

Protocol during protests



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Introduction

The University of the Free State is not only committed to protecting its staff and students, but also to enabling the full exercising of their constitutional right to protest on its campuses. The purpose of this Protocol is to inform those students and staff who are not participating in protest action how they should act during protests to avoid any violent confrontation, vandalism, intimidation and undue disruption, without unduly impeding the protestors who are exercising their right to protest.

Do's and don'ts for non-protesting students and staff

The point of departure of the 'Do's and Don'ts' is to prevent any escalation of conflict, and where possible to de-escalate conflict. For non-participating staff and students, this entails refraining from engaging with protestors, getting into arguments with them or displaying physical resistance. Such actions usually cause escalation of the conflict, and do not assist the university authorities in resolving the conflict. Thus, engagement should be left to the university authorities in the first instance. Staff and students may offer advice to the university authorities (as well as to the Institutional Coordinating Committee at each of the campuses) on how to resolve issues underlying the conflict.

DO'S

1. Communicate – The University must be informed if it is to respond appropriately to protest action. If you know of ongoing or impending protest action, immediately inform the relevant 24/7 Operational Centre of Protection Services in one of the following ways:

BY PHONE

Bloemfontein Campus – 051 401 2634 / 051 401 2911

Qwaqwa Campus – 058 718 5460 / 058 718 5175

South Campus – 051 505 1217 / 051 505 1478

BY SMS OR WHATSAPP

Mr Noko Masalesa – 078 801 8198

Mr Cobus van Jaarsveld – 083 406 7300

Mr Ricardo O'Connell – 078 960 4165 / 060 984 4629

Bloemfontein Campus:

Mr Dan Alexander – 083 631 4707

Mr Msokoli Ngqangaza – 083 302 1909

Qwaqwa Campus:

Mr Mbutho Kaulela – 078 019 8482

Ms Sibongile Madlala – 072 9388468

South Campus:

Mr Stephen Matthews – 083 809 0876

BY EMAIL:

investigation@ufs.ac.za

2. