

Proposal for the strengthening, expansion and institutionalisation of the University of Cape Town (UCT) Global Citizenship: Leading for Social Justice Programme (GCP) 2018 to 2022

“GCP is an interdisciplinary, cross-faculty, active learning and leadership programme aimed at innovation in critical global citizenship, community engagement and social justice pedagogy.”

1. Introduction

This document has been developed to support the strengthening, expansion and institutionalisation of the *Global Citizenship: Leading for Social Justice Programme (GCP)* at the University of Cape Town. The GCP is an eight-year-old teaching, learning and development initiative located within the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT), a unit in the Centre for Higher Education and Development (CHED) at UCT. Drawing and reflecting on its exceptional progress since its start-up in 2010, this document outlines where the GCP has come from and its strategic intentions going forward, intentions that align strongly with UCT's broader transformation and development goals. It captures the important contribution the Programme has made to the University thus far and outlines what is needed going forward at the programme and institutional level if it is to be valued as and developed into a sustainable resource for UCT going forward.

2. The development of the GCP at UCT and its strategic importance for the University

UCT's new Strategic Planning Framework 2016 - 2020 (SPF) recognises that fundamental, transformational change across the institution must be integral to the pursuit of its strategic intentions over the next five years. Central to these and a key concern consistently articulated in the recent student protests across the public higher education system in South Africa, has been the need for improvements to and innovations in teaching and learning that bring about wide reaching changes to the curriculum and pedagogical practice. The SPF argues that this challenge is one that requires interrogating dominant “ways of knowing, seeing and teaching” so that students are enabled to become more active, engaged and critical thinkers within the local and global contexts of which they are part. Instilling such attributes in its graduates gives meaning to the central role of the university in building democracy and contributing to the public good.

While this focus on what is happening within the classroom and the nature of the learning experience for students is core to UCT's strategic intentions, it has also been consistently highlighted as a key transformation challenge confronting South Africa's entire public higher education system. Ten years ago, the national Ministerial

Committee set up to investigate discrimination in the public higher education system noted that limited progress had been made in “epistemological transformation, i.e. ‘how knowledge is conceived, constructed and transmitted’” (DHET, 2008, p 35)¹, with the consequence that universities were continuing to graduate “students with their views unchallenged” (ibid, p 35). More recently, a report prepared by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) on *Transformation at Public Universities in South Africa* (2016) argued that universities must through the curriculum “contribute to the development of a participatory, democratic, politically aware and critical citizenship in order to promote a culture founded on the respect for diversity and human rights” (SAHRC, 2016; p. 38). To do this universities need to be vigilant in reflecting on the relevance and responsiveness of their programmes to societal needs and the learning needs of their students.

These imperatives have been central to an important teaching and learning initiative set up at UCT in 2010 under the framework of the University’s previous Strategic Plan (2010-2014). This programme, the ***Global Citizenship: Leading for Social Justice Programme (GCP)*** was started with a small grant from the Vice-Chancellor’s Strategic Fund. It is located within the internationally recognised Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) within the Centre for Higher Education and Development (CHED) and is now specifically noted as an initiative for growth in Goal 5 of the new SP (2016 -2020). Since its start-up the Programme has seen approximately 2500 students from different faculties and levels of study participate in its academic offerings. These have primarily taken the form of three non-credit bearing short courses and, from 2013, a credit-bearing course open to students across all faculties,² offered in partnership with the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment. While pursuing a range of activities, these courses have formed the core of the GCP.³

From its inception, the intention of the GCP has been to provide learning opportunities for *students* to enable them to take up their roles as future citizens and leaders, roles that would require them to think about and act on global concerns *and* local issues, and grapple with the connections between them. The GCP was specifically designed to move beyond the parameters of a conventional academic programme. In the GCP students have been required to actively engage in the learning process as thoughtful and opinionated scholars and citizens, able to think about and respond in nuanced ways to contemporary issues. However, it was also recognised that for the GCP to achieve these objectives it would need to facilitate innovative forms of intellectual engagement. This would include exposing students to multi-disciplinary interrogation of issues as well as facilitating and deploying pedagogical practices where student’s knowledge is valued and where they enter into meaningful partnerships for knowledge sharing with

¹ Citing Hall (2006).

² The level at which the course is offered to students in a faculty is determined by the faculty to align with their academic programmes. However, the courses presently offered are designed for students at the 2nd and 3rd year level.

