



South African Council  
for the Architectural Profession

**REPORT OF THE VIRTUAL VISITING SACAP VALIDATION BOARD AND THE  
COMMONWEALTH ASSOCIATION FOR ARCHITECTS (CAA) TO  
THE ARCHITECTURAL PROGRAMMES AT  
THE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE AND PLANNING AT  
THE UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND (WITS)**

**PURPOSE OF THE VALIDATION VISIT: VALIDATION VISIT  
18 – 20 OCTOBER 2021  
FINAL REPORT**



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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The South African Council for the Architectural Professions and the Commonwealth Association of Architects Validation Board, acting as Education and Training Qualifications Authority (ETQA) for the Council on Higher Education, virtually visited the School of Architecture and Planning (SoAP) at the University of Witwatersrand from 18-20 October 2021.

The validation visit served to assess the quality and relevance of the:

- Bachelor of Architectural Studies (BAS) – Candidate Technologist
- Honours in Bachelor of Architectural Studies (BAS- Hons) – Candidate Senior Technologist
- Master of Architecture (MArch) – Candidate Architect

The Validation Board is satisfied that the three programmes meet the minimum standards requisite for recognition set by SACAP. This report contains the findings of the Validation Board.

A summary statement was presented to the SoAP at WITS verbally over the virtual platform on the 20 October 2021 and in writing on the 20 October 2021.

The Validation Board thanks the WITS University executive management, the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment at the University of the Witwatersrand and School of Architecture and Planning (SoAP) for their assistance during the visit.

## 2 LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALS	Architecture Learning Site
CAA	Commonwealth Association for Architecture
CA	Canberra Accord
CBE	Council for the Built Environment
CHE	Council on Higher Education
SACAP	South African Council for the Architectural Profession
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SoAP	School of Architecture and Planning
VB	Validation Board
WITS	Witwatersrand University



### **3 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The VB wishes to thank the following for their time, effort, arrangements, and hospitality:

DVC Prof. R. Osman, DVC: Academics

**Acting Dean of Faculty of the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment:** Prof C. Musingwini,

**Assistant Dean the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment :** Prof: A. Fitchett

**Head of School of Architecture and Planning:** Professor Nnamdi Elleh

**Programme Director:** Mr Garret Gantner

The staff, students, alumni, and part-time lecturers represented at the virtual visit for making time available and sharing information.

### **4 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The VB acknowledges the support and importance that the leadership places on the role of SoAP in WITS University. This was echoed in the discussions with the DVC Academic, Prof Osman and the Faculty of Engineering Acting Dean, Prof Musingwini and Prof Fitchett.

The SoAP is cognisant of the requirements for transformation in the current South African societal context as well as in the built environment, and is aligned with the mission and the vision of the Faculty and the University of the Witwatersrand.

The VB recognises the strong leadership both at faculty level and at the school level. This is evident in the ongoing upgrading of the facilities of the school specifically the historical building, John Moffat. Before the lockdown extra space was made available inside the building. The VB also commends the SoAP for the diligent manner in which the validation documents and processes were organised by the school.

The staff are highly motivated and innovative in their teaching practice and especially with the transition to online learning during the lockdown. The school has an enthusiastic and energetic body of students.



The VB commends the SoAP staff for all their efforts in a most difficult time during the COVID-19 pandemic. The use of the ULWAZI site, which is the WITS internal Learning Management System, was an effective way for staff to communicate with the students. WITS is also commended for supplying laptops to students who were in need before the lockdown so that all WITS students were able to transition from contact to online learning.

The school is also highly commended for their 2020 Prizewinning Student Design Work, the VB panel members enjoyed seeing all the designs that the winning students had created. Both the school and the students are commended for an excellent job done.

#### **4.2 Recommendations to SACAP**

The VB recommends to SACAP the:

- Unconditional continued validation be granted for the Bachelor of Architectural Studies (BAS) programme, for registration as Candidate Architectural Technologist,
- Unconditional continued validation be granted for the Bachelor of Architectural Studies Honour's (BAS Hons) programme, for registration as Candidate Senior Architectural Technologist, and,
- Unconditional continued validation be granted for the Master of Architecture (MArch) programme, for registration as Candidate Architects.

The next validation visit will be in five years' time (October 2026).

#### **4.3 Specific advice to the ALS**

The VB recommends that, despite the unconditional continued validation being granted, the ALS addresses the following issues prior to the next validation visit;

- Continuous improvement of the school would be maintained if the standard ratio of the staff vs. students is maintained at 1:15 as prescribed by the SACAP guidelines and Canberra Accord.
- That SoAP to develop an ideal workload plan for SoAP staff that recognises the unique teaching requirements of architecture programmes and to accordingly shape their research requirements and expectations in an equitable manner.
- The VB acknowledges the Head of SoAP research development strategy as a positive move that that will take time to develop and yield results.
- The transformation agenda of the school for hiring and promoting a diverse body of staff is an ongoing exercise that needs to be planned for strategically with clearly outlined short term and long goals.

## 5 PREAMBLE

SACAP has a mandate in terms of the Architectural Profession Act, 2000 (Act 44 of 2000) to assess the quality and relevance of qualifications which will lead to registration as a candidate and eventually professional registration and practice. Its quality assurance mechanism comprises validation visits by SACAP appointed VBs to each of the ALSs situated at South African institutions. These visits are conducted every five years.

The aim of a validation visit is further to validate that the graduates from the visited ALS meet the requisite standards for Part 1 (BAS) and Part 2 (M.Arch) set out by the Canberra Accords which both the SACAP and CAA subscribe to. This allows for further opportunities for graduates internationally. Depending on the nature of a qualification, a validated qualification enables graduates to register in one of the categories of Candidate Draughtsperson, Candidate Architectural Technologist, Candidate Senior Architectural Technologist or Candidate Architect with SACAP and subsequently as professionals after two years of in-service training and the passing of an examination in professional practice.

## 6 VALIDATION PROCESS, AIM AND OBJECTIVES

Validation is an outcomes-based, peer-reviewed evaluation of architectural qualifications. SACAP evaluates the evidence as presented by the ALS and revealed by means of interviewing staff, students and external examiners. Accreditation, as conducted by the Council on Higher Education (CHE), focuses on procedures and processes, and although SACAP may comment on issues such as governance and administration, those are mainly the domain of the CHE. In addition, validation provides a benchmark of international standard as well as allowing mobility of students between the various programmes offered by validated ALSs.

