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UCT statement on security at exam venue

Due to the situation that UCT has faced over the past few weeks, where multiple classes, tests and exams were targeted by protesters and some disrupted to a point that they had to be abandoned, an alternative plan to ensure the successful delivery of the exams was developed.

It is critical that the exams are concluded successfully. The executive has previously expressed the dire consequences for thousands of students, for staff and the additional financial catastrophe for UCT if the exams are not concluded. Furthermore, UCT is determined to conduct the exams in a safe, quiet and calm atmosphere to support students in doing the best they can.

In light of the continued protest and the increase in unlawful incidents, any attempt to secure exams over two weeks in multiple separate venues proved to be extremely complicated.

The decision was therefore taken to create a single exam venue that can be secured as fully as possible. This venue has been constructed on the UCT rugby fields on Upper Campus. Access to the venue and the surrounding area is strictly controlled.

The executive has expressed regret that security must be deployed to such an extent on campus to secure the exam venue. Staff and students should expect increased visibility of security measures around the exam venue. In the prevailing context, there is unfortunately no alternative. Campus Protection Services (CPS), private security officers and the South African Police Service (SAPS) are working closely together on the project.

The executive took this unusual step as a measure of a firm commitment to the huge majority of students who want to write their exams and see the academic year through to its end. A small number of protesters remain determined to see the university shut down, and have disrupted tests and exams over recent weeks in their attempts to do so. The executive will do their level best to prevent such incidents from recurring.

Thus far, as a result of disruptions over the last two weeks, 12 individuals (11 of whom are UCT students) have been arrested and/or charged, some remain under arrest, and three further cases of arson or malicious damage to property have been opened without suspects yet identified.

The executive realises that it may be stressful for some students to write exams in the midst of an increased security presence, but hopes that students understand that this has become unavoidable.

The immediate presence of security within the exam perimeter has been reduced to a minimum. However, Campus Protection Services officers will still be present in the exam halls. This is to enable the interception of any protesters who are students, and therefore may be entitled to be in the exam venue, from attempting to disrupt any exams. In terms of the current interdict, any protesters attempting to disrupt exams will be handed over to the South African Police Service for arrest.

There are medical and other emergency teams on standby near the venues within the perimeter fence should anyone need assistance.

ENDS

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