



16 March 2023

UCT management and SRC reach mediated agreement

The University of Cape Town (UCT) management and the Students' Representative Council (SRC) have reached an agreement over fee block issues following two days of mediation sessions.

Mediation sessions between UCT management and the SRC took place on 14 and 15 March 2023, facilitated by an independent external mediator, Mr Ashraf Mahomed. He was supported by Mr Akha Tutu, who was appointed by the student representatives.

Under the agreement, which came into effect on Wednesday, 15 March, the UCT management shall, in a consultative manner, "conduct a review in respect of its fee policy, with specific reference to the application of a 'fee block' on the grounds of the financial means of the university and the needs of each student, the socio-economic conditions affecting each student, the academic performance of each student, and so forth."

The agreement is applicable to academically eligible UCT students who were registered in 2022, including students in the Graduate School of Business. However, it is not applicable to international students due to visa restrictions.

Interim Vice-Chancellor, Emeritus Professor Daya Reddy, said: "We have worked very hard over the past two days to resolve the issues as speedily as possible in order not only to ensure that academic and other activities continue without further disruptions but also, importantly, to work jointly with the SRC to address the plight of students affected by fee blocks."

SRC President Ms Hlengiwe Lisa Dube said: "The SRC as student leaders will continue to advocate for students of this institution. We are pleased that management was able to address some of the pressing issues. We vowed no student will be left behind and as we continue to fight the bigger fight of fee blocks, let us acknowledge the efforts and accomplishments made thus far."

The agreement states that the university's management will take reasonable measures, through an accountable, transparent and fair approach, to:

- Review the relevant circumstances of each student affected by the application of a 'fee block', on a case by case basis, with the view to identifying any issues preventing them from registering for and participating in the 2023 academic

programme. All students with a combined family income of less than R650 000 will be presented to Council, with a reasonable payment plan to be implemented following gainful employment, within a three-week timeframe. Students whose combined family income is over R650 000 may also be considered for presentation to Council.

- Provide to all students within the agreed cohort full access to the educational resources and academic activities at UCT for the 2023 academic programme during the assessment period.
- The academic assessment for each student will be determined by nature and stage in the degree programme, guided by the principle of optimising student learning, and where necessary, in course-based programmes this will be addressed through the development of an academic plan with an academic advisor and student representative (should the students choose to have representation). Oversight of the outcomes of the academic assessment status will be by a committee of four, comprising representatives from the management and the SRC.

The UCT management will take reasonable measures to assess affordability for each student and the need to develop an appropriate and individualised payment plan, including signing an Acknowledgement of Debt. Where a student so chooses, a student representative will be available to engage in the process.

In addition, the SRC committed to working with management on a fundraising strategy to alleviate payment plans as well as, broadly, student fee debt.

Management and the SRC will also engage with the Department of Higher Education and Training and NSFAS, via Universities South Africa (USAf), to resolve the R45 000 'fee cap', which is aggravating the financial aid crisis.

The parties agreed that all the issues relating to accommodation, student assessment and academic concessions, as well as the interim interdict, remained outstanding and mediation will continue to finalise these.

ENDS

Issued on behalf of the UCT management and the SRC

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