The broad aim of the validation system is the safeguarding of standards in architectural education by means of a recognition process. This report is aimed at providing an assessment for the validation of the Bachelor of Architectural Studies (BAS) programme, the Bachelor of Architectural Studies Honour's (BAS Hons) programme, the Master of Architecture (MArch) programme at WITS.

## 7 CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

The criteria applied are aligned with SACAP and the CAA Competencies for the Architectural Profession. The process is prescribed in SACAP's Validation Guidelines, referred to as the Validation Protocols. The architectural competencies prescribe a range of skills and knowledge fields for each of the four architectural professional categories and are approximately aligned with the qualifications being validated. To allow for the diversity of philosophies and focus that exists at ALSs, it is accepted that some competencies will be more developed at some institutions than at others.

Although the validation process is standardised for consistency and equality, the intrinsic diversity of



learning programmes is accepted and celebrated. The ALS undergoing validation is expected to clearly articulate and explain how its programme is positioned and unique characteristics of the programme and its niche can be highlighted.

The panel must assess courses/modules/subjects in terms of structure, credits, content, teaching and learning, and intellectual intensity in terms of the year offered. An ALS must also indicate how continuity and vertical progression are achieved in the transition between qualifications. Of specific importance are the requirements for, and envisaged format of, final year design theses and the examination procedures.

## **MEMBERS OF THE VALIDATION BOARD**

The panel consisted of Dr Finzi Saidi (VB Chairperson), Ms Mathebe Aphane (VB member), Mr Johnathan Manning (VB member), Ms Alethea Duncan-Brown (VB member), Mr John Kagiso Molebatsi (VB member), Ms Naledi Gumede (SACAP Observer), Ms So Ching (CAA representative), Mr Belang Rapalai (CAA representative), Ms Boineelo Masuku (CAA observer), Dr Katlego Mwale (CAA observer), Mr Sandile Boyi (CBE observer) and Ms Kimberley Rowan (SACAP Manager: Education and Accreditation & Secretariat). No conflicts of interest were reported. A detailed schedule of VB members and their qualifications is appended (Annexure D).

## **8 OBSERVATIONS AND FEEDBACK**

### **Intellectual Identity**

The VB is of the view SoAP offers unique and responsive architecture programmes based on its location in Johannesburg which are well-known and do attract a wide cohort of students from with South Africa and the African continent. The identity of the architectural programmes of the School of Architecture and Planning is one which recognises the changing nature of the architectural profession, while endeavouring to continue to contribute towards knowledge and technological advancement within the discipline. This was evident in the continuous curriculum improvement in course content by integrating indigenous knowledge into curriculum content in the learning experience of students as well as adding a new course that addresses broader global climate and social challenges.

It aims to educate the next generation of architects, providing them with the necessary skills to practice at a national and international scale. The SoAP has made resources available for student scholarships and they have currently raised over R6 million in funds for both the undergraduate and postgraduate programme. Student access and staff innovation has successfully moved to an online platform since the beginning of 2020 due to the COVID regulations and the strict lockdown.

## TRANSFORMATION

### Background & Context

SACAP is concerned about a general lack of progress in the transformation of the Architectural Profession, particularly in relation to the following metrics:

Only 28,1% of SACAP Registered Professionals are Black versus 92,2% of the population of the country;

Only 24,5% of SACAP Registered Professionals are Women versus 51,1% of the population of the country;

The overall number of SACAP Registered Professional Architects who are black increased by just 78 (12,6%) between 2013 and 2020;

The percentage of Black Professional Architects as a proportion of all SACAP Registered Professional Architects has declined from 17,4% in 2013 to 16,9% in 2020;

Large numbers of architectural graduates who are black appear not to progress beyond BAS or BTech and do not return to university to complete an MArch degree that would facilitate eventual registration as a Professional Architect.

### University Policy

The University of the Witwatersrand has established the Wits Transformation Office and identified 8 Key Transformation Priorities:

1. Diversifying the Wits Academy: Internal and external sourcing process including the advancement of identified talent;
2. Curriculum Reform: A curriculum reform which includes African theorists and is both locally and globally relevant;
3. Student Admissions: Demographic and class diversity, and cosmopolitanism of students, across all programmes;
4. Promotion of a diverse & Cosmopolitan Residence Life Experience: Cosmopolitan residence that is representative of students from different backgrounds and race;
5. Institutional Culture: Optimising organisational design and culture-change
6. Institutional Naming: Symbolic names and or statues that are informed by Western and indigenous traditions;
7. Language: A resource instrument to enable staff and students to develop competence in one of at least two South African languages – Nguni and Sotho;
8. Insourcing and Outsourcing: Process to ensure insourcing all outsourced services that involve vulnerable workers.

## Transformation of the Architecture Programme

The SoAP measures its transformation progress in relation to the following indicators:

- Diversity of studio staff within in the programme (with respect to race);
- Gender balance of staff;
- Gender balance of students;
- Balance of throughput rates regardless of race/gender;
- Visible and tangible institutional culture change within the programmes;
- Visible and tangible curriculum change.

## Progress & Successes

Curriculum Change – Efforts to broaden the curriculum beyond western and Eurocentric traditions towards a more inclusive and decolonised model of Architectural Education are noted and applauded, in particular the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems as part of 1st Year History and Theory.

Student Intake – The percentage of black applicants as a proportion of all applicants admitted to BAS 1st Year has increased substantially in the last 10 years (76.7% in 2021 compared to 45.1% in 2010).

Growth in the proportion of MArch students who are Black as a proportion of all MArch students (63.6% in 2021 compared to 37.5% in 2016)

Majority of students are women in both BAS and MArch programmes;

Relatively high throughput rates of 80-90% for BAS and 91% for MArch during the 2018-2020 period;

Support – Various support mechanisms both financial and academic are available to assist students who may be struggling for one reason or another, including various scholarships, redirected fees to fund excursions and materials, academic support available via the Academic Development Unit, Wits Writing Centre and Wits Language School.

