

STUDENT STRIKE CALLED OFF AS UNISA REACHES AGREEMENT WITH THE SRC

12 January 2019

The University of South Africa (Unisa) and its Student Representative Council (SRC) concluded and signed an agreement today (Saturday, 12 January 2019); that will see the student strike called off with immediate effect and **normal operations of the university resuming by Monday, 14 January 2019.**

The agreement came as a result of the breakthrough made by the parties during negotiations within the university; as well as constructive engagement by the parties with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET; focusing on the registration challenges at Unisa, which included accreditation, enrolment planning, provision of laptops and other matters.

The table below provides an update on the issues that were the subject of the negotiations. Areas where there are new developments, which necessitated the conclusion of the agreement; are highlighted in bold letters:

NSRC DEMAND	UNISA RESPONSE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All students who completed higher certificates in 2018 should be allowed to proceed with registrations from 02 January 2019 ; and - All qualifying students must find space in the university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The university will make every effort to ensure that all 2018 Higher Certificate students who have applied for admission for cognate Bachelor’s degrees; and meet the admission requirements, will be accordingly registered. There will be clear timelines of offers to Higher Certificate recipients. - Unisa is subject to the DHET Student Enrolment Planning Policy Framework and as such our head count is limited to 380 000 and the first time entering students to 54 434. Unisa is not in a position to accept all qualifying students. However, Unisa Management has agreed to consider an additional 10 887 first-time entering students who have applied and who qualify. <p>However, the university has agreed to consider an additional 25 000 spaces for</p>



	<p>students have applied for the first semester of 2019 and who qualify. The NSRC will be kept informed weekly at a committee meeting on progress in this regard.</p>
<p>Fee increment by the university is rejected</p>	<p>UNISA has an integrated planning process, which includes the preparation of a 3-year budget in accordance with pre-determined prescripts, and is approved by the UNISA Council, in terms of the HE Act. The annual fee increase is also considered during this MTEF process, and is an integral part of ensuring the financial sustainability of the institution.</p> <p>The annual fee increase proposed and approved by Council was 6.9% (weighted). However, the net fee increase to be implemented will be 5.3% in accordance with a national norm.</p> <p>The NSRC disagrees with any fee increment and reserves its right to continue campaigning for Free Education.</p> <p>Unisa will develop a plan by end February by 2019 to enhance services in all regions; with comprehensive consultation in the regions.</p>
<p>Whilst the NSRC welcomed the decision to supply NSFAS-funded students with laptops, they however reject the provision of laptops as a substitute for the R5000 textbook allowances. The demand is essentially for both the device and the relevant textbooks</p>	<p>While several advances have been made to secure laptops for students, the choice of either a laptop or a textbook allowance in any one year of student funding is informed by the policy of NSFAS.</p> <p>NB: To assist students, Unisa further made an allocation of R5 million from its coffers to purchase additional textbooks that are now available to registered students at all Unisa libraries.</p> <p>The NSRC proposes a halt of all processes relating to this matter until all issues are resolved.</p>
<p>The NSRC demands an urgent resolution of the matter regarding Unisa qualifications not registered with SAQA</p>	<p>The management committee in early December 2018 considered a report from the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee which outlined a list of qualifications without SAQA IDs and resolved that all these qualifications will not be offered to new</p>



	<p>students in 2019 but would allow only pipeline students to continue. Unisa will continue to engage with the accreditation bodies to provide SAQA IDs for these qualifications and as soon as these are available, the qualifications will be re-opened and students allowed to register.</p> <p>Following engagement with the DHET, a commitment has been made to facilitate a meeting with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and Unisa to :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Find a solution to open registration to Accredited Qualifications while the SAQA registration is being finalised ; (2) Engage in a process to extend the expiry date of Re-Accredited qualifications with old SAQA IDs while awaiting the new SAQA IDs; and (3) Attend specifically to the issue of the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), which is one of the qualifications with a lapsed registration. DHET committed to engage SAQA to allow Unisa to continue offering the PGCE programme. <p>Note 1: These interventions are intended to ensure that students already enrolled in accredited programmes are not prejudiced.</p> <p>Note 2: Upon the intervention by DHET, only 25 qualifications will remain closed; and these are largely qualifications that will be phased out at the end of 2019.</p> <p>Unisa will provide the list to the NSRC on Monday, 14 January 2019.</p>
<p>The NSRC demands that the NSFAS must include all benefits and accord these to Unisa beneficiaries</p>	<p>Currently NSFAS students receive the following allowances, at UNISA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition fees (excluding Aegrotat and supplementary exams) • Learning material allowance (ongoing)



	<p>allocation) / e-device allocation (once-off) up to a maximum of R5000 for a student registered for a minimum of 3 modules</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o R600 per module for students registered for less than 3 modules o Allowances for practical portion of qualification (specific qualifications / modules only), including full cost of accommodation and food <p>Based on discussion between DHET and the students, plans are in place to establish a task team to engage with NSFAS on this matter.</p>
<p>The NSRC demands the immediate resuscitation of the Unisa Call Centre</p>	<p>In 2018 Council approved the establishment of a central structure for dealing with student queries, called the Student Communication Service Centre (SCSC). The first phase of the SCSC is already operational and is implementing an integrated system for UNISA to manage communication with students and other stakeholders, focusing on query resolution and the management of communication by telephone. Email and social media communication will be incorporated in the subsequent phases of implementation.</p> <p>Unisa has committed to increase the visibility and availability of the SCSC, including plans to identify the location of the SCSC as well as increase its staff capacity to respond students, particularly considering the drive to use online registration.</p>
<p>The NSRC indicated to Unisa Management that there are students who have received notification that they have been excluded academically due to their failure to meet the minimum credits required in each year of study.</p>	<p>All students excluded erroneously will be corrected within 72 hours and there will be communication with affected students and their respective funders. Additionally, students who did not receive SBUX before 15 August 2018 will be given special consideration.</p>
<p>The NSRC requested Unisa to consider providing a bus service from Gandhi Square (Johannesburg Regional Service Centre) to ferry new students to Florida Campus for the duration of the closure of Gandhi Square due to refurbishment</p>	<p>Unisa to set up a task team immediately to include relevant stakeholders, including the NSRC.</p> <p>The Task Team will provide 80 municipal bus tickets per day to returning students to commute between Gandhi Square and</p>



	Florida for registration purposes only until 25 January 2019.
Registration must be extended to the last day of January 2019	Unisa will do everything in its power to conclude registration on time.

‘As Unisa, we welcome this agreement and we are pleased that the operations of the university will return to normal; and that thousands of our people who aspire to acquire an education and better their lives; will be afforded the opportunity access Unisa – a university that plays a leading role in the higher education sector in the country and on the continent. This breakthrough also demonstrates how crucial dialogue is in efforts to find solutions. **Notwithstanding this agreement, we still urge students to register online unless it is absolutely necessary to visit a Unisa Service Centre**’ said Unisa Principal and Vice Chancellor, Professor Mandla Makhanya.

-Ends-

**ISSUED BY UNISA MEDIA AFFAIRS
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