



# THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF SEYCHELLES

MEDIA YOUTH SPORTS AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

REPORT ON THE

VISIT TO THE UNIVERSITY OF SEYCHELLES, JULY 2022

Seventh Assembly

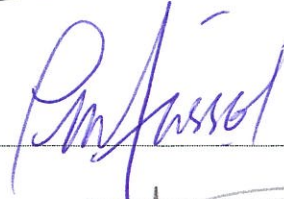
**The Chairperson of the Media, Youth, Sports and Culture Committee submits, on behalf of the Committee its Report on its visit to the University of Seychelles, July 2022:**

Hon. Wavel Woodcock  
**Chairperson**



**Other Members:**

Hon. Philip Arissol  
**Vice-Chairperson**



Hon. Naddy Zialor  
**Member**



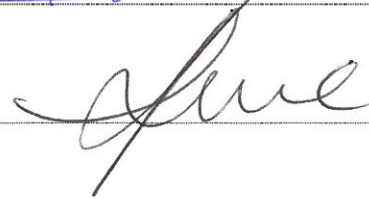
Hon. Kelly Samynadin  
**Member**



Hon. Paul Ernesta  
**Member**



Hon. Flory Larue  
**Member**



Hon. Johan Loze  
**Member**



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	4
INTRODUCTION .....	
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	6
FAMILIARISATION VISIT AND MAIN FINDINGS .....	
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> .....	8
MEETING WITH THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVES, AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES .....	
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	12
<b>Annexure</b> .....	13

## CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

The Media, Youth, Sports, and Culture Committee (MYSCC), is a Select Sessional Committee, tasked with oversight of the departments of Media, Youth, Sports, and Culture. The fulfilment of its tasks involves conducting visits to the departments of Media, Youth, Sports and Culture, seeking clarifications and making reports and recommendations.

The committee conducted a visit to the Anse Royale Campus of the University of Seychelles on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2022. A meeting was then held with the University's Vice-Chancellor, executives as well as the President and Vice-President of the university's Student Council. The visit to the UniSey was one which had been planned for an earlier time but was postponed as a result of disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. It was thus, an activity which was considered overdue for the committee. This document is a report of the committee's findings during the visit and meeting.

### **1.1. The University of Seychelles**

The University of Seychelles, or the UniSey, as it is commonly known, is the only university in Seychelles. The UniSey welcomed its first group of students in 2009 and was officially inaugurated in 2010. Currently 380 students are enrolled full-time at the university with around 40 lecturers and additional associate lecturers.

The UniSey offers a range of courses (*see Annex*), operating across two campuses, the Anse Royale Campus and the Mont Fleuri Campus. The university partners with several other universities in different countries, such as South Africa, Reunion and Mauritius to deliver some of their courses. The vision of the UniSey is as follows:

*“As the national university, we aspire to be at the heart of the socio-economic transformation of Seychelles and the SIDS community more widely, and in our own unique setting, to contribute to global knowledge and understanding.”*

The university currently faces a myriad of challenges in the way of attaining its vision. These challenges have been brought to the attention of the MYSCC through concerns of students as well as parents. Such concerns include limitations of infrastructure, insufficient student allowances, technological limitations as well as a lack of adequate staff members.

### **1.2. Aims of The Visit**

As the committee representing the interests of the youth, the University was considered an important institution for the committee to visit and meet with, as they play an instrumental role in the development of the young population in Seychelles. In light of the concerns raised about the university, the MYSCC wished to achieve several aims from the visit and meeting:

- 1) To gain more information on the university's infrastructure, facilities, and available resources.
- 2) To gain more information on the courses on offer at the University of Seychelles.

- 3) To understand the university's constraints.
- 4) To gain a better understanding of student concerns.

## CHAPTER TWO

### FAMILIARISATION VISIT AND MAIN FINDINGS

This chapter will provide information on the different sections of the Anse Royale Campus of the University of Seychelles visited by the MYSCC and the challenges and concerns voiced by the members of staff, whilst the visit was being conducted.

#### **Campus Visit & Concerns Raised**

The MYSCC was guided through the UniSey Anse Royale campus by the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Ms. Joëlle Perreau, members of staff, and the President and Vice President of the Student Council.

The visit began at the '*Konpa*', which is the first point of enquiry for students. This office is responsible for the provision of information and guidance to students, members of staff, and visitors of the university regarding courses, facilities, and the various services on offer. The *Registrar's office*, *Marketing offices*, and *HR and Finance offices*, were visited next. The main constraints raised by the members of staff and interns present were the lack of office space as well as insufficient staff members. The *staffrooms*, *classrooms*, and *lab* were also visited.