## Shortcomings & Concerns

The low percentage of black (African) applicants being admitted (4,2%) is of concern, although the ALS's assertion that this is "evidence of major structural problems with the South African secondary education system and is entirely beyond the control of the School" is noted;

Higher exclusion and drop-out rates prevalent amongst Black students;

Racial disparity in relation to performance and weighted average mark (WAM);



Lower qualification rate amongst MArch students who are black (68.2% for black African students versus 81% for white students);

An apparent lack of continuity between the content of the decolonised 1st Year History and Theory course and that of subsequent years is highlighted as a missed opportunity;

Just 16,6% of academic staff are black South Africans, although this is a metric that most ALSs in South Africa are struggling achieve progress against and it is also noted that three additional Black members of staff are currently counted amongst the “Non-SA” category.

### **Recommendations**

The maintenance of a Staff/Student Ratio above 1:15 is seen as critical to providing necessary studio contact time to support improved throughput rates amongst students and close the gap in weighted average marks between Black and White students;

Focus on funding of scholarships for Honours and Masters students’ in need of financial support, especially Black students;

The success of the 1st Year History and Theory Course in incorporating decolonised course content into the curriculum should be expanded to latter years;

The proposed part-time BAS Honours course is supported with a view to facilitating progression towards eventual PrArch registration for students who would not otherwise be able to complete their Honours and Masters degrees due to financial constraints;

As a long-term strategy SoAP could explore ways of increasing the participation of students from diverse backgrounds in the post-graduate programmes- honours and masters;

Initiation of short courses aimed at supplementing and supporting SACAP’s Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) initiative is recommended.

### **Other Proposals**

Establishment of an outreach programme in partnership with identified secondary schools, possibly in collaboration with SAIA and SACAP, is proposed as a possible means of overcoming hurdles to 1st Year entry for applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds;

The VB suggests re-initiation of the funded Foundation course to orientate and better prepare students for entry into 1st Year.

## **9 COMMENTARY**

### **9.1 Documentation, Digital Presentation, and Exhibition of Work**



The documentation was timeously distributed to the members of the VB before the visit. It was clear and well compiled, and addressed concerns highlighted in the previous validation report from October 2016. The information was further expanded on and clarified in presentations by the Programme Director, Mr Garret Gantner, the Head of School, Professor Nnamdi Elleh and selected staff members.

All work, including course outlines, moderation reports and student assessments was digitally presented in the ULWAZI site as well as in websites which held some of the portfolio work.

The VB also commends the “2020 Prizewinning Student Design Work”. The work that was presented to the VB by the awarded students was of a high calibre.

## **9.2 Self-Appraisal and Response to the Previous Validation Report**

The School has been effective in addressing the previous concerns that were raised at the validation visit of 2016. The VB noted and was pleased with the investment in, and, the refurbishment of the John Moffat building that has taken place. The second year Design in the BAS programme has been strengthened to better prepare students for third year BAS. It was also evident that the programmes have been better aligned to the competency requirements of each SACAP category of registration. WITS is commended for taking seriously their transformation agenda through the introduction of the eight (8) key transformation points in their Transformation Policy.

## **9.3 Meetings with Management (Acting Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment : Mr C. Musingwini and the Associate Dean: Ms Anne Fitchett)**

The VB held constructive and transparent discussions with the Acting Dean and the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment who pointed out the challenges that SoAP had to overcome.

In general the VB extended their congratulations to the school for having an excellent set of programmes which have a high throughput rate and has taken the lead within the country. The VB also noted that WITS being ranked as the 500<sup>th</sup> best school in the world is an excellent achievement.

The VB commended the management team for having a very good and excited group of lecturing staff. The VB also commended management for the massive renovations that were done to the facilities since the previous visit in 2016. The innovations achieved by the school due to covid and online learning were happily noted by the VB members.

The 8 key transformation points that the SoAP has developed is a good innovation to lead transformation in the country, however, there are still transformation and strategic issues that needs to be addressed. These include the staff vs. student ratio which should be the RIBA recommended ratio of 1:15. At the moment the lecturing staff are overwhelmed with the number of students and the amount of time it takes to develop the student individually. Management should also engage with their staff and plan how to achieve a number of research publications in a sustainable manner.

The student enrolment for black students seem fairly even, however the numbers seem to dwindle as the years progress with black student numbers becoming evidently lower in the postgraduate programmes. The enrolment based on the mathematics entry requirements is seen to deter students from applying for enrolment, resulting in the school to lower the entry requirement and adding a mathematics module at first year.

Due to the increase in the number of graduate students, teaching at postgraduate level should be addressed in terms of the staff cohort. The management team can possibly look at innovative programmes such as night classes or weekend classes to support RPL for upgrades of registration categories.

Prof. Musingwini commented that the challenge with the ratio of students vs. staff is related to the funding that comes from government, the student enrolments are driven by government subsidies. The only way to increase the budget is to increase the student enrolment.

In general, management seemed very committed and supportive of the School's vision and mission.

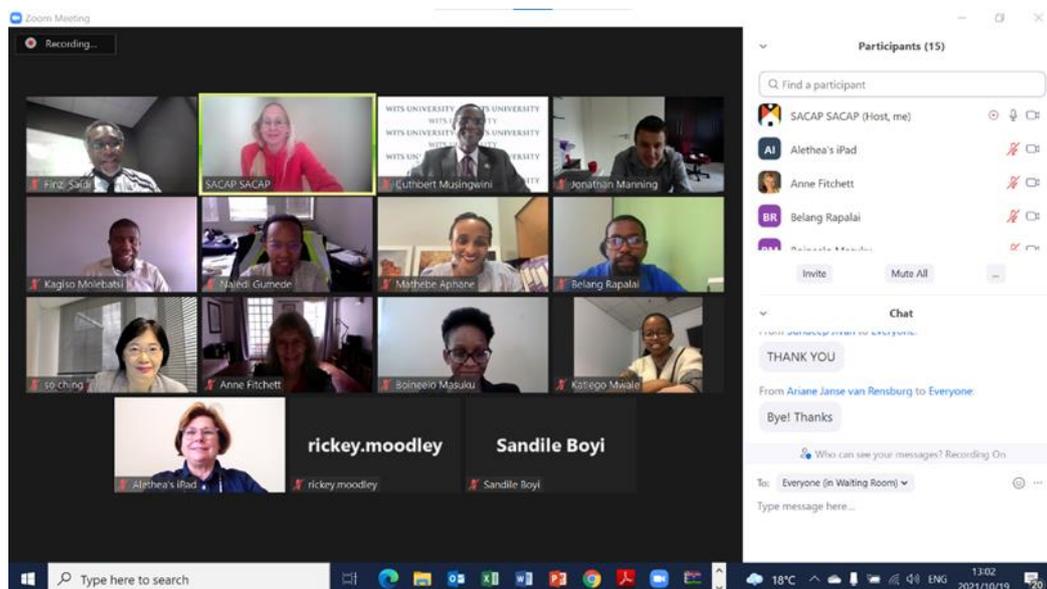


Photo 1: The VB meets with the Acting Dean (Prof. C. Musingwini) and the Associate Dean (Prof. Anne Fitchette)

