implementation of relevant projects and proposals to mobilise resources. It is therefore about ensuring that the institution consolidates its capabilities to do this, in terms of relevant staff being professionally prepared for this, and the enabling tools and systems being made available to them. But it also is about improving the overall image of the institution and inspiring the right confidence in society, the public and private sectors.

Priority #6: Improvement of the Operating Environment – This speaks to a number of important features to enhancing the university environment for efficiencies and the accomplishment of strategic goals. It means careful effort to improve the infrastructure of the university to enhance the overall quality of life for students and staff. It also means a commensurate address of operating frameworks, policies and standard operating procedures, as well as systems, towards increased efficiency and a smart, agile, responsive and accountable organisation. One key urgent matter for attention that has overwhelming consensus in the latter regard is addressing bottlenecks and red-tape in the university's procurement systems which is a significant brake on efficiencies, is a cause for internal frustration, and injures the university's reputation externally.

Priority #7: Consolidation of Financial Sustainability – This is to be achieved through a number of strategic actions, chiefly – (i) the improvement of internal efficiencies to streamline and contain cost while moving resources to areas of strategic priority; (ii) the improvement of the operations of divisions earmarked for revenue-generation, as well as (iii) special strategic projects aimed at improving the financial fortunes of the university through commercial, grant and endowment funding.

Implementation working doc