



PUBLIC STATEMENT BY THE EQUAL EDUCATION TERTIARY SOCIETY (EETS): CALL FOR URGENT ACTION AT UWC

The ongoing accommodation crisis at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) has reached an intolerable level, severely compromising students' well-being, safety, and academic success. The university's executive management has failed to provide a tangible and sustainable solution to this crisis. Instead, misleading statements have been issued, creating a false impression that 1180 bed spaces have been secured. This claim is not only inaccurate but directly contradicts the reality students face on the ground.

In fact, the situation has worsened—the closure of Cassinga Residence under the pretext of renovations has significantly reduced available bed spaces. This has forced many students into overcrowded, unsafe, and unaffordable private accommodations, exposing them to financial exploitation and precarious living conditions. Many students have been left with no alternative but to sleep in TV rooms, the student centre, and the SRC office, creating an unacceptable and undignified living environment.

While the university claims that Cassinga Residence is closed for renovations, there has been no clear communication on timelines or alternative arrangements for affected students. The question remains: *Why was Cassinga closed without ensuring adequate alternative accommodations?* If the residence was deemed unfit for occupation, then students should have been provided with safe and stable housing before the start of the academic year. Instead, students are now being moved around with no clear strategy, creating havoc. For example, students who were initially without residence were moved to Simonsberg, only for them to take the spaces of returning students, leaving them with nowhere to stay. This disorganized and inconsistent approach has created a chaotic cycle of displacement, with no proper planning or transparency. Students are being moved around endlessly with no clear plan on a sustainable way forward. The complete lack of cohesion in the university's housing strategy is exacerbating the crisis instead of resolving it.

Moreover, the desperation for accommodation has led to increased exploitation of students by private landlords, particularly in Belhar. Students are being scammed by fraudulent landlords, while others are being forced to pay exorbitant fees simply because landlords know they will do anything to secure a place to stay.

This situation is *not just an inconvenience; it is a direct threat to students' academic success and well-being*. The financial and emotional burden placed on students and their families is *unacceptable*, with some parents even considering deregistering their children because they simply cannot find a place for them to stay.

In light of this *unfolding humanitarian crisis*, EETS demands the following immediate actions:

1. **Postponement of academic classes** until a structured and effective accommodation plan is in place. Students *cannot* be expected to focus on their studies while experiencing such instability.

2. **Immediate reopening of Cassinga Residence**, provided that it is safe for occupation. If renovations must continue, students should be **temporarily housed in university-funded alternative accommodations** until Cassinga is ready.
3. **A transparent and structured housing plan**, including clear communication on available residences. The current system of moving students around with no strategy must end.
4. **Urgent intervention to protect students from exploitation by private landlords**. The university must take responsibility for ensuring that all students have access to **affordable, NSFAS-accredited housing** and properly vet all recommended private accommodations.
5. **An emergency relief plan for displaced students and their families** who are currently struggling to find accommodation. The university must *acknowledge and address* the distress this crisis is causing.
6. **Immediate transparency and accountability from UWC management regarding the alleged 1180 bed spaces**. If they exist, where are they? If they do not, then management must be held accountable for misleading students.

The EETS also demands that the registration period be extended for students who received offers this week. The university has been shamefully giving out offers and only give students only one day to accept the offer and to pay the registration fee. With the majority of students coming from poor backgrounds and relying on NSFAS to fund them, it is impossible for a student to register within hours of accepting an offer. We hereby reiterate our calls for the commencement of the academic year to be postponed to also give those students who have recently received offers enough time to register.

UWC has failed its students, and we must not stand by while this crisis continues. If management does not act immediately, students will have no choice but to escalate action. *Students deserve honesty, dignity, and respect—not empty promises and disorganized responses*. No student should be left homeless while the university expects them to perform academically. If immediate action is not taken, EETS will continue to mobilize students to demand their right to safe, stable, and affordable housing.

We refuse to accept inaction.

In solidarity,

Equal Education Tertiary Society (EETS)

University of the Western Cape

For enquiries:

Chairperson: Sinoyolo Ngantweni | 073 237 3692

Media and Communications Officer: Kamogelo Maleka | 064 904 2860