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UCT introduces special tribunal and online reporting tool to deal with GBV cases

The University of Cape Town has introduced with immediate effect a special ad hoc tribunal to deal with cases of gender-based violence.

The university has also created an online reporting tool that makes the reporting of sexual and gender-based violence user-friendly and accessible.

The special tribunal will address the backlog of cases in the system and deal with any new cases that may arise, while the reporting tool allows the Office for Inclusivity and Change to track cases through the UCT system, thereby increasing transparency, while allowing for anonymous reporting.

This is part of the tangible action the UCT executive has taken in dealing with sexual and gender-based violence on campus, and improving safety and security on campus.

The university plans to provide staff and students with a sexual and gender-based violence toolkit, as well as a personal alarm device. UCT is also scaling up voluntary self-defence classes that were part of a pilot programme earlier this year.

A cross-institutional sexual and gender-based violence working group met earlier this week, and they identified four streams of work, focusing on dialogues on masculinity, dialogues on restorative justice, campus safety and community engagement. The activities of these four streams will be capacitated and resourced over the coming months.

See the full communication by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng, below.



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
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Support and safety efforts around sexual and gender-based violence

6 September 2019

Dear colleagues and students

We wrote to you this week ([Read the VC Desk](#)) and promised that we would update you on what the UCT executive and I are doing and planning in our attempts to deal with sexual and gender-based violence on campus, and improve safety and security on campus.

We are discussing ideas and proposals at the highest level and actively seeking better, more impactful solutions. It is an ongoing process and the matter will stay as a priority on our agenda. From November 2017, significant systemic changes have

been made to ensure that the University of Cape Town (UCT) is responsive and effectively managing the incidences of sexual and gender-based violence.

For the past year the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Transformation has been working on establishing a special tribunal to deal with sexual offenses and other forms of discrimination. This requires amendments to our current policies as well as the establishment of a set of procedural rules. This is an ongoing project and we hope to finalise it in the next few months.

However, we recognise that there is a backlog in dealing with cases referred to the Student Disciplinary Tribunal by the OIC. As an interim measure we have therefore introduced with immediate effect a special ad hoc tribunal based on the principles of a special tribunal but utilising current procedures. It will address the backlog of cases in the system and deal with any new cases that may arise. Many survivors feel incredible anger because they have been let down by a legal system that should support and protect them. We hope that the additional and special tribunal will make a difference for survivors.

Furthermore, we have created an [online reporting tool](#) that makes the reporting of sexual and gender-based violence user-friendly and accessible. The tool allows the Office for Inclusivity and Change (OIC) to track cases through the UCT system, thereby increasing transparency, while allowing for anonymous reporting. It will allow the university to track perpetrators, identify potential hotspots and generate more data. Based on this data, UCT will be able to make better decisions around the prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and improve our ability to support those affected by such incidents.

We invite students and staff who have experienced sexual or gender-based violence to find the courage, hard as we know it is, to report the matter. They can now do so through the online reporting tool or by contacting the OIC directly. For assistance with reporting an incident using the online reporting tool, please contact the OIC on 021 650 2767 or [Professor Dee Smythe](#), [Professor Pamela Schwikkard](#), [Dr Fatima Khan](#) or [Dr Yellavarne Moodley](#) from the Faculty of Law. The [online reporting tool](#) is already operational and can also be accessed via the [UCT App](#).

Students and staff can still receive individual support and referral information by visiting the OIC office in person (Ivan Toms Building, 28 Rhodes Avenue, Mowbray – next to the Student Wellness Service). Anyone who needs immediate medical assistance or advice following a rape and/or sexual assault should call, SMS or send a missed call to the standby number: 072 393 7824. We advise all staff and students to save this number on their cellphones. For telephonic counselling, please call Rape Crisis on 021 447 9762 or the South African Depression and Anxiety Group on 0800 24 25 26.

We are hoping to provide staff and students with a sexual and gender-based violence toolkit, as well as a personal alarm device. We are also scaling up voluntary self-defence classes that were part of a pilot programme earlier this year. Once specific details on these initiatives have been finalised, we will share them with the university community.

A cross-institutional sexual and gender-based violence working group met earlier this week, and they identified four streams of work, focusing on dialogues on masculinity, dialogues on restorative justice, campus safety and community engagement. The activities of these four streams will be capacitated and resourced over the coming months, and more information will be provided in due course. Faculties and departments will continue to engage on the need for addressing sexual and gender-based violence and the need for healing as we commence classes on Monday.

We live in a country where crime is a reality, and it does affect all of us, but the safety of students and staff remains the university's highest priority. [Campus Protection Services \(CPS\)](#) continues to work closely with the South African Police Service (SAPS) to target certain crime categories, deploying CPS staff to focus on crime hotspots. The CPS emergency number is printed on the back of every UCT identity card. We have also extended our partnership with the Groote Schuur Community Improvement District to secure the campus perimeter.

There is much work that still needs to be done, but we are committed to working with all staff and students to address sexual and gender-based violence comprehensively as an institution.

Sincerely

Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng

Vice-Chancellor

ENDS

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