



Department of  
**Student Affairs**  
Liberating the Soul for Well-being & Flourishing

# DSA STRATEGIC PLANNING FRAMEWORK

| 2025 - 2026





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# PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

The purpose of this Strategic Planning Framework is to establish a **cohesive, evidence-based, and humanising approach** to strategic planning, implementation, and accountability within the **Department of Student Affairs (DSA)**.

This framework functions as a **strategic-operational bridge**, translating DSA's long-term strategic vision into actionable, measurable, and integrated operations. It outlines the mechanisms through which strategy becomes practice, ensuring that planning is not only visionary but also implementable, accountable, and reflective.

## IT IS DESIGNED TO:

- Provide **strategic alignment** across DSA clusters and institutional priorities.
- Define **operational mechanisms** that ensure goals are executed through measurable outputs and outcomes.
- Strengthen **accountability, collaboration, and evidence-based reflection** across DSA.

This framework directly supports the **UCT Vision 2030 and Vision 2035**, the **DSA Framework** and its **seven Key Strategic Areas (KSAs)**, and the institutional commitment to **transformation, student success, leadership, wellbeing, and social justice**.

# THE DSA ECOSYSTEM

The DSA is a complex and interdependent system of clusters that collectively advance student development, wellbeing, and success.

**The framework is structured to ensure coherence and integration across the following DSA clusters:**

- **Student Housing and Residence Life**
- **Student Wellness Services**
- **Student Financial Aid**
- **Student Development**, comprising two sub-clusters:
  - *Student Life and Governance*
  - *Sport and Recreation*

Each cluster contributes uniquely to the holistic student experience. The **seven Key Strategic Areas (KSAs)** serve as **vehicles that bridge these clusters**, enabling cross-functional collaboration and coherence in implementing the DSA's strategic intent.

This means that **KSAs are not additional structures**, but integrative pathways that align activities across clusters, ensuring that operations reflect shared goals and values.



# STRATEGIC PLANNING PRINCIPLES

## 01. HUMANISING AND INCLUSIVE

Strategy must centre on the dignity, agency, and development of both students and staff, cultivating a humanising culture across all DSA environments.

## 02. EVIDENCE-INFORMED

Decisions and interventions are guided by institutional research and analytics led by **OSARIA** (Office of Student Affairs Research, Innovation, and Analytics).

## 03. COLLABORATIVE AND INTEGRATED

KSAs promote synergy and collective impact across all clusters and programmes.

## 04. TRANSFORMATIVE AND ADAPTIVE

Planning must respond dynamically to changing student and institutional contexts.

## 05. ACCOUNTABLE AND TRANSPARENT

Deliverables are measurable, time-bound, and reported through consistent monitoring, review, and governance mechanisms.



# FRAMEWORK STRUCTURE

This framework outlines the **3Ps and 3Rs** that structure the DSA's strategic and operational planning processes.

## PILLAR 1: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Ensures that all DSA plans and activities align with:

- UCT Vision 2030 and transformation imperatives
- The DSA Framework 2035 and seven KSAs
- National higher education priorities and regulatory compliance

**Deliverable:** *Annual DSA Strategic Implementation Plan*

## PILLAR 2: DSA FRAMEWORK 2035

Each cluster and programme translates strategic priorities into **operational plans** that define:

- Annual objectives and performance indicators
- Activities and resource allocations
- Risks, dependencies, and timelines

**Deliverable:** *Cluster Operational and Readiness Plans aligned with KSAs*

## PILLAR 3: MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND LEARNING

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning embeds reflection, learning, and accountability into DSA practice.

OSARIA supports this process through data analytics, research, and institutional reporting.

### Focus Areas:

- KPI tracking by KSA and cluster
- Quarterly and annual performance reviews
- Evaluation of impact, relevance, and alignment

**Deliverable:** *DSA Monitoring & Evaluation Dashboard and Annual Performance Report*

## PILLAR 4: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Defines institutional governance, decision-making, and reporting structures that maintain integrity, compliance, and inclusivity.



