

STUDENTS' CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- 1.1 Adherence to the Bill of Rights and the relevant founding values of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, in particular, human dignity, the advancement of human rights and freedoms and the pursuit of equality, irrespective of race, creed, gender, sexual orientation, class, age, disability, social or cultural background.
- 1.2 Commitment to uphold UNISA's vision (Towards the African university in the service of humanity) and the national mission to advance the cause of the African Renaissance and to give effect to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).
- 1.3 Commitment to translate the goals as set out in UNISA's Agenda for Transformation by 2015, especially objective 6.6, namely to create a nurturing environment to promote student well-being, to foster a sense of belonging to UNISA and to mobilise alumni in the service of the University.
- 1.4 Students are a central constitutive component of UNISA and are at the same time responsible clients and customers of UNISA's academic, management and other support services employees.
- 1.5 Students bear the primary responsibility to be diligent in learning and carrying out research with a view to exiting with the required qualifications within reasonable timelines.
- 1.6 Students and employees of the University are expected to treat each other with respect and to make every effort to uphold the image of the University.
- 1.7 Employees of the University are obligated to adopt the principles of **Batho Pele** in all relations with students, and consequently, upholding and realising the **Baithuti-Pele** principles, student satisfaction comes first.
- 1.8 Appropriate sanctions will be meted out to those who undermine the letter and spirit of this Charter, subject to upholding the principles of just administrative action according to law.

2. BUILDING A NEW INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

- 2.1 Now that the new UNISA has finally been established, the challenge is the cultivation of a new institutional culture that is cognisant of the need to shade away aspects of the old institutional cultures of the merged institutions.

- 2.2 Part of the new culture is that the University must compete for and attract a share of students of high quality, while retaining its policy of providing access to and remedial programmes for those with marginal qualifications to enable them to exit with high standards of achievement. In addition, the University will strive to create an enabling environment so that students with disabilities can participate fully and enjoy equal opportunities.
- 2.3 The processing of enrolment and registration should be revamped.
- 2.4 Better tuition should be provided and there should be a maximum turnaround time of three weeks for the marking of student assignments and the preparation of research reports.
- 2.5 Enhanced and mutually respectful communication between employees and students will be encouraged, taking into consideration the University's new policy of multilingualism.
- 2.6 The University's premises will be smoke-free and no weapons whatsoever will be allowed on such premises, except as authorised by law.
- 2.7 The University should endeavour to improve sporting and recreational facilities for students.

3. RIGHTS TO SERVICE EXCELLENCE

- 3.1 Every student has the right to service excellence commensurate with the University's new institutional culture.
- 3.2 Academic freedom, freedom to conduct research and freedom of expression and intellectual engagement apply to all students.
- 3.3 Students have the right to offerings based on curricula that are transformed to reflect the African character and location of the University. Furthermore, students with disabilities not only have the right to the conversion from traditional to non-traditional material, but also the right not to be disadvantaged by the time taken for conversion.
- 3.4 Research students have the right to institutional support, including priority access to scientific conferences organised by the University in fields relevant to their research.
- 3.5 Prospective students are entitled to the transparent and timeous assessment of pre-registration records or portfolios for recognition of prior learning where applicable. In the event that the portfolio is judged to be insufficient for granting admission, written reasons should be given.
- 3.6 Students (both current and prospective) are entitled to apply for financial assistance to further their studies where means of paying tuition fees are not accessible and to know the criteria that is used when allocating funds.
- 3.7 Students are entitled to know the procedures and deadlines (i.e. closing dates) and documents needed in support of their applications for financial aid. Where an application is approved, a contract form is signed by the student and where the application is rejected reasons for rejection should be provided in writing.
- 3.8 International students seeking accommodation should be advised and assisted with relevant information.

- 3.9 Prospective post-graduate students with non-South African qualifications will not be required to have post graduate honours degrees as a prerequisite for admission to master's and doctoral studies in line with the general and college-specific requirements of the admission policy.
- 3.10 Students are entitled to lodge complaints with the University's Ombudsman against any University employee or structure for poor service – to this end the University has established a toll free number, accessible to students on a 24 hours, seven days a week basis.
- 3.11 Current and prospective students have a right to timeous information regarding all aspects of financial support administered by the University.

4. STUDENT OBLIGATIONS

- 4.1 All rights correlate with obligations, responsibilities and duties to other rights-bearers and society as a whole.
- 4.2 Reasonable and justifiable limitations on rights and freedoms are constitutionally permissible.
- 4.3 Students should specifically be obliged to honour human rights in their dealings with each other and with the academic employees/University.
- 4.4 Human rights should also be honoured in terms of gender and other equity issues.
- 4.5 Students are part of this University and thus have responsibilities regarding the achievement of the objectives for 2015.
- 4.6 Students are expected to take overall responsibility for their designated programme of study.
- 4.7 All procedures and policies are to be respected in all their dealings with fellow students and Unisa employees.
- 4.8 Students are obliged to inquire about how financial assistance is allocated, how much was awarded, to know the terms and conditions as outlined in the contract and to repay the loan for the sustainability of the scheme.

5. INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES TO ENFORCE AND MONITOR THE CHARTER

- 5.1 The Student Affairs portfolio undertakes to enhance student support and service and to ensure the provision of a student's voice, through an establishment of duly elected Students' Representative Council – in line with a world-class African university values.
- 5.2 An external Ombudsman will be appointed.
- 5.3 Whistleblowers will be effectively used.
- 5.4 Internal disciplinary systems will be utilised.
- 5.5 Student complaints will be effectively managed of and feedback ensured.
- 5.6 Effective quality assurance systems will be implemented.
- 5.7 The services provided to students will be constantly reviewed for relevance, impact and the satisfaction of students.

- 5.8 The Customer Care Committee (CCC) will annually review the Students' Charter to ensure due compliance from the employees on promised services.
- 5.9 Each college is to publish a comprehensive list detailing a menu of services accessible to students.
- 5.10 Equally, all support services, such as the Office of the Dean of Students, the Examinations Department, Despatch, Counselling Services, Learner and Tutor support, the Digital Contact Centre etc, are to publish a list of portfolio-specific services.
- 5.11 All entities are to enter into Service Level Agreements, which will be authorised by College Boards and relevant committees and ratified by Council.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARTER

Related charters of the former institutions that were in force prior to the commencement of this Charter are replaced with effect from the date on which Council approves this Charter.