Also visited by the members was the UniSey's library where several constraints were noted. The Vice-Chancellor informed the committee that ministries have expressed their intentions for the university's library to act as a repository for research being done in Seychelles. This research is also intended to be accessible online. In addition, the university wishes to add to its repertoire of electronic resources and online journals in the future. Whilst the UniSey is working toward the digitalisation of library resources, it is faced with several challenges. Firstly, it was observed that the library space is quite limited. Furthermore, the Vice Chancellor informed the MYSCC that the university is lacking the fiscal capacity to implement systems where research on Seychelles from different departments and ministries could be stored. In addition, the university is hoping to improve upon the current system by which students access the electronic and digitalised resources but is again limited by inadequate financial resources. The library is also lacking books and as a result of limited resources to gain more, is only stocking the books which are classed as 'highly recommended'.

The UniSey consists of several Research Institutes, these are the *James Michel Blue Economy Research Institute*, *Creole Language and Culture Research*, the *James R. Mancham Peace and Diplomacy Research Institute*, and the *Education and Socio-economic Research Institute*, whose launching is planned for October 2022. The members of the MYSCC visited the office of these aforementioned institutes during the visit, where the researchers voiced several challenges they are facing in their work. These include the lack of office space and infrastructural limitations of the UniSey. The research unit is working towards creating databases which are currently being done digitally. In the future, however, the research unit would need space in the library to store its research. A further challenge lies here, as the library space is also limited. The lack of equipment is also cited as a challenge for the university's research institutes, as researchers have to send their samples abroad for testing when conducting research. Furthermore, a lack of transportation for the

researchers affects their ability to carry out their duties, as there is only one bus which is not adequate for researchers carrying out different research projects.

In terms of the research work itself, the researchers informed the committee that documentation is a weakness which needs to be addressed. Research projects of the institute concerning culture, such as the 'Origins' project and linguistics projects are suffering from a lack of proper documentation of information. The researchers also informed the committee that there is a lack of staff members for research. For the implementation of various projects under the different research institutes, they require more researchers. Funding for conducting research is also a challenge for the research institutes, as the different research projects require investment and resources.

The department for technology at the UniSey, consisting of 4 members of staff, concluded the visit of the campus. The activities of the unit include managing the university's servers as well as facilitating online learning. The challenges faced by this unit includes the unreliability of internet in Seychelles. The internet is slow and is further affected by the amount of people using the internet at the university.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MEETING WITH THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY EXECUTIVES, AND STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

Following the familiarisation visit of the UniSey's infrastructure and facilities, a meeting was held with the Vice-Chancellor of the university, the university's executives, and student representatives. Discussions were raised on various points concerning the university, its business, and challenges. This chapter will present the different points discussed, concerns raised, as well as recommendations proposed in tackling such challenges.

#### **1.0.Courses**

The first point of discussion was the university's courses. The Director of Marketing, Ms. Dolivette Chang-Ko, informed the committee of the courses that the university offers, and the barriers associated to this aspect. According to the university, the trend which has become apparent is that, applicants to the university are mostly part-time in-service students. Programs on offer are delivered through full-time and associate lecturers through blended learning, a mode of teaching adopted as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ms. Chang-Ko informed the committee that the list of courses currently on offer is subject to change and expansion reflecting the demands and needs of the country. For instance, the university plans to add a doctoral school, finance and economics undergraduate program, as well as a travel economics course. Twinning programs, partnerships between local universities and overseas institutions, are also being considered as the university plans for the future. Moreover, the university's staff informed the committee that a meeting was held with ministries and organisations to determine the needs of the country. Following this exercise, the university is identifying means of synchronising the needs and demands of the country, customising programs to reflect such needs. Where gaps are identified in the availability of local expertise, the university works with both local and international institutions to cultivate this expertise in the country through the University.

Disruptions to normal teaching modes, as a result of the pandemic have meant a migration to online learning. This has been made difficult due to technological limitations at the university. Internet connectivity is often a challenge, when as associate lecturer is delivering a lecture online, for instance, the students may not have access to good internet connectivity. This affects the quality of their learning and interactions with each other and their lecturer.

#### **2.0.Revenue**

Another point of discussion raised during the meeting was the revenue of the university and the challenges associated. The Vice-Chancellor provided the committee with information on the revenue lines of the university. The budget of the university is around 40 or 41 million rupees a year, a sum which, according to the Vice-Chancellor only allows the university to "survive". The Agency for Human Resource Development (ANHRD), pays the university a lump sum in September which the university manages for several months until the next payment. Other revenue lines include project grants, consultancies, endowments, as well as the renting of facilities.