#### 9.4 Comments Based on an Interview with the External Examiners

The external examiners felt that the programmes in the SoAP are addressing serious issues about some deep history topics, especially within Africa and how the landscapes were used on the continent. Covid affected students negatively and online learning in the beginning was problematic however the external examiners said that students were still able to produce good work.

They raised concerns around innovations to the programmes – *“will the students leave it behind when they leave the school or will the students apply their knowledge as they learn overall”*.

The external examiners commented that transformative issues aren't being dealt with adequately. They felt that apartheid and post-covid issues of living spaces should be a topic for discussion.

The Design classes are quite big and range between 75-80 students, the design courses have intensive teaching programme.

Construction in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year is based on the buildings in Braamfontein – multiple storey construction buildings. The external examiner felt that students still needed mentorship after completion of their studies but also commented that all students have been employable after the course. Students that go through to the BAS (Hons) have a good concept of detail for what they have learnt in their third year.

A comment made by an external examiner “that a 30 minute time slot for final presentations of dissertation per student after 5 years of intensive study is insufficient for them to do justice to the work they have undertaken and should be given at least one hour to present their work and to include the examiners feedback, the whole process crit process is too rushed.”

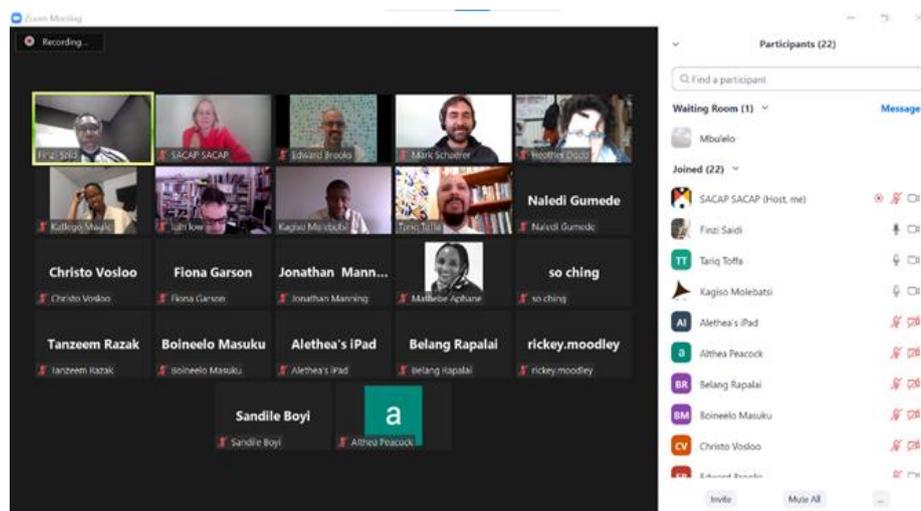


Photo 2: The VB meets with the external examiners.

## 9.5 Comments Based on an Interview with Students

The validation visit to the SoAP received inputs from a vibrant and outspoken group of students (57 students in total). Students commented that the transition into first year can be challenging because there is an expectation of prior architectural knowledge. The students admitted that doing projects online was a big help during the covid pandemic but also found certain elements to online learning challenging. They felt that more could be done to improve the social online interaction amongst peers as the students were not learning as a group but rather an individual. Students commented that online did also help them to manage their time more appropriately. They also felt that if the online learning platform was to be used in the coming years more should be done to prepare the student with online drawing and how

to use the ULWAZI system effectively.

The students commented that the school assists them with free data. However, it was noted that they often needed more data as their projects are generally data intensive.

The students commented on the lack of scholarships/bursaries available for post graduate studies. This in turn has an impact on students being able to access the MArch (Prof) Programme.

The students commended the fact that lecturers were available for students who were finding it difficult to cope during the covid lockdown and WITS also had resources for student counselling. The students acknowledged that their lecturers were doing a good job with the presentations on the online platform, however they also felt that projects should accommodate online learning as they felt that the projects were so very much studio based.

