

ECARE Values

Stellenbosch University's Institutional Values

A FlourishTalk Conversation Deck for Values-Based Dialogue



Visual concept:

A majestic tree with roots labeled with ECARE values grounding Stellenbosch University's mission, its branches bearing fruits of teaching and research, with diverse community members flourishing beneath its canopy—symbolizing how institutional values nourish and sustain academic excellence and societal impact.

This card deck was specially prepared for everybody who is interested in living by SU's ECARE values.

Part of Stellenbosch University's ECARE Values

About ECARE Values

Stellenbosch University's Values Framework

The ECARE values—Excellence, Compassion, Accountability, Respect, and Equity—form the ethical foundation of Stellenbosch University. Articulated in Vision 2040 and Code 2040 (SU's integrated ethics code), these five interconnected values guide all university activities from teaching and research to community engagement and institutional governance. Together, they reflect our commitment to advancing knowledge in service of society while upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct.

The Five ECARE Values

Excellence: We strive for the highest standards in teaching, learning, and research. This value pertains to our work—the quality, rigour, and impact of everything we do. Excellence means continuous improvement, intellectual curiosity, and commitment to making meaningful contributions to knowledge and society.

Compassion: We care for and support one another. Compassion reflects our engagement with direct and indirect stakeholders—recognizing our shared humanity, responding with empathy to suffering and need, and creating communities of care where all can flourish. It requires both feeling and action.

Accountability: We take responsibility for our actions and decisions. This value governs the execution of our conduct—owning our choices, acknowledging mistakes, following through on commitments, and being answerable to those we serve. Accountability builds trust and enables genuine transformation.

Respect: We value dignity and diversity in all our interactions. Respect means honouring each person's inherent worth, engaging across differences with openness and humility, creating inclusive spaces, and recognizing that diverse perspectives strengthen our collective pursuit of truth and justice.

Equity: We promote fairness, inclusivity, and equal opportunities for all. Equity goes beyond formal equality to address systemic barriers, historical disadvantage, and unequal starting points. It requires intentional action to ensure that all can access opportunities and reach their full potential.

How to Use This Deck

Personal Reflection: Select a value that resonates with a current challenge or aspiration. Journal your responses to the questions, noticing where you're living this value well and where growth is needed. Return to questions that provoke discomfort—they often reveal important insights.

Team Dialogue: Use these cards in staff meetings, orientation sessions, or professional development workshops. Choose a value together, discuss 2-3 questions as a team, and explore: How does this value show up in our daily work? Where do we see gaps between stated values and lived practice? What would deeper embodiment look like?

Values Clarification: Sort the five cards by current priority in your life or work. Reflect: Which value needs more attention right now? When do these values conflict, and how do you navigate that tension? How might your priorities shift in different life seasons?

Ethical Decision-Making: When facing a difficult choice, review questions from each value card. Consider: Which values are at stake in this decision? How can I honour multiple values even when they seem to conflict? What would the most compassionate, accountable, respectful response be?

From Stellenbosch to the World

While these values are rooted in Stellenbosch University's institutional identity, they transcend any single context. Excellence, compassion, accountability, respect, and equity are universal aspirations relevant to individuals, organizations, and communities everywhere. This deck is freely offered as part of FlourishTalk's mission to make meaningful values-based conversation accessible to all. Use it to deepen integrity, strengthen relationships, and contribute to more just and flourishing communities.

Excellence

Striving for the highest quality in your work and actions; going beyond adequacy to achieve outstanding results.



Visual concept:

A perfectly formed diamond refracting light into brilliant colors, sitting on a gradient background that transitions from rough stone to polished crystal, representing the journey from good to exceptional and the multifaceted nature of striving for highest quality.

Exploring Excellence

Reflection Questions Across Life Spheres

1. How could you raise your standards in meaningful ways?
2. What does it look like to appreciate excellence while accepting imperfection?
3. Why might excellence be worth pursuing while avoiding perfectionism?
4. When have you experienced or created something excellent?
5. How can you create cultures that value excellence without demanding perfection?
6. What would it look like to maintain high standards sustainably?
7. What would it look like to pursue excellence joyfully?
8. What does excellence mean to you, and how is it different from perfection?
9. How can you appreciate excellence without using it to judge yourself harshly?
10. How can you celebrate excellence together?
11. How might you help others achieve excellence?
12. How do you pursue excellence in areas that matter to you?
13. What does it look like to hold communities to standards of excellence?
14. When might excellence conflict with values like accessibility, speed, or contentment?
15. How do you encourage excellence in loved ones without creating pressure?

Compassion

Recognizing others' suffering and being moved to help; combining empathy with action to alleviate pain or difficulty.



