



MEMORANDUM

TO: National Student Representative Council
UNISA

FROM: Prof P LenkaBula and Members of Mancom

ATE: 11 February 2022

VICE-CHANCELLOR AND MANCOM RESPONSES TO THE ISSUES RAISED BY THE NSRC

INTRODUCTION

The Management (ManCom) acknowledges and appreciates the role of the Student Representative Council (herein after referred to as the NSRC) in the life of the university, as provided for in the Higher Education Act and the university statute. The list of issues raised by the SRC are pertinent to the student support and academic success.

The university always strives to engage with all stakeholders in good faith and will always try to accommodate reasonable demands of students within existing governance frameworks, policies, and available resources. As a principle, the university will always try to cater for the plight of financially needy and academically deserving students.

Following the bilateral meeting between ManCom and the NSRC on Thursday, 3 February 2022, ManCom made an undertaking to respond to all the issues on the table, despite the disruption of the said meeting.

The following is a ManCom consolidated response from the various portfolios in the university:

I. Offers to students

Offers to students have been made to applicants in line with the enrolment plan and targets. Deviations to these figures must be approved by each College after a careful assessment of available capacity, again so that quality is not compromised. It must be remembered that deviations often attract sanctions or penalties from the DHET.

In terms of students who completed Higher Certificates last year, about 9 000 received offers out of about 12 000. This is a significant number. The remaining could not be accommodated because of the space limitations in some of the applied qualifications (LLB and BEd being the most sought-after qualifications) and some students not qualifying for admission. An engagement was held with the College of Law to see if it was possible to take on more students, but they are already over their target.

In addition, students who meet the NSFAS criteria for funding will be registered even though NSFAS had not issued confirmed funding lists due to delays on their side. Beyond this intervention, we continue to support students who cannot afford to pay their registration fees at the moment to register through the AOD process to ensure that they are not left behind when the academic year starts.

II. Extension of Registration

The university has decided to extend the registration period. The closing date of registration for the 2022 first semester modules has been extended to 14 February 2022 and the final payment date for the minimum fee is 17 February 2022.

The university is unable to have an unreasonable extension of the registration period due to the limitations imposed by the enrolment plan of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the need to protect the integrity of qualifications and the accreditation requirements set by the Council on Higher Education. The university places a high premium on its qualifications which are fully accredited and quality-assured.

III. Wavering of prerequisites

Due to the need to adhere to quality requirements, the university will not introduce a blanket or permanent waiver to prerequisites. The waivers will be introduced under the following strict conditions:

- Prerequisites be temporarily waived only for students whose results are outstanding at this stage, i.e. for October/December 2021 and January/February 2022 exams.
- After the outstanding results are made available, students who have passed prerequisite modules will continue unaffected with their registered modules and those who fail to pass the prerequisite modules be deregistered from the modules that require the affected (failed) prerequisites.
- These adjustments should not tamper with the current timelines for assignment submission. Instead, colleges should make special arrangements to support the affected students to catch-up on the lost time.

IV. Distribution of Allowances

A Project Team meeting was held on Wednesday, 9 February 2022 where the NSRC presented their additional specification requirements for the solution which Unisa Enterprise is expected to provide. The meeting resolved that the Secretary General of the NSRC will submit a formal specifications requirement to Project Team and that Supply Chain Management (SCM) will assist in consolidating the specifications. Once this is done, these will be provided to Unisa Enterprise for consideration over three days before providing feedback to the Project Team on their solution's ability to meet the specifications as provided.

Unisa Enterprise will be required to also do a demonstration of their solution to an evaluation committee which will be selected from the members of the Project Team, inclusive of all stakeholders. Based on the feedback and demonstration of the Unisa Enterprise solution, the Project Team will determine a way forward.

A commitment was made by the Project Team to secure the continuation of payments of allowances to students from April and beyond, regardless of the outcomes of the evaluation of the Unisa Enterprise solution.

V. Free Supplementary Exams

ManCom has resolved that those students who did not use the Invigilator App on their own volition will be liable for half of the cost of the supplementary examination, whilst those who were unable to utilise it because of not being acclimatized to this mode of invigilation, or due to Covid-19 and other socio-economic circumstances will be allowed to write the supplementary examinations at no cost. Students must take note that the Invigilator App is a necessary requirement to safeguard the integrity of all examinations and qualifications.

However, in the unlikely event that supplementary fee waivers exceed R5 million in terms of costs, ManCom will require approval by FIECoC or even Council depending on the quantum.

VI. Student discipline in respect to examinations

ManCom has resolved that those students who did not utilise the Invigilator App and were not cleared by the appeals process be given a supplementary opportunity accompanied by a warning letter.

VII. Release of results

There has been tremendous progress in the marking of scripts and release of results. The following table reflects a near complete status:

Oct/Nov 2021	Numbers
Admission examinations	2 091 2777
Admitted heads	339 910
Take home exams	1 040
MCQ's	323
SBL Modules	65
Non-Timetable Modules	1 147
Results released	1 912 521

The outstanding results for OCT/NOV 2021 examinations affect Module Code - PLS 1502 x 250 and are showing 'progress of marking' status. Going forward, the management is putting interventions to ensure efficiencies and improvements in appropriate turnaround times.

VIII. Approval of building projects

This issue is receiving attention already. The relevant directorate (Facilities Management) is currently discussing space requirements for the regions to ensure that it can provide suitable facilities while ensuring alignment with the strategic direction of the university, as well as the impact of Covid-19 on space requirements academic work.

Resignation of the Dean of Students and Vice-Chancellor

The resignation of university officials happens strictly under the law and the relevant contractual obligations. Periodical performance assessments are done by the relevant portfolio leader in respect to the Dean of Students and by Council in respect of the Vice-Chancellor. So far, both authorities have decided to continue the services of the two officials concerned. In the event that the NSRC is not satisfied with the ManCom response, it is free to petition the Council of the university.

CONCLUSION

As indicated above, Management values the input and role of the NSRC in the life of the university. Our student leaders are co-architects of the vision to build an African university shaping futures in the service of humanity.

Management remains available to engage with the NSRC on all the important matters that affect the quality of student life in our university. In the true spirit of co-operative governance, it is hoped that the NSRC will continue to play its role as a strategic partner in the advancement and transformation of the university.