### **Mechanisms include:**

- DSA SMT review cycles
- Cluster accountability sessions
- Risk, finance, and policy compliance monitoring
- Quarterly and Annual reporting to the DVC: Student Affairs

**Deliverable:** *DSA Governance Calendar and Accountability Matrix*

## **PILLAR 5: TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

Focuses on nurturing a purpose-driven, ethical, and compassionate institutional culture through:

- Leadership and professional development
- Staff wellbeing and mindfulness programmes
- Communities of practice and reflective learning spaces

**Deliverable:** *DSA Transformation and Leadership Development Plan*





# THE SEVEN KEY STRATEGIC AREAS (KSAs)

The **seven KSAs** provide the structural backbone for integrating DSA's clusters. They act as **bridging mechanisms** through which operational plans are aligned, ensuring coherence, inclusivity, and transformation across the department.

KSA	STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS
KSA 1	Grow a Culture of Ethical Self-Organisation
KSA 2	Academy of Leadership Development
KSA 3	Develop a System of Integrated, Responsive and Agile Support
KSA 4	Transform the Environment for Social Cohesion and Social Justice
KSA 5	Create a Humanising Student Experience
KSA 6	Advance Health Promoting Practices
KSA 7	Student Success and Wellbeing



# IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

PHASE	TIMELINE	KEY ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS
<b>Strategic Alignment &amp; Planning</b>	Dec '25 - Jan '26	Strategic workshops, cluster goal alignment, and budget integration	DSA Strategic Implementation Plan
<b>Execution &amp; Coordination</b>	Feb '26 - Sep '26	Programme delivery, cross-cluster coordination, mid-year review	Cluster Progress Reports
<b>Review &amp; Reflection</b>	Oct '26 - Nov '26	Evaluation of performance, feedback sessions, and evidence review	DSA Annual Performance & Impact Report
<b>Adjustment &amp; Forward Planning</b>	Dec '26	State of Readiness Workshop and future goal setting	Updated Implementation Plan for the following year

# ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

LEVEL	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>Executive Director: DSA</b>	Provides strategic oversight, ensures institutional alignment, and leads governance reporting.
<b>Senior Manager: Projects &amp; Administration</b>	Strategy implementation and institutional alignment. Facilitates governance reporting.
<b>Cluster Directors, Deputy Director and KSA Leads</b>	Translate strategic goals into operational plans and lead implementation.
<b>OSARIA</b>	Provides research, data analysis, and performance reporting.
<b>Finance and Governance Teams</b>	Ensure compliance, fiscal responsibility, and process integrity.



# MONITORING AND REVIEW

## MECHANISMS

Monitoring and reflection are ongoing processes embedded in DSA's rhythm of operations.

### KEY MECHANISMS INCLUDE:

- **Quarterly KSA and Cluster Reviews**
- **Annual State of Readiness Workshop** (December)
- **Mid-Term Strategic Review** (2026)
- **Annual Institutional Performance Report** to the DVC: Student Affairs

# REVIEW AND CONTINUOUS

## IMPROVEMENT

The Strategic Planning Framework will undergo an annual review led by the **ED: DSA**. Continuous feedback from clusters and governance structures will shape iterative improvement and ensure continued relevance.

## CONCLUSION

This framework positions the **DSA** as both a strategic and operational leader in advancing transformation, student development, and institutional well-being.

It bridges **strategy and practice**, connecting the seven KSAs and DSA clusters into one integrated ecosystem guided by **humanising pedagogy**, **ethical leadership**, and **collaborative innovation**.

Through this, the DSA reaffirms that strategic planning **is not merely an administrative process; it is an act of care, purpose, and vision** that sustains a humanising and flourishing university community.



# FRAMEWORK TEMPLATE

Based on the **Strategic Planning Framework (2025–2026)** the below is a **comprehensive DSA Strategic Reporting Template** that aligns DSA framework, the seven KSAs, and the implementation and monitoring cycle (Dec–Nov).

## UCT DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS (DSA) STRATEGIC REPORTING TEMPLATE

Reporting Period: ☐ Q1 ☐ Q2 ☐ Q3 ☐ Q4

Year: 2025 / 2026

Cluster / KSA:

Submitted by:

Date:

### SECTION 1: STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT *(Framework Pillar 1)*

#### AREA

#### Description

**Strategic Objective(s)**

State the strategic objective(s) this report relates to (from the DSA Strategic Implementation Plan or Cluster Plan).

