

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **UNISA STATEMENT ON ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL AND ONLINE HARASSMENT LEVELLED AGAINST MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (NSRC)**

The University of South Africa (Unisa) has taken note of a statement issued on Friday, 09 July 2021 on the letterhead of the National Student Representative Council (NSRC) which, amongst others; mentions receipt of a complaint of sexual harassment made against a member of the NSRC, as well as reporting of the complaint to the university and the South African Police Service (SAPS).

Whilst the other matters in the statement pertaining to student support services are scheduled to be addressed at a planned meeting between university management and the NSRC soon, the university is of the view that the sexual harassment matter is of a serious nature and must be promptly responded to.

The university confirms that it is aware of the complaint of sexual harassment lodged against a member of the NSRC and that this complaint has been lodged with the university. The university can also confirm that the said member of the NSRC has also lodged a complaint of online harassment.

The Office of the Dean of Students has already initiated an internal process to investigate both complaints and take appropriate steps, working through the Student Disciplinary Office. The complaints are being handled in accordance with the relevant university policies and the Unisa Student Disciplinary Code.

The interventions made by the university include the provision of all the necessary support to the complainants, including providing access to counselling services where required.

The university will also ensure that the rights and dignity of the affected parties are safeguarded throughout this process; and that this matter is attended to and concluded as speedily as possible.

The university will also afford the necessary space and respect to the external process being handled by the South African Police Services (SAPS) in relation to the sexual harassment complaint and will co-operate with this investigation should it be required to do so.

Unisa has a zero tolerance towards all forms of harassment and seeks to provide an environment free from any form of harassment, including sexual harassment, sexual assault and bullying. The university believes that such harassment undermines the atmosphere of trust and respect that is essential to a healthy study, work and academic environment.



In this regard, members of the Unisa community are encouraged to promptly report all incidents of harassment, including sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, sexual assault and bullying to the relevant university officials. The university will at all times ensure that the necessary disciplinary measures are taken, the complaints attended to speedily; and that those found guilty of violating its policies on harassment receive appropriate sanctions.

The university administration, led by the Principal and Vice Chancellor, Professor Puleng LenkaBula, is committed to deal decisively with issues of social injustice, including Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and other forms of human indignity.

Regarding the specific complaints against the members of the NSRC, the university appeals to all stakeholders to allow the internal process that has been initiated to run its course without any hindrance, undue influence or pressure. This matter will be attended to speedily and without fear, favour or prejudice.

**-Ends-**

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**ISSUED BY UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA - MEDIA AFFAIRS**