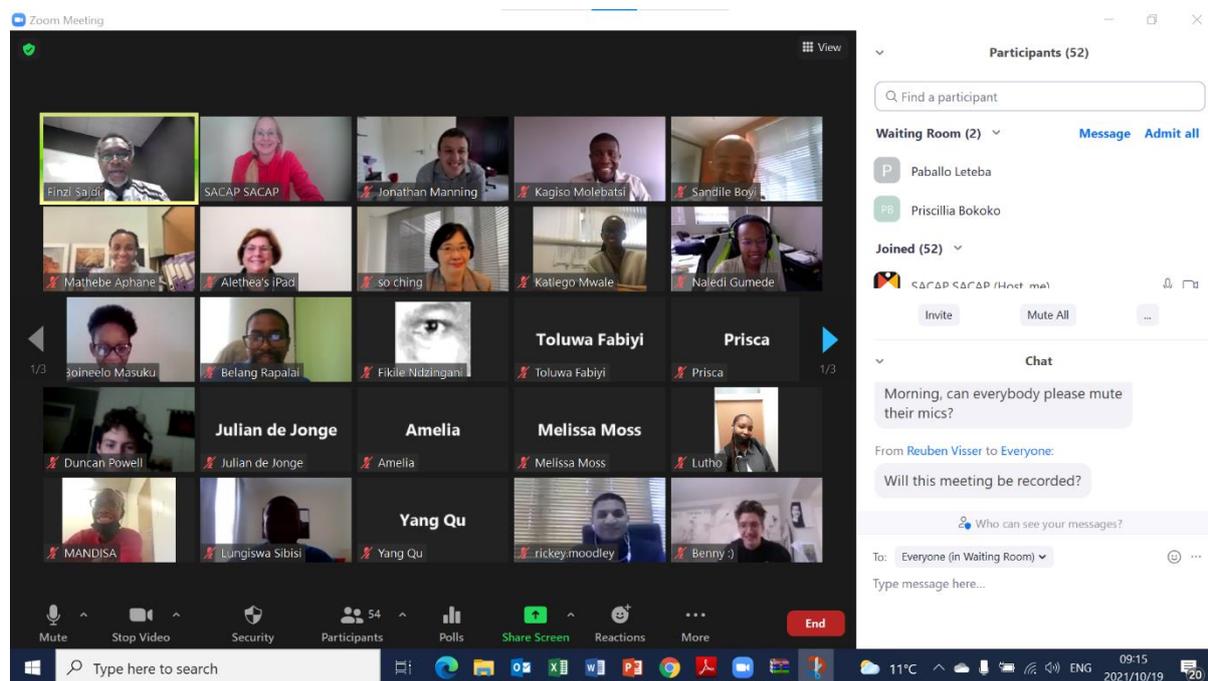


Photo 3: The VB interviewing the students from the SoAP

## 9.6 Comments Based on an Interview with Staff

The complimentary and diverse teaching methods of the staff exposes students to team-based, cross-disciplinary, and design-research forms of teaching architecture. The staff had to undergo many challenges of shifting architectural education to online under the COVID-19 lockdown conditions. Online learning meant that staff had to give 100% of their time to students.

The staff commends WITS for coming up with the eight (8) key points of transformation as a sign that WITS is taking transformation seriously. The staff felt that the key issue impeding the school's transformation progress were an insufficient number of staff and insufficient time. The staff commented that they are working over their recommended timeframes with a lot of energy needed to produce the targets that are expected of them. The Transformation Policy is clear but drafting new programmes is taking much of the staffs' time, there is little "teaching" resources available and the staff are stretched.

The staff also commented on the lack of time for research publications due to the demands of teaching. It would be beneficial for WITS management to have a discussion with the academic staff and to address and articulate the concerns raised.

The MArch [Prof] programme is coordinated by one staff member, and students are assigned a supervisor. Thus, each student has year-long access to one academic staff member primarily, and another secondarily, allowing for a high degree of staff-student contact. While this is of benefit to the student, pressure from the University to increase enrolment numbers at postgraduate level may force a rethinking of this individual-based thesis model, as supervisory capacity amongst staff is already approaching its limit.



Photo 4: The VB interviewing the academic staff members

## 10 FACILITIES AND RESOURCING

### 10.1 SoAP Facilities:

The John Moffat Building is undergoing substantial refurbishments. It is envisaged that this will meet the future needs of the school. The studio spaces are in a process of being upgraded but the Masters studio is complete with new furniture. The upgrade will also include the exhibition area, whose furniture for social spaces has already been procured.

The teaching facilities are adequate. The temporary CAD lab is well equipped with over 100 computers which are equipped with state of the art software that enables the students to access most of the software they need with minimal or no data costs. This made the transition to online learning more efficient under COVID-19 lockdown rules. The CAD lab is also equipped with printers which are accessible to the students. The workshop area is equipped with laser cutters of different sizes, 3D printers, CNC mill and woodworking and metalworking equipment and provides students the opportunity to design, test and make their projects.

The School's in-house library is well equipped with reading and other media materials.

The VB would like to commend the Wits management for supporting this ambitious project of the upgrading of the School. The John Moffat Building will be more user friendly and functional for the school's community.

## **11 COMMENTARY ON THE MODULES PRESENTED:**

### **11.1 BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES (BAS)**

#### **DESIGN AND THEORY**

##### **General Comments:**

The VB was satisfied that the course was aligned to the SACAP and CAA competencies of registration. The course aims were clear and well-articulated and delivered by staff at the right level of qualification. The general consensus is that the design courses are well managed, and that the information provided to the students is clear and conducive to productivity and creativity in the learning environment. The reports indicate for the examination process as thorough and fair with the staff being very dedicated and actively involved. There was however concern that where hand drawings are used it would be troubling if these students could not comprehend communicate their work using office ready standards of CAD representation.

The School has made efforts in cultural transformation in the history and theory courses which has not yet seen transition into the design courses, however the alignment can be seen in project where the school makes a deliberate attempt to extract and explore the cultural aspects into the design course. The University had an existing online program (Ulwazi) for the delivery of lectures and assignments. With the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic the school has demonstrated a vigour and dedication to ensure that all students gain full access to this through the provision of laptops for some students and access to internet services through the use of mobile phone data. There is clear evidence of vertical articulation and horizontal integration of construction modules and skills into the design work.

The students demonstrate office readiness especially for middle to high performing students. The quality and relevance of assessment is excellent and the VB commends the school for this.

### **11.2 HISTORIES AND THEORIES OF ARCHITECTURE I, II & III**

##### **General Comments:**

The VB felt that this course was commendable. Firstly there was a response to the



decolonisation agenda of the curriculum by referring or by introducing an understanding of the physical environment of the southern region. This point was strongly implemented. It was evident in the self-appraisal report and the presentation by the lecturers. This increased the student's understanding of their Southern African context with amongst other things, ways of understanding and ways of exploring the environment that is rigorous, to some extent cultural and exploratory.

In the first year there seems to be a good understanding of archaeology and settlements in Africa. Students have applied what they learnt in their history module to their design projects. There is integration between history and theory and the studio on the application to design.

The VB would have liked to see more references from African scholars for instance, the exploration of an African cultural way of making things and maybe thinking about "ubuntu" as a concept. These concepts and references are missing in the pedagogy of theory and history.

In the second year there is a traditional architectural historical knowledge. The knowledge content itself is adequate, being that it teaches traditional architecture and its development over time and space, but there is an opportunity to reflect in the context of the decolonising agenda.

Year two of history appears to be isolated, it needs to speak to curricula changes introduced in first and third year modules in order to show the vertical integration of knowledge along the theme of decolonisation. The module needs to imagine ways of retelling the classical architectural world stories in a decolonised context in which Africa is central. In order to heighten the dialogue, Africa should be central to the discussions. There should be a discussion about the dialogue between Africa and the international movements of the north on design paradigms that took place at the time. The students should always be reminded that Africa was there when all that was happening in order to contextualise Africa and the classical knowledge.