**Linked KSA(s)**

**Identify relevant KSA(s):**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 01 Ethical Self-Organisation   | <input type="checkbox"/> 02 Leadership Academy        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 03 Integrated Support          | <input type="checkbox"/> 04 Social Cohesion & Justice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 05 Humanising Experience       | <input type="checkbox"/> 06 Health Promotion          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 07 Student Success & Wellbeing |   |

**Alignment to UCT Vision  
2030 / 2035**

Describe how these actions contribute to UCT's Vision and transformation priorities.

**Alignment to Institutional  
Priorities / DVC Portfolio**

Indicate relevant institutional goals or mandates that this contributes to.

## SECTION 2: OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE *(Framework Pillar 2)*

<b>Operational Objective</b>	e.g., Enhance student residence experience
<b>Planned Activity</b>	Leadership training workshops
<b>Actual Output / Progress</b>	3 workshops completed with 86% participation
<b>Timeline / Status</b>	On Track / Completed
<b>Responsible Person</b>	Cluster Head: SH&RL
<b>Evidence / Supporting Docs</b>	Attendance register, feedback forms

### Summary of Key Achievements:

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### Challenges / Barriers:

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### Mitigation Actions:

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### SECTION 3: MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING *(Framework Pillar 3)*

<b>Performance Indicator (KPI)</b>	e.g., % students accessing wellness services
<b>Baseline</b>	65%
<b>Target</b>	75%
<b>Current Achievement</b>	72%
<b>Variance</b>	-3%
<b>Reflection / Lessons Learned</b>	Increased demand; new booking system improved access

#### Evidence of Impact:

- Quantitative (data trends, KPIs, survey results)
- Qualitative (student feedback, narratives, testimonials)

#### Learning / Recommendations for Next Cycle:

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#### SECTION 4: GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY *(Framework Pillar 4)*

<b>Governance Mechanism / Forum</b>	e.g. ED: DSA Review
<b>Date Held</b>	15 May 2025
<b>Key Decisions / Outcomes</b>	Approved the new student engagement model
<b>Follow-up Actions</b>	Implement a pilot at 3 residences
<b>Responsible Person</b>	KSA5 Lead

#### Compliance / Risk Notes:

- Policy, finance, or process deviations
- Corrective actions taken
- Audit-readiness comments

#### SECTION 5: TRANSFORMATIONAL CULTURE AND CAPACITY BUILDING *(Framework Pillar 5)*

<b>Initiative / Activity</b>	Mindfulness sessions for staff
<b>Purpose / Link to KSAs</b>	Supports KSA6 and KSA5
<b>Target Group</b>	DSA staff
<b>Outcome / Feedback</b>	Implement a pilot at 3 residences





#### Culture Reflections:

- How has this period contributed to a humanising, ethical, and compassionate culture?
- How has staff/student leadership capacity been developed?

## SECTION 6: RISK, DEPENDENCIES, AND READINESS *(Cross-cutting section)*

<b>Risk Description</b>	Delay in residence maintenance procurement
<b>Impact</b>	High
<b>Likelihood</b>	Medium
<b>Mitigation Plan</b>	Engage SCM early; weekly tracking
<b>Responsible</b>	Facilities Head
<b>Status</b>	In progress

## SECTION 7: SUMMARY DASHBOARD *(Executive Summary View)*

AREA	INDICATOR	RAG STATUS	COMMENTS / NEXT STEPS
<b>e.g. Strategic Alignment</b>	90% of activities aligned to KSAs		Well-integrated across clusters
<b>e.g. MEL Reporting</b>	Quarterly data submissions completed		Data ready for the OSARIA dashboard
<b>e.g. Governance</b>	All reviews are held on schedule		One session postponed
<b>e.g. Transformation</b>	Staff wellness initiatives implemented		Positive staff feedback

**LEGEND:**  On Track  At Risk  Off Track

## SECTION 8: REFLECTION AND FORWARD PLANNING

**Key lessons for upcoming quarter/year:**

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**Adjustments or innovations planned:**

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**Support required from ED: DSA or OSARIA:**

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### SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

<input type="checkbox"/>	Data validated by Cluster Director/Deputy Director / KSA Lead
<input type="checkbox"/>	Supporting evidence attached
<input type="checkbox"/>	Submitted to OSARIA for consolidation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Included in DSA Annual Performance & Impact Report

## NOTES







**Department of  
Student Affairs**  
Liberating the Soul for Well-being & Flourishing

## **DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS**

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