



## higher education & training

Department:  
Higher Education and Training  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

### Media Release

#### **Media Statement on Disruptions at Institutions of Higher Learning as a Result of Student Political Intolerance**

27 August 2015

The Department of Higher Education and Training notes with concern the disturbances taking place at our institutions of higher learning, as a result of student political intolerance during the time of elections of new Student Representative Councils.

Institutions of higher learning are open spaces for free speech, academic freedom and independent thinking. Therefore, intolerance of opposing ideas is against the very essence of a university. It is our expectation, as the Department, that institutions of higher learning must be exemplary on how differences of opinion and disputes are resolved, and that it should be through disciplined and mature exchange of ideas. It is completely unacceptable in our democracy that in an institution of higher learning, disputes lead to physical clashes and the disruption of academic programmes.

Student political activities at institutions should be conducted within the rules, policies and prescribed procedures of individual institutions. Equally, the Department expects political parties in our country to respect our institutions and abide by their rules on how political activities should be conducted. The conduct of all must be guided and be within the rules of our institutions, which in turn are crafted within the prescripts of our Constitution. Any divergence from these rules must be dealt with by the institutional management through the rule of law.

The Department condemns any form of political intolerance, violence and hooliganism at our educational institutions. The infrastructure and property at our institutions belongs to the South African public, and are derived from the hard labour and efforts of the citizens of this country. The destruction and attack on these institutions is therefore, an attack on all South Africans. The Department calls upon the management of our institutions to make sure that students, staff and property are protected at all times.

The Department also calls upon the management and governing bodies to take the necessary action against the perpetrators of violence and those responsible for the destruction of property, and ensure that legal actions and civil claims are instituted where appropriate, to recover any losses incurred. We also call upon political parties to act responsibly and respect the laws of this country, and the rules of our institutions. Incitement of violence by leaders of political parties is an irresponsible act of desperation.

The management and leadership of all our institutions, universities and Technical Vocational Education and Training colleges, must ensure the safety and security of all staff and students at our campuses, particularly during this time of student representative council elections, as an act of democracy should never lead to violence. The institutional management and leadership must ensure that students undergo conflict resolution training and fully understand human rights.

The Department of Higher Education and Training has planned for the training of the student leadership at all our institutions, and will be conducting this training during October 2015 and early November 2015.

**Ends**

**Mr GF Qonde**

**Director-General**

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