The university struggles to manage with the financial resources it gets and this results in their inability to grow and develop further. Moreover, urgent expenses may crop up, such as students requiring books, which further strains the finances of the university. Other constraints associated with the revenue lines is that the revenue gained from project grants cannot be used for other expenses outside the specific projects. In addition, the renting of facilities is limited, thus revenue is also limited in this case. The revenue lines of the university are not well-developed and diversified, a shortfall the university aims to address in their new strategic plan. The university also plans to encourage investment in education in Seychelles.

### **3.0. The University of Seychelles and the ANHRD**

The University of Seychelles' relationship with the ANHRD was also discussed during the meeting. As the national university, the institution performs a crucial function in the development and education of the youth. Prior to its existence, students only pursued degree-level education abroad. The UniSey requires a more collaborative relationship with the ANHRD, the agency soon to be replaced by a new division within the Ministry of Education (MoE) to undertake its scholarship function.

The university feels that it does not receive enough support from the government in sending students to pursue their education at the UniSey. The UniSey feels it should be the first choice as a higher education institution, instead of universities abroad. To address this challenge, a potential course of action discussed was that ANHRD should review their scholarship process, in consideration of the mass of in-service employees who require and would like to gain higher levels of qualifications in their respective fields. In addition, more emphasis should be placed on investing in the UniSey as the national university.

The university feels that it should have more of a say in the training choices for Seychellois. The Dean of Faculty, Mr. Zelime informed the committee that for the year 2022, the university will only be enrolling 5 in-service teachers for the program of Bachelor of Education in early childhood and 5 in-service teachers for the course of Bachelor of Education, in primary. This amounts to only 10 teachers receiving degree level training. The Dean stated that elevating the level of education in the country will require the number of teachers receiving degree level training to increase. Aligning the country's needs to the courses that the university offers is considered an important step in achieving this, giving the UniSey more input where it concerns training. To encourage a positive shift in mindsets and attitudes with regard to university level training it was suggested that the UniSey could work with the Guy Morel Institute as a whole package. Once a course is offered to an employee to study at the Guy Morel Institute, the UniSey could offer the 'next step' in the education of that employee. In this way, the employee benefits from continuity and the whole package of training is budgeted for.

### **4.0. International students**

The subject of international students at the UniSey was also a topic of discussion during the meeting. The community of international students at the university is small. The initial plans of the university have always been to encourage international students to study at the University of

Seychelles. The achievement of this, however, has proven to be a challenging activity for the university.

The Vice-Chancellor informed the committee that one of the major barriers preventing international students from pursuing their education at UniSey is Accommodation. This notion was reiterated by several of the university's executives. There is no accommodation available at the university to house students on campus. The Director for Marketing explained that whilst there is a significant amount of interest shown in the UniSey by international students, they are deterred once they learn of the high cost of accommodation and other living expenses in Seychelles.

Furthermore, there are barriers concerning employment in Seychelles whilst studying as an international student; this is also considered a deterrent. Despite meetings with departments of immigration and employment, explaining that university students do require employment and there are also in-service international students who need to work, regulations in Seychelles make no provisions for this.

One proposition is that researchers and international students are given the opportunity to work at least 20 or 30 hours a week. In doing so creating a more attractive package enticing international students to study at the UniSey. The registrar of the UniSey, Dr. Pasaud, discussed the opportunities for special visa routes, as has been implemented by other countries. Special visas permitting international students to stay in the country they have studied in and work there for a number of years, would not only be beneficial for the student but also the country as a whole, as there would be an increased qualified workforce.

#### **5.0. Accessibility of Classes for Students**

Several points were discussed which addressed facilitating classes for students, such as night classes as well as facilitating bank loans. Night classes was discussed as a viable option for people who are working but are also students at the university. According to the university, there were classes that were available at later times and on Saturdays. The university also customises shorter programs for different local institutions, for example, the staff at PUC and Airtel have attended trainings for *Information Technology*. The university also informed the committee that facilitation of bank loans from the Seychelles Commercial Bank and Credit Union for students do exist.

Challenges for the university lie mainly with the release of workers from their employment to attend classes. According to the UniSey, many prospective students who are in-service express interest in attending the UniSey and pursuing higher qualifications. The challenge is that their employers do not approve their leave. Another issue concerns the mindset of prospective students. The university aims to encourage people to further their education, but many are afraid to. The university, however, tries to provide support and reassurance in these cases.

#### **6.0. Perception of the University**

Several of the university's executives discussed the perception of the UniSey. Despite being a national university, many students choose to study abroad. The Vice-Chancellor stated that results from a study that was done, concluded that, being an island state, many local students wish to leave the country to experience living and studying abroad.