³ In 2017, the GCP received funding to pilot a 4th short course in partnership with Sol Plaatje University. It is envisaged that this course will form part of the broader programme offerings from 2018.

communities. Through such learning opportunities the fundamental relations of power that dominate our society, including in the creation and sharing of knowledge, are reflected on and challenged, enabling students to build a sense of critical citizenship and social activism through intellectual engagement. The importance of these issues for students and the value of the GCP has been consistently articulated by those students who have completed one or more of the courses. Put simply, as one student commented

The Global Citizenship course has allowed me to explore ideas, and gain a sensitivity which cannot be taught. As a Civil Engineering student, I have found that we occupy a very interesting space in that we have to be technically minded while appreciating that our endeavours, once we are in the work environment, shall have a direct impact on people's lives. GC has allowed me to re-examine where I see myself within the world and critically evaluate the ideas I have about development, and those we so often unjustifiably see as the 'Other' when we think about such engagements. It has challenged this thinking and subtly appealed to my sense of humanity, leading me to resist a gung-ho approach to issues of social justice (3rd year Civil Engineering student)

While the primary focus of the programme is on the students and building active citizens, the GCP has also been cognisant that such learning opportunities are enabled through scholarly spaces where pedagogical practice is reflected on and consistently enhanced through research and intellectual engagement. This has meant that the GPC has also been focused on *academic staff*. Key strategies in this regard have included the development of young scholars from historically disadvantaged groups, building necessary research capacity around the concerns the GPC seeks to address and working with existing academic staff to develop more responsive and socially just pedagogies within the academy. Central to the latter has been the envisaging of the GCP as an important vehicle for building 'engaged scholarship' at UCT, where "academics scholarly and/or professional expertise (is utilized) with an intentional public purpose or benefit" (UCT Strategic Plan, 2016).

Throughout its development, the GCP has consistently worked in ways that cross traditional institutional and disciplinary boundaries and actively demonstrated how important such intra-institutional collaboration is to building new communities of practice and facilitating *institutional change*. Similarly, through its service learning orientation strong partnerships and networks have been developed and sustained with external partners and communities, including international ones. Most recently, the GCP enabled UCT to enter into a strong collaborative partnership with Sol Plaatje University, thus contributing directly to the development of a new university in South Africa and strengthening opportunities for institutional collaboration – once again, a key priority for the country's higher education sector (DHET, 2013)⁴. Developing and sustaining such partnerships across the institution and with the broader society are exceptionally important to UCT. They are key to creating a supportive intellectual environment able

⁴ White Paper on Post School Education and Training (2013).

to attract and connect people, including staff and students, across the world, particularly across the African continent (UCT Strategic Plan, 2016).

Central to the GCP's development has been the existence of strong, *visionary leadership* that has been able to translate the conceptual underpinnings of the Programme into the exciting academic offerings now in place and consistently enhance its increasing stature and innovative potential across the University. This leadership has primarily been provided by Dr Janice McMillan, one of the two co-founders of the GCP and the staff member who has led it since its inception. In addition to her 20 years teaching and research experience in critical and popular pedagogy in the field of adult education at UCT, Dr McMillan has participated in and led a number of institutional, national and international initiatives in service learning and community engaged pedagogy and built through these a range of important networks. This innovative work led to her being part of the setting up the Stanford University programme in Cape Town in 2010 on which she also taught for five years. Her innovative teaching work has been especially recognised. In 2016 she received the UCT Collaborative Educational Practice Award for the GCP course in the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, and a Distinguished Teacher Award, the highest teaching award at UCT. In addition to Directing the GCP, Dr McMillan is also presently involved in assisting the Deputy Vice Chancellor Research and Internationalisation to grow and develop UCT's social responsiveness initiative.

3. The GCP in 2017 and priority strategies for the way forward

The GCP is now in its eighth year and has undertaken a process of strategic reflection to consider the way forward (See Appendix A for an overview of what is presently in place). The recent student protests at UCT and across the sector have brought into sharp focus the value and importance of initiatives such as the GCP in contributing to the kind of transformative changes demanded of South African universities by students and the broader society. However, for such value to be properly harnessed across the institution the GCP needs to be expanded, strengthened and institutionalised so that it becomes a sustainable and viable programme at UCT. With this broad imperative in mind and taken the institutional need that exists, the following have been identified as the *four main strategies* that the GCP intends to pursue over the next five years. These strategies are intended to build on the significant progress that has been made to date and enable the further development of the Programme in ways that will harness its innovative potential for the institution.

3.1 Consolidating and expanding innovative teaching and learning

A central focus of the GPC over the next five years will be to both consolidate but also expand its academic offerings, enabling substantially more students to undertake the courses on offer and increasing the number of academic staff involved in and engaged with the Programme. The intention is particularly to increase both the number of short courses on offer (non-credit bearing but which are noted on a student's academic

transcript) and those that a student can gain credit for as part of their academic programme. The latter courses, drawing on what has already been learnt from the successful Social Infrastructures course within the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, are regarded as an especially important area for growth, enabling the direct involvement of faculties and aligning the content and pedagogical practices of the GCP with specific disciplinary and professional requirements. This process of expansion will also include the further development of specific student training opportunities that the GCP has piloted, such as workshops facilitating cross student dialogue across difficult issues related to social justice and training students to mediate and manage such engagements. The Programme's positioning in CILT also allows for the exploration of blended and online learning spaces which provide another excellent opportunity for not only growing student numbers but also sustaining practice. This location greatly facilitated the success of the partnership with Sol Plaatje University during which we piloted a course on active citizenry through dialogue and deliberation that drew on a combination of face-to-face and online provision.

