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UCT Council Chair recuses himself from deliberations on VC's review application

The Chair of the University of Cape Town (UCT) Council, Adv Norman Arendse SC, welcomes the independent determination made on Friday, 16 October 2026 by Adv Nazreen Bawa SC on the Vice-Chancellor's (VC) request that he recuse himself from Council's deliberations concerning the VC's review application against Council.

Council adopted a process under which a request for the recusal of a Council member, where it cannot be resolved between the parties, is referred to an independent senior counsel or retired judge for a binding determination. The Chair agreed to that process and to be bound by its outcome.

Adv Bawa SC found that the Chair has no personal interest in the review proceedings, and that no conflict of interest requiring his recusal arises under the Higher Education Act. She found that he is cited in the review in his official capacity only; that he has no personal interest in its outcome; that his personal integrity is not impugned in the application; and that there is no evidence that he would be biased against the VC.

Despite this finding, the Chair has decided to step aside from the Special Council meeting to be held shortly, while Council considers the item concerning the review application. The Deputy Chair will preside over that item.

The Chair has taken this decision in the interests of the university. It removes any suggestion that the litigation, or Council's handling of it, could be delayed or called into question because of his participation, and allows Council to proceed with its consideration of the matter without further delay.

Adv Arendse said: "I am grateful to Adv Bawa SC for her determination, which confirms that I have no conflict of interest in this matter. Nevertheless, the interests of the university must

come first. I have therefore chosen to step aside from this item so that Council can attend to the litigation without distraction, and so that the matter can proceed to finality before the court."

The review application remains before the High Court. Council will not comment further on the matters before the court.

ENDS

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