The credibility of the university is also doubted and this serves as a deterrent as many students would not want to pursue their education at the UniSey, despite, as the Dean of Faculty stated, there being many examples of success stories of UniSey graduates.

### **7.0. Student Assessments & Concerns of the University**

The President and Vice-President of the student council, Mr. Steve Monnaie and Ms. Samia Brioché provided the MYSCC members the concerns of the UniSey students. One issue discussed was the allowances of students. Allowances for university students from Praslin and La Digue is SCR 6,685 whilst students from Mahé receive SCR 3,685. Many students feel that allowances are too low and not reflective of the economic situation of the country. The students feel that accommodation on Mahé is expensive and feel that the university should have its own on-campus accommodation, made available to students. One option discussed regarding this issue was for the university to reach out to investors to invest in building student accommodation for the university.

Another concern, as previously highlighted is the lack of library resources. Often times students have to rely on online resources which are sometimes only available for up to 24 hours, after which they would need to re-download the resource. This presents challenges for students who lack consistent access to the internet.

Another issue discussed was the relationship between the UniSey and the University of London (UoL). The President of the council stated that liaising with the UoL is difficult and relay of information from the partner university is delayed. It was then explained that the difficulty in communication was due to the Covid-19 pandemic and that the programs offered at the UniSey in partnership with the UoL is being phased out. This is due to the increasing cost of the programs, leading the university to develop their own programs.

Part-time work was also discussed as a concern for the students. Many students feel that they do not benefit from part-time work which relates to their field of study. One point noted was that, whilst many university students, as seen across the world, do not engage in part-time work which directly relates to their field, it is still a way to earn money whilst these students are working. A suggestion was made for the university and student council to reach out to its local partners and organisations to provide the students with part-time work.

### **Other Topics Discussed:**

The Vice Chancellor discussed several marketing initiatives such as having a 'spot' on the Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation (SBC) channel, called "*UniSey Talks*", where the UniSey talks about various topics concerning the university. However, the UniSey faced challenges regarding the direction of this program. An alternate suggestion was made to the university, to explore other options to determine the way forward and ensure that the university is able to gain this exposure and coverage. The marketing of the university was also discussed in the form of outreach programs in the districts, assisted by the District Administration.

## CONCLUSION

The visit to the UniSey informed the members of the MYSCC of the university's business, its aims going forward, as well as its current challenges as a higher education institution in Seychelles. The main challenges expressed included infrastructural limitations, limited fiscal, human and technological resources, which ultimately affect their services and development. More information on the barriers which prevent the university from attaining an increased community of international students was gained.

The university has been having meetings with concerned departments to improve on their shortcomings as well as foster collaboration in the way forward. The Media Youth Sports and Culture Committee will follow up with the relevant ministries, departments and agencies on the matters raised during the visit and meeting.

## Annexure

### Annex 1: List of Attendees of the Visit and Meeting

Media Youth Sports and Culture Committee (MYSCC) members present:

- Hon. Wavel Woodcock (Chair)
- Hon. Philip Arissol (Vice Chair)
- Hon. Flory Larue
- Hon. Naddy Zialor
- Hon. Kelly Samynadin
- Hon. Paul Ernesta

Members absent from the visit:

- Hon. Johan Loze

Committee secretaries:

Ms. Shannon Surman

Mr. Vincent Quatre

List of attendees from UniSey:

1. Vice-Chancellor Ms Joëlle Perreau
2. Registrar Dr. Indra Persaud
3. Dean of Faculty Dr. Justin Zelime
4. Director of Finance Mrs. Emmanuella Simeon
5. Director of Marketing and Communications Ms Dolivette Chang-ko
6. Acting Director of Quality Assurance Mrs. Diana Ithier
7. Senior Manager of International and Local Engagement Mrs. Prema Servina
8. Senior Human Resource and Talent Management Manager Ms Marie-Andree Sally
9. President of the Student Council Mr. Steve Monnaie
10. Vice-President of the Student Council Samia Brioche

### Annex 2: List of Courses on Offer at the University of Seychelles

- Diploma in Computing and IT in Networking, Infrastructure and Security
- Diploma in Computing and IT in Software Development
- Diploma in Computing and IT in Web Technologies and Databases
- Diploma in Journalism
- Ed. in Secondary Education with specialization in History / Geography / Mathematics / English
- BSc Environmental Science
- Bachelor of Laws (LLB)

- MSc in Marine Science and Climate Change
- Work Experience Route to BSc Computing and information Systems
- Licence de Français (BA French)
- BSocSc Social Work
- BSocSc Youth and Community Work
- Master of Business Administration
- MSc Sustainable Tourism Management
- Master of Education in Education Leadership and Management