The references recommended for the students include traditional architectural literature but lacks in terms of African literature. It is recommended that the literature suggested should reflect some African scholars. We encourage the second year module to "grapple" with what the classical architectural knowledge means in terms of decolonisation. This knowledge should be taught as part of the dialogue of understanding African civilisations.

The VB would have preferred that the third year stream present their work in a similar template as the other years. The VB would have preferred that the course outline have detailed module content. The course outline was well described and very well presented. In the study guide the content needs to be more detailed and fleshed-out in terms of what content is taught when, so that the students can see their cumulative development over the three years. Even though the course content is creative, more detail can be included in the course outline.

The VB is concerned that at exit level 3 for the BAS programme, external examiner's reports were not provided in the digital platform



In conclusion it is recommended that the thread of the decolonisation agenda should be continued from first year right through to third year.

### **11.3 THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CONSTRUCTION I, II & III**

#### **General Comments:**

The VB were satisfied that the course met the requirements for the SACAP competencies of registration and the CAA validation. The first year course is an introduction for students into construction technology. The teaching and learning methods were sound and clear. Both the external and internal moderation was fair. There is a clear progression from first to second year in theory and practice of construction, the students showed competency in their drawings that were available for review. The students showed even more competency in their drawings in the third year and a better understanding of tectonics was seen in third year.

### **11.4 BUILDING ECOLOGY**

#### **General Comments:**

This is a new course which was introduced into the BAS first year in response to a deeper understanding of sustainability / environmental and ecological challenges in cities and the world. It is a very good response to the need for transformation knowledge to address sustainable design challenges. The students' assessment submissions show the alignment of the outcomes in the study guide.

### **11.5 DESIGN REPRESENTATION I & II**

#### **General Comments:**

The Design representation course introduces first year architecture students to ways of seeing observation, representation and architectural design communication. The module focuses on developing students' hand drawing skills. It introduces a variety of architectural representation techniques such as drawing plans, elevations, sections, axonometric and model making. There was a concern of too many exercises in design courses. First year course has now been developed with fewer concise exercises. Model making skills at first year could be emphasised to ensure that it is as robust as drawing skills. The course has been broken down into a series of exercises which incrementally build on students design representation skills.

The course is well structured and appropriate for first year of study. Assessment methods are clearly defined – an underpinning of continuous assessment throughout the semester. The outcomes to be achieved are clearly set out in the exercises.



The second year course introduces students to understanding the city and the urban context through mapping and film making. The main aim is to allow students to explore, interpret and represent the city through maps, 3D maps and narratives.

#### **11.6 DIGITAL APPLICATIONS IN ARCHITECTURE I, II & III**

##### **General Comments:**

The course is an introduction for students in the application of computer software in visual presentations which then builds on to their knowledge in the second and third year. Computer drawings are assessed and the marks given are fair.

WITS is well equipped with computers and the latest software programmes to offer this module.

The VB felt that the course was aligned to both the SACAP competencies and the CAA validation.

#### **11.7 INTRODUCTION TO STRUCTURES**

##### **General Comments:**

The VB felt that the content of the course was impressive. The course introduces the students to the design of structures. The assessment tasks are clear and the marking is fair.

The course is aligned to the SACAP competencies and the CAA validation.

#### **11.8 APPLIED MATHEMATICS**

##### **General Comments:**

The course prepares first year students for progressing years of study where they will learn the introduction to Structures and Civil Engineering Theory. The assessments were clear through the tests and examinations presented and the VB found that the marks given to the students were fair.

#### **11.9 CIVIL ENGINEERING THEORY I, II & III**

##### **General Comments:**

The course is aligned to the SACAP competencies and the CAA validation. The course is basic lessons on civil engineering theory. The conducted assessments are written tests and

examinations. The assessment is clear and sound and the marks awarded are fair.

## 11.10 SMALL OFFICE PRACTICE

### General Comments:

The course material for learning is well set out and in line with SACAP requirements as well as relevant to Professional Practice. The course resources are well in line with the used resources for Professional Practice in the country and internationally such as the Contracts (Architect-Client Agreements and Construction Contracts).

The reading list (course resources) is impressive as well as the output of the high-end students. The material may however be slightly advanced for this level of students as the lessons and teachings may be intangible as most students will not have experience these or have a proper understanding of real-life scenarios. However, the lectures and tutorials are simplified and structured well to engage the students' minds where benefit of experience is not present.

Based on the students' marks it would seem that there was an understanding of the concepts taught.

## BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURAL STUDIES (HONOURS)

### 11.11 ADVANCED DESIGN STUDIO

#### General Comments:

Students who graduated with a BAS degree with a minimum of a 65% weighted average mark (WAM) in the final year of study, and who have obtained at least 65% for design (ARPL3005 Architectural Design & Theory III) in the final year, with a completed year of practical experience in the profession, are granted automatic admission to the BAS (Hons) degree. All other applicants go through the interview process. The minimum average and design mark is set at 60% to qualify for admission. Once automatic admissions are determined, the number of available slots against the enrolment target is assessed, and remaining applicants are shortlisted.

It was felt that many students, in particular black students, were disadvantaged by the minimum threshold requirements (set out above) and the VB felt that there should be other means to test the "readiness" for students to enter into the BAS (Hons) programme. This observation is based on the need for greater transformation of the student cohort in the post-graduate degree.

The work viewed through the examination process was rigorous, interesting and layered. Each Elective was appropriate and complex for different reasons. The design briefs demonstrated

separate framing interests, which were accompanied by contextual references, this created a good frame of reference from which the students could ground themselves, particularly in the uncertainty and distance posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and its imposed lockdowns. The pedagogic approach is valid, clearly defined through a series of exploratory themes. Objectives well defined and articulated. A good integration of theory, presentation methods and construction.

## 11.12 ADVANCED HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE & URBANISM

### General Comments:

The VB felt that the course is well outlined, well described in its intentions/objectives. Whilst the outcomes are clear, they should be broken down into content with reference materials that will be used for the assignments.

