

MEDIA STATEMENT

Minister Nzimande condemns the disruption of classes at Wits

10 October 2016 - The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande is disturbed by the disruption of classes and chaotic scenes witnessed at the University of Witwatersrand and other universities.

The university's attempts to continue with the academic programme are being held to ransom by a minority of irresponsible and disrespectful students who are intent upon disrupting classes at the university.

"This is a critical time for the academic programme with examinations fast approaching, therefore it is of paramount importance for classes to resume without delay. We strongly condemn the actions of striking students who clearly do not want to see the completion of the academic programme. They continue to disrupt and intimidate students who want to continue with their studies and in so doing deny the majority of student their right to higher education", says Minister Nzimande.

The Minister and Department calls on the university management to do everything in its power to ensure that the academic programme successfully resumes.

"We support your efforts to get the academic programme underway. I have been in discussions with a number of stakeholders in the sector who adopted the multi-stakeholder declaration on 3 October 2016 and called for universities to reopen and learning to continue. Non-striking students should not be held to ransom by a few striking students who do not want to learn", said Minister Nzimande.

The law enforcement agencies will continue to act and the law must take its course against those who have been found to have committed crimes. There has been enough intimidation and destruction of property including violence, which can no longer be tolerated.

The Minister and Department continues to call upon parents, vice chancellors, members of council, traditional and religious leaders, trade unions and business leaders including convocations and alumni, working with the Department to play their role in finding a lasting solution.

Minister Nzimande says, "Access to higher education, particularly for the poor is everyone's concern and therefore all stakeholders must play an active role in saving our 2016 academic programme. Ongoing negotiations cannot stand in the way of classes resuming, dialogue is the only answer, and intimidation and violence will never address the legitimate concerns of students."

The Minister and Department appreciates the efforts of several stakeholders who have genuinely been working tirelessly to try and find innovative ways to resolve the issues.

End

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