

MEDIA STATEMENT

Approved for Public Release

Date: Thursday, 21 April 2022

MEDIA STATEMENT BY UNISA MANAGEMENT ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY

1. Yesterday, 20 April 2022, the Management of the University of South Africa (Unisa) met to consider the latest developments in terms of institutional instability caused by acts of lawlessness on the part of organised labour in the form of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU).
2. The Management was unanimous in its affirmation of the constitutional rights of workers to protest and organise workers around labour relations matters. However, the Management does not approve or condone lawlessness, violence, and intimidation. Worker issues and robust debate are what Management has welcomed and allowed at Unisa. Lawlessness, violence, and intimidation are not provided for in the bargaining agreements, the Labour Relations Act or Unisa policies. As such, they will not be allowed to thrive in an academic environment.
3. The Management has taken steps to protect the integrity of the university and its academic programmes, as well as to protect life and property. The primary mandate of the university is the pursuit of knowledge, and the university Management has a moral and legal obligation to provide a conducive environment for learning and teaching, research and engaged scholarship.
4. The following measures have been approved to mitigate against anarchy and lawlessness:
 - a. The salary adjustment dispute which has been running for a few months has since been amicably resolved. It was the only fundamental issue that had disturbed labour peace at Unisa.
 - b. Five staff members, who also occupy leadership roles in NEHAWU, have been suspended effective from 19 April 2022 pending the disciplinary hearings, for organising an illegal and unprotected strike, as well as causing the disruption of the 2022 Autumn Graduation Ceremonies, among others. Such reckless activities have clearly caused harm to the image of the university and scores of workers, students and visitors were exposed to immense risks.
 - c. A court interdict is in place and enforceable against any illegal activity which seeks to disturb the operations of the university. This includes intimidation, harassment



and any other related activity as spelled out in the court order. The university is obligated to uphold the law.

- d. Workers who are engaged in an illegal and unprotected strike are fully aware of the court interdict and the fact that no union has been granted the certificate to strike by the CCMA. As such, workers are advised to report for work, failure of which disciplinary process will follow in line with university policies and the law.
 - e. Due to the violent nature of disruptions, the university has taken urgent steps to upscale security at its campuses, as well as to engage relevant government agencies which have the capacity and resources to manage security situations that fall outside the scope of normal labour relations disputes.
 - f. Management remains open to engage on real and substantive worker issues, including on the strategic issues of transformation and the future of Unisa. Lawlessness, violence, and intimidation do not constitute part of that agenda.
5. As a university, we have a duty to all our internal and external stakeholders, including our workers. Our biggest concern is that students and families from especially economically marginalised communities have been denied their rights to graduate in dignity. Some of these graduates are first generation graduates in their families and the devastation is immeasurable and, in some instances, irreversible. Unisa cannot afford this kind of harm to continue unabated.

Unisa continues to be a centre of academic excellence

6. Our national and global rankings are improving, and we are proud of the achievements and our deepest gratitude goes to our talented and excellent researchers and academics. The *US News & World Report* has published its *2022 Best Global Universities Rankings*, which includes a list of the top 13 tertiary learning institutions in South Africa – 10 of which, including Unisa, are ranked among the top 900 in the world. For the second consecutive year, the rankings placed Unisa at 9th in the country and 851st globally, up from 921st in the previous year. This ranking included 54 African universities and three ODeL universities. Unisa achieved 22nd position out of the 54 African universities (ninth of the South African universities) and 2nd among the ODeL universities.
7. We have also improved our overall ranking in the *Times Higher Education World University Rankings* to joint position 948, despite an increase in the number of ranked institutions from 1 527 institutions for the 2021 ranking to 1 662 for the 2022 ranking.
8. Among African universities ranked, Unisa achieved 30th position out of the 71 ranked African universities. However, Unisa achieved 7th position for teaching, 8th position for research, joint 31st position for industry income, but only 46th position for citations and 50th position for international outlook. Only five open distance education institutions were ranked, of which Unisa was 3rd of the five.
9. Similarly, in the *Times Higher Education Emerging Economies Rankings* for 2022, Unisa improved its position to joint 237th out of 698 institutions in the second quartile overall. Furthermore, Unisa also improved its position in all five dimensions of teaching, research, citations, industry income and international outlook.



10. Unisa is too big to fail. It is an important national, continental and global asset that must always be protected by all of us as members of the public and leaders committed to the university's vision and core mandate.
11. We will continue to build meaningful and enduring partnerships internally and externally based on sound ethics, mutual respect, observance of the rule of law, common principles and a shared vision. And we also hold each other accountable where necessary.
12. We remain committed to shaping African futures in service of humanity!

Issued by Unisa Management

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