This course is at the correct level of complexity in terms of what it asks the students to perform. It seems to be a very enriching course which prepares the students for entering into the master's programme.

## 11.13 RESEARCH PROJECT

### General Comments:

The Research Project course aims to build an understanding of the potentials and methods of research in architecture. Architecture is informed by, and informs, diverse ways of understanding space, its use, technology and programme. It is also informed by theoretical positions, whether articulated or not, that might range from status quo positions (architecture as an instrument of capital, state or other interests) to critical ones (architecture as an arena for protest or compensatory actions). It is focused on developing creative and critical inquiry, reflective understanding, and cultural, social, and technical knowledge in preparation for self-motivated independent learning. The pedagogic approach is valid, clearly defined through a series of exploratory themes. The objectives are well defined and articulated. There is a good balance of theory, presentation methods and construction.

An appropriate selection of relevant topics is set in the urban landscape. This ensures that students engage with the immediate concerns of the community at large and of which they are also a part of. As a consequence, they start to develop community engagement skills that could be implemented in the future when they are in practice.

A series of electives which inform the main project— a cross disciplinary collaboration. There is a synchronicity between all subjects. The students are work-ready however there is an on-going concern with regards to students not continuing into the final year of study for

financial/personal reasons.

The external examiners gave excellent feedback and this is a highly commendable curriculum and appropriateness of projects selected for the electives. Continuous assistance in academic writing may profit the course and the overall development of critical arguments as research for design within the degree. This will also strengthen the need to develop a 'research position' as part of the process.

#### **11.14 CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURAL THEORY**

##### **General Comments:**

The VB were satisfied with context of the course. It has been well aligned and carefully considered. The assessments are clear and sound. The course is well aligned to the SACAP competencies and the CAA validation.

#### **11.15 ADVANCED THEORY & PRACTICE OF CONSTRUCTION**

##### **General Comments:**

The course is a clear progression from the BAS and students are successfully integrated into the course with their designs, there is a clear understanding of tectonics demonstrated. The quality of the assessments given are fair and the marks given to students were adequate. The course is referent and aligned to the SACAP competencies and the CAA validation.

### **MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE (PROFESSIONAL)**

#### **11.16 ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN & DISCOURSE**

##### **General Comments**

There is evidence of an intense design process and theoretical vigour is demonstrated in the final project portfolio and collaborated by the external examiners. However, the assessment criteria (40% written document – 60% design) should be better aligned with the examiner's report template. The teaching and learning method is Studio based with a multi-layered supervisory system.

The demonstration of self-directed learning and the application thereof is clearly evident in the research document and final design resolution. A high level of time management skills and initiative underpinned the success of the course and will serve the students well at a professional level. The course outline and the outcomes produced in the research document are well integrated both vertically and horizontally. The context for the selected projects was



good and theoretical discourse was excellent. This was particularly evident in the design reports and drawings of the top students however the final submissions by the students achieving the lowest passes varied widely. A lack of resolution and level of complexity in their final design should be given greater consideration notwithstanding it is evident that staff do give direction and input to assist the weaker students. The course objectives are clear, they are studio-based with multi-layered supervision with a studio master and are supported by individual supervisors with continuous assessment to assess the students' progress.

The marks given in the internal moderation process are fair although they were higher than those of the external examiners', but the outcomes are indicative of the overall quality of the work submitted. It was noted that many of the students who were achieving the lowest passes were required to do substantial additional work after the examination in order to comply with the minimum requirements at master's level both in their design report and the quality of the design submitted.

The external examiners' written reports are thorough and reveal that they are more than satisfied with the standard of this course. In the self-assessment it was noted "that the external examiners have also become more representative of a diverse professional set of architects and academics over the past five years to engage with the more representative group of students. New examiners have been introduced over each of the years, with only a single examiner being retained.

The School is carefully monitoring students who graduate with the BAS degree. It is notable that after their practical year many continue to work until they are in a financial position to forgo earnings in practice, in order to afford postgraduate fees. There has been an increased number of students on bursaries or support by architectural offices. It is evident that more students are having to work part-time during their postgraduate studies, this is an issue for which the School has not fully developed a strategy but needs to be addressed urgently.

The Design teaching in the BAS, BAS Honours and Masters Professional is aligned with the SACAP and CAA competencies.

## **11.17 ADVANCED DIGITAL APPLICATION**

### **General Comments:**

The VB was satisfied with the outcomes of the course. The course teaches students to use computer software to design complex shapes. The course builds on Digital Applications from BAS programme. The assessments were very clear and the marks awarded were fair.

## 11.18 SIMULATED OFFICE PRACTICE

### General Comments:

The VB felt that there was a lot of referenced material in the teaching lectures and tutorials presented which could give a lot of guidance on reading to source, but there is no reading list provided for the course. This may however be due to the fact that the course is connected and studied in conjunction with Small Office Practice and Architectural Professional Practice. The lecture/tutorial presentations provided a lot of guidance on how to structure assignments, and what is required as a competency for the output. The module was well detailed and structured.

The content and course teaching was impressive but may be at a level that the student may not be able to grasp and understand as they may not be able to perceive some of the concepts and scenarios from a lack of experience and perhaps exposure at their level. The level of information may be useful after a couple of years work experience.

## 11.19 ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

### General Comments:

The reading material list is well structured and has a good build-up from the BAS level teachings and learnings. The lecture notes and tutorials are very well articulated and provide a remarkable amount of information required to practice architecture not only in South Africa but internationally as well. The course provides students with a well-rounded base to ready them for running their own firms or being a professional within the discipline.

Lecture presentations are structured well and extremely informative.

## 12 CONCLUSION

Having spent an intense three days over a virtual visit scrutinising the many facets of the School of Architecture and Planning, the SACAP Visiting Board of 2021 is convinced of the competencies, integrity and efficiency of the three SoAP programmes, the credibility of its academic staff and its infrastructure. It is quite evident that the WITS institution has a strong foundation for its transformational agenda and provides the SoAP with a firm base to confidently develop a clear vision for the future architectural programmes. The board wishes the Head of School, Programme director and the School the very best for the coming term.

Mr Garret Gantner	Dr Finzi Saidi (VB Chairperson)
Date: 17/11/2021	Date: 17/11/2021
Signature: 	Signature: 

## Annexure A: Competencies used

The competencies were aligned with the envisaged Identification of Work Matrix. That matrix is based on the complexity of the project, and the sensitivity of the context and site, whether natural or constructed.