In addition to increasing student participation, reaching more staff through the Programme is also seen as important over the next five years. While the GCP intends to do this by creating a greater presence across faculties and involving more staff directly in its activities, a key focus over this period will be expanding the opportunities that the Programme has created for the mentorship of young black scholars, especially around the development of critical community engaged learning and associated pedagogical practices. This focus on GCP as an incubator for such learning and development among young staff is also regarded as important to strengthening existing UCT and government initiatives aimed at the development of young black and women academics.

3.2 Strengthening the research base

Underpinning the GCP's development from the outset has been the recognition that for it to be successful it must be underpinned by a strong research base that enables the ongoing building of new knowledge around innovative teaching and learning practice in higher education, particularly through the lens of social justice. Although the Programme has created the opportunity for such scholarship to emerge, reflected mainly through several publications produced by the Director and her participation in a range of academic conferences and networks, it is felt that over the next five years the GCP needs to develop a stronger research base. Especially important here will be strengthening the GCP's capacity to contribute to the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education, a growing field both within South Africa and internationally. It is recognised that in addition to increasing the Programme's research outputs, expanding the pool of post-graduate students connected to and undertaking supervised research within the Programme will be important to building such a base. An additional activity envisaged to take forward this strategy will be the development of a GCP seminar programme, creating a space for intellectual engagement for staff and students involved in the work of the programme and creating the opportunity for the GCP to build a greater intellectual presence on campus.

3.3 Contributing to institutional transformation

Section 2 of this document has captured the important ways in which the GCP has in the past contributed, and continues to contribute, to critical elements of UCT's transformation agenda. As already noted, the student protests of the last two years have reinforced the urgency and importance of transformative change across the higher education sector that moves beyond the rhetorical to grapple with necessary shifts in thinking about the curriculum, pedagogical practice and how knowledge is created and shared within the university. These contextual challenges mean that over the next five years the GCP has an even greater role to play across the institution and strengthening its contribution to institutional transformation will continue to form an important part of its activities going forward. Especially important here will be continuing to work across traditional institutional barriers and build a vibrant community of practice across the institution involved in the development and translation of innovative teaching and learning practice. Similarly, and especially important to the present context, will be the Programme's efforts to strengthen through its courses and other offerings the voice of students within the classroom, including enhancing the potential of "horizontal learning spaces" where students are placed at the nexus of the university and external communities. It is also envisaged that through the work of the Director in particular, the GCP will continue to play an important leadership role in taking forward UCT's new strategic goals.

3.4 Deepening existing partnerships and building new networks

Section 2 has also drawn attention to the importance of partnerships across the institution and with external role players to realising the objectives of the GCP, particularly towards enabling students to make meaning of local concerns within a globalised world. This imperative aligns strongly with UCT's plans to strengthen its transformation efforts over the next five years through improved internationalisation. Providing students with a university experience that exposes them to the diversity and the complexity of a globalised world and facilitates international engagement is regarded as a key to these efforts (UCT, 2017)⁵. Over the next five years a key strategy for the Programme will be the strengthening and deepening of its existing partnerships and the building of new networks, especially across the African continent and the broader global south. Especially important here will be the development of partnerships with all faculties across the University and the deepening of the innovative working partnership already in place between the GCP and the Department of Student Affairs. Similarly, the Programme will continue to build its relationship with student organisations and extend the range of collaborative initiatives with these structures. Externally, especially important for the Programme will be the developing partnership with Sol Plaatje University and its involvement in key international networks such as the EU funded Global Education Learning Platform (GELP) and the Talloires Network.

⁵ Draft UCT strategy on internationalization (2018 – 2020)

4. Sustainable staffing framework for the expansion and strengthening of the programme

At present the GCP is located within the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) within CHED, with one permanent institutional staff member, the Director, employed at a Senior Lecturer level. Additional capacity is enabled through the employment of six core part-time programme staff on temporary or short-term contracts that have been funded to date through third stream income (Appendix B captures GCP's present staffing arrangements). In addition, each of the short courses employs two facilitators and four tutors on short term contracts. Although to date the GCP has made exceptional progress, its ability to expand its offerings and strengthen its role across the institution through the strategies outlined above is strongly dependent on a more sustainable and strengthened staffing base and through this, greater institutional commitment to institutionalising the Programme. Central to this is the establishment of two additional full-time and one additional part-time institutional posts within the Programme who together with the Director would form the Programme's staffing core. It is envisaged that additional staff members employed on a part-time basis and funded through third-stream income would then support this core. The diagram below captures this staffing framework, showing the envisaged roles and lines of organisational accountability.

Proposed GCP staffing framework

