

## UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

23 July 2022

Dear staff and students

### UPDATE ON DURBAN CAMPUS OPERATIONS

A joint EMC-Senex meeting took place on Friday, 22 July 2022 to consider whether there is any logical and compelling reason for staff and students not to return to our campuses. Simply, we could not find any logical and compelling reason why DUT students and staff could not return to the University.

Thus, decisions that were shared with you via our statement on 8 July 2022 still stand:

[https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/DUT.EMC\\_Senex\\_Statement.08July2022.pdf](https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/DUT.EMC_Senex_Statement.08July2022.pdf)

### BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEK'S VIOLENT PROTEST

Management is aware of some students and staff who appear to wish lockdown had not ended and COVID-19 had not abated. The latter are the reasons we resorted to full online learning during 2020 and 2021. These students and staff wish us to continue with online learning and reverse our decision of 8 July that we must, like many other universities, return to full face-to-face academic and administrative activities at DUT. With regard to administrative activities, for instance, we have received many complaints from students and parents who either call or visit our administrative offices but find no one to help them.

Partly as a result of this reluctance to return to our campuses, there was violent protest action, starting on Monday, 18 July, by relatively small groups of students which, unfortunately, resulted in disruptions at our Durban campuses. Beyond their reluctance to return to our campuses as alluded to above, they exploit just about any matter to ensure our academic programme does not continue. Notwithstanding the SRC's own statements during the week in which it reported on progress being made on these matters and urged students to return to our campuses, these groups of anarchists are hell-bent on unleashing chaos and violence and shutting DUT down.

In the area of Student Services, for example, there had been two sticky matters, which have since been resolved. There was a group of students who had first opted for private accommodation and now wish to change to full accommodation.

Last week, we shared a statement with you in which we explained the situation around the issues of student accommodation and National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) allowances, two of the major issues raised by the SRC. Here is the link to our previous communiqué: <https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/DUT.EMC-Senex.statement.140722.pdf>.

A number of infrastructure related matters regarding the availability of some teaching and learning venues were also discussed. While there may be claims that some preferred venues are not available, other venues are available elsewhere in the university. While different faculties and departments might have custody of some, they all belong to the University. Our Real Estate and Timetabling staff will be working through the weekend to ensure that alternative venues are made available to every other department or faculty.

As we all know, violent protest action has become an integral part of our lives in South Africa, Violence, in general, is our everyday experience. A place like a university, where logic and reason, debate and deliberation must trump everything, is the last that should be seen as a place of violence.

We, thus, apologise for DUT being turned into a violent place by these anarchists, despite our best efforts to engage honestly with the SRC, the only statutory body representing the interests of our student body. As noted above, if there had not been engagements between Management and the SRC, the SRC would not have been able to issue statements providing details of what progress had been made on sticky matters we had.

For staff members who were traumatized by the violence, disruption and intimidation this week, please contact the DUT Employee Wellness Office who will assist you with professional help and support. Please follow this link to access the relevant contact details: <https://www.dut.ac.za/ewpl/>.

For students who were traumatized by the violence, disruption and intimidation caused by the protestors, please contact the DUT Student Counselling and Health, via the link below, for professional assistance and support: [https://www.dut.ac.za/support\\_services/student\\_services\\_and\\_development/student\\_counselling\\_and\\_health/](https://www.dut.ac.za/support_services/student_services_and_development/student_counselling_and_health/)

## SECURITY RESPONSE

The Joint Operations Command (JOC), a group that includes various law enforcement agencies including the SAPS, Metro Police, the Public Order Police, and Campus Protection Services, worked reasonably well during the week. The on-going collaboration within this JOC assisted in reducing the impact of the protests and prevented more serious damage to university property.

However, in some instances, our security response may have been less than favourable. This was evident on Thursday, 21 July, when protestors invaded the ML Sultan Campus and the City Campus in Durban, disrupting operations, threatening and intimidating staff and students. The police had to enter campus and disperse the protestors. No disruptions took place by Friday, 22 July, in the afternoon. We and the JOC will continue to increase vigilance in protecting our people and DUT's property.

Following in-depth discussions with SAPS and the Durban Metro Police, together with police's Crime Intelligence Unit, an updated security plan is being finalised to ensure that the necessary precautions are in place. Without divulging specific details of the revised security plan, police will have an increased presence in the area and they will be enforcing the High Court Order that was granted earlier this year. Campus Protection Services has confirmed one protestor has been suspended and a further two are under investigation. Here is the link to the High Court Order that was granted on 29 March 2022 and published on our website: <https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/ORDER-GRANTED-29.03.2022.pdf>.

## **ENGAGEMENTS WITH THE STUDENT LEADERSHIP**

As evidenced by the SRC's own statements, the relevant structures and officers of the University have met with the SRC to address student concerns. The Cabinet of the Student Parliament was also convened and appraised of the situation. On Thursday, 21 July, in a bid to deepen our democracy, agreement was reached with Student Services to hold a special sitting of the full DUT Student Parliament. This is a broad student forum that includes registered clubs and societies, Faculty representatives and political student organisations. As stated in our 8 July statement, Management is concerned that the only loud voices are those of a great minority consisting of anarchists. The silent voices of the majority must begin to be heard, instead of just a small group of vocal protestors from one political affiliation, or perhaps a faction therefrom.

## **CONCLUSION**

We continue to advise that you should only access official university statements via our email platforms. Official announcements will be shared with all staff via the DUT PinBoard staff email system and the with all students via the official DUT4life email accounts. Please do not only rely on social media posts that you may receive via WhatsApp as sometimes misinformation is also spread by the protest leaders to seed further chaos and confusion.

The University is determined to have face to face, in-person engagements this semester. We must return to our academic routine and to ensure that we provide physical teaching and learning at DUT. As we argued in 2021, we cannot afford to churn our graduates who have not been fully acculturated as real university graduates in our lecture

halls and seminar rooms where logic and reason, deliberation and debate take place. As noted above, we must remember that the only reason we initially adopted full online teaching and learning in 2020 was due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now that the government's public health regulations have been relaxed, the National State of Disaster has been repealed and the DUT Council have suspended the DUT Vaccine Policy, there is no valid reason to not have physical engagements on our campuses. We must revert to pre-pandemic teaching and learning and provide our students with a full campus experience. Yes, we will still have blended learning just like we had pre-2020 using Moodle and other mechanisms like MS Teams. However, that does not suggest those must be the primary mechanisms that must relegate face to face engagements to a secondary status.

We will update you if there are any future developments. We also take this opportunity to congratulate our graduates who recently graduated in Durban and those who will be gracing the graduation stage in Pietermaritzburg next week. We are immensely proud of our staff and the 9081 graduates from the Class of 2021.

Have a safe and successful semester.

Sincerely

DUT Management Team

