



STATEMENT ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN STUDENT HOUSING IN DURBAN

01 March 2019

Management has observed with great concern the emergence of opportunistic elements who are mobilising students in residences almost every evening to persuade them to demand to be moved from their current residences to other residences. This is not done in the spirit of finding solutions to identified problems which Management and the SRC are jointly dealing with at present. Members of staff in Student Housing in Durban are subjected to insults and intimidation on a daily basis by small numbers of students who complain even about the most trivial of issues. Sadly, this opportunism waters down the legitimate concerns raised by students in selected buildings. Management is aware about some legitimate concerns and is dealing with them through determined processes jointly with the SRC.

Management agreed with the Student Representative Council that it should be allowed to deal with pressing short term issues by the end of March 2019. There is also a process being led by the Dean of Students together with the members of the SRC to visit buildings which are reportedly not compliant with norms and standards and general health and safety issues. This team will present a report once they are done with this process.

The elements we are referring to, have hijacked this institutional process and turned into self-seeking excursion. We strongly want to urge students to desist from fomenting problems where there is none. Management remains committed to implementing the agreement it reached with the SRC. We remain thankful to the SRC that it is committed to the agreement despite its members being put under serious pressure every day to consider illegality. The only legitimate body to engage on matters of students on their behalf is the SRC. The Department of Student Housing has also established its own structures to create efficiencies in their operations.

Without encroaching on individuals' inalienable rights, we wish to categorically state the following:

- the university has an obligation to provide a conducive environment to staff to perform their duties;
- the university will consider all necessary steps within the ambit of the law to fulfil the above obligation;
- the university appeals to all students to remind themselves about University and Residence rules;
- the university will act against perpetrators where there is sufficient evidence of wrongdoing in accordance with the rules referred to above;
- no mass meeting will take place in residences if not organised by the SRC, Central Housing Committee or House Committee;
- leased buildings are private properties and landlords reserve their right to make their own security arrangements; anyone who enters any private property without the prior knowledge of the landlord is trespassing and landlords reserve their right to deal with trespassers within the ambit of the law;
- the university may not be held liable for the perceived trespassing at a private property.

We wish to appeal to everyone's conscience to allow the university to function with least disruptions.

Dr David Mohale
Executive: Student Services