		SITE SENSITIVITY		
		LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
PROJECT COMPLEXITY	LOW	PrArchDraught		
		PrArchT		
		PrSArchT		
		PrArch		
	MEDIUM	PrArchT		
		PrSArchT		
		PrArch		
	HIGH	PrSArchT		

## Annexure B: Curriculum Overview

### The BAS programme:

YOS	COURSE	CR	TERM	NQF LEVEL	CORE/SUPPORT
1	APPM1000A Applied Mathematics	7	S1	5	support
	ARPL1000A Architectural Design & Theory I	60	FYR	5	core
	ARPL1001A Theory & Practice of Construction I	30	FYR	5	core
	ARPL1028A Design Representation I	10	S1	5	support
	ARPL1029A Digital Applications in Architecture I	10	S2	5	support
	ARPL1030A Building Ecology	7	S2	5	support
	ARPL1031A Histories & Theories of Architecture I	8	S1	5	core
	ARPL1032A History of Settlement, Architecture & Planning	12	S2	5	core
	144	Total credits, YOS 1			
2	ARPL2000A Architectural Design & Theory II	60	FYR	6	core
	ARPL2002A Theory & Practice of Construction II	30	FYR	6	core
	ARPL2012A Histories & Theories of Architecture II	20	FYR	6	core
	ARPL2019A Design Representation II	10	S1	6	support
	ARPL2020A Digital Applications in Architecture II	10	S2	6	support
	ARPL2021A Introduction to Structures	7	S1	6	support
	CIVN2018A Civil Engineering Theory I	7	S2	6	support
	144	Total credits, YOS 2			
3	ARPL3002A Small Office Practice	7	S1	7	support
	ARPL3005A Architectural Design & Theory III	70	FYR	7	core
	ARPL3021A Histories & Theories of Architecture III	20	FYR	7	core
	ARPL3031A Theory & Practice of Construction III	33	FYR	7	core
	CIVN3029A Civil Engineering Theory II	7	S1	7	support
	CIVN3030A Civil Engineering Theory III	7	S2	7	support
	144	Total credits, YOS 3			
	432	TOTAL CREDITS, BAS			

### The BAS (HONS) programme:

COURSE	CR	TERM	NQF LEVEL	CORE/SUPPORT
ARPL4000A Advanced Design Studio	45	S1	8	core
ARPL4004A Advanced History of Architecture & Urbanism	18	S1	8	support
ARPL4005A Research Project	36	S1	8	core
ARPL4001A Design Studio	45	S2	8	core
ARPL4002A Contemporary Architectural Theory	18	S2	8	support
ARPL4003A Advanced Theory & Practice of Construction	18	S2	8	core
	180	TOTAL CREDITS		

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### The MArch (Prof) programme:

COURSE	CR	TERM	NQF LEVEL	CORE/SUPPORT
ARPL7001A Advanced Digital Applications	9	S1	9	support
ARPL7002A Simulated Office Practice	45	S1	9	support
ARPL7003A Architectural Design & Discourse	90	FYR	9	core
ARPL7041A Architectural Professional Practice	36	S1	9	core
	180	TOTAL CREDITS		

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## Annexure C: Schedule for the 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> October 2021 validation visit to WITS UNIVERSITY

### Monday, October 18

Start time	End time	Session	Led by	In attendance
8:00	8:15	Validation Intro	SACAP	All academic staff, CAA
8:15	8:30	Summative Self- Assessment Intro	Prof N. Elleh, HoS	All academic staff, SACAP, CAA
8:30	10:00	Academic Programmes & Curriculum Presentation	G. Gantner, Programme Dir. Wits SoAP Academic staff	All academic staff, SACAP, CAA
10:00	10:15	Break		
10:15	10:45	Private meeting with HoS	SACAP, CAA	Prof N. Elleh, HoS G. Gantner, Programme Director
10:45	12:30	Review of work SACAP visit of facilities	SACAP, CAA	
12:30	13:30	In-person lunch with SACAP rep inspecting facilities	Prof N. Elleh, HoS	G. Gantner, Programme Director H. Judin, PG Director, M.Arch Convenor K. Dörmann, BAS Hons Convenor SACAP rep
13:30	17:00	Review of work	SACAP, CAA	(SACAP - private)
17:00	18:00	Presentation of 2020 prizewinning student design work	G. Gantner, Programme Dir. Prizewinning students	SACAP, CAA, All academic staff, current students

### Tuesday, October 19

Start time	End time	Session	Led by	In attendance
8:00	9:00	Private discussion	SACAP, CAA	(SACAP - private)
9:00	10:00	Meeting with students & graduates	SACAP, CAA	Student class reps Recent graduates
10:00	10:30	Break		
10:30	11:30	Meeting with external examiners	SACAP, CAA	selected Externals Examiners
11:30	12:45	Call with academic staff	SACAP, CAA	All academic staff (without HoS)
12:45	13:15	Call with: Prof. C. Musingwini, Acting Dean Assoc. Prof A. Fitchett, Asst. Dean: UG Assoc. Prof L. Van Dyk, Asst. Dean: PG	SACAP, CAA	Prof C. Musingwini, Acting Dean Assoc. Prof: A. Fitchett, Asst Dean: UG Assoc. Prof L. Van Dyk, Asst Dean: PG
13:15	14:00	Digital Lunch (optional): Dean, Asst. Deans, HoS & Examiners	Prof N. Elleh, HoS	(optional): SACAP, CAA, Prof C. Musingwini, Acting Dean, Assoc. Prof: A. Fitchett, Asst Dean: UG, Assoc. Prof L. Van Dyk, Asst Dean: PG, External Examiners
14:00	17:00	Private discussion	SACAP, CAA	(SACAP - private)

### Wednesday, October 20

Start time	End time	Session	Led by	In attendance
8:00	10:30	Drafting of statement	SACAP, CAA	(SACAP - private)
10:30	11:30	Call with: Prof. R. Osman, DVC: Academics Prof C. Musingwini, Acting Dean	SACAP, CAA	Prof. R. Osman, DVC: Academics Prof C. Musingwini, Dean Prof N. Elleh, HoS

### **Annexure D: Validation Board Members**

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