Visual concept:

Two overlapping circles of warm golden light with their center creating a gentle glow that spreads outward in soft waves, with small hands reaching toward each other, representing empathy transforming into action and care for others.

Exploring Compassion

Reflection Questions Across Life Spheres

1. How do you bring compassion to workplace relationships and situations?
2. How do you extend compassion without taking on others' suffering as your own?
3. What does it look like to truly see and acknowledge someone's pain?
4. What practice would help you cultivate more consistent compassion?
5. Who in your life needs more compassion from you, including yourself?
6. Why might compassion be essential for both individual and collective wellbeing?
7. What would it look like to respond to difficulty with compassion rather than judgment?
8. How can you maintain compassion in relationships even when feeling hurt yourself?
9. How can you create compassionate cultures without compromising standards?
10. When might compassion conflict with values like justice, honesty, or self-protection?
11. How can you acknowledge your suffering without wallowing or making excuses?
12. What happens in you when you extend compassion versus when you judge or harden?
13. When have you received compassion that truly helped you feel seen and supported?
14. What does compassion mean to you, and how is it different from pity or sympathy?
15. How do you extend compassion to people beyond your immediate circle?

Accountability

Taking responsibility for your actions, decisions, and their consequences; being answerable to yourself and others for what you do and don't do.



Visual concept:

A clear mirror reflecting a person standing with strong posture, surrounded by symbols of responsibility including a balanced scale, an open hand, and footprints leading both backward and forward, representing honesty, ownership, and being answerable for actions.

Exploring Accountability

Reflection Questions Across Life Spheres

1. What commitment around accountability would most impact your integrity and relationships?
2. How might your leadership or influence grow if you modeled fuller accountability?
3. How do you demonstrate accountability for your work results and responsibilities?
4. How do you respond internally when you've made a mistake or failed to meet a commitment?
5. How do you balance accountability with self-compassion when you've fallen short?
6. What does accountability mean to you beyond just admitting mistakes?
7. What does collective accountability look like in addressing community issues or harm?
8. What makes it difficult to admit mistakes or take responsibility when consequences feel severe?
9. How do you hold yourself accountable for your impact on your community or environment?
10. What would it look like to create an accountability practice that feels supportive rather than punitive?
11. How do you respond when others try to avoid accountability or shift blame?
12. How can you create mutual accountability in relationships without it feeling like keeping score?
13. What's the difference between accountability and blame or shame?
14. How can institutions or organizations build genuine accountability mechanisms?
15. When have you witnessed someone taking true accountability, and what made it meaningful?

Respect

Showing regard for people's worth, rights, and dignity; treating others with consideration.



Visual concept:

Diverse human silhouettes of different heights standing in a circle, each with their own unique glowing aura, connected by gentle threads of light that show regard without intrusion, representing honoring each person's worth and dignity.

Exploring Respect

Reflection Questions Across Life Spheres

1. What does respect mean to you, and how is it different from fear or agreement?
2. How do you demonstrate respect in your relationships?
3. What would it look like to create more respectful environments?
4. What would it look like to create cultures of genuine respect?
5. Who or what needs more of your respect?
6. What does it look like to respect differences while staying connected?
7. How do you contribute to cultures of respect?
8. What makes maintaining respect difficult in conflict?
9. How do you cultivate self-respect?
10. How do you balance respect with honesty about problems?
11. What role does respect play in healthy relationships and systems?
12. How do you show respect in professional contexts?
13. How do you respect people whose actions you oppose?
14. When might respect conflict with values like honesty, equality, or challenging authority?
15. What practice would strengthen respectful engagement?

Equity

Ensuring fairness by recognizing that different people need different support to achieve equal outcomes.



Visual concept:

Three people of different heights standing on platforms of different sizes - with the smallest person on the highest platform and the tallest needing none - all able to see over a fence at the same level toward a shared sunrise, representing fairness through different support for equal outcomes.

Exploring Equity

Reflection Questions Across Life Spheres

1. How can you help create systems that provide what different people need?
2. Where is equity most needed in your spheres of influence?
3. When have you seen equity create fairer outcomes than equality alone?
4. What does equity mean to you, and how is it different from equality?
5. What would it look like to advocate for equity that you might not personally benefit from?
6. Why might equity be necessary to address historical and systemic disadvantage?
7. When does equity become preferential treatment or reverse discrimination?
8. How do you examine where you need more support versus where you have advantage?
9. How might you help others understand the importance of equity?
10. What would it look like to ensure everyone has what they need to succeed?
11. How do you determine what equity requires in complex situations?
12. What does it look like to address historical inequities?
13. How could you better understand and advocate for equity?
14. How can you design equitable systems and practices?
15. How can you support equity without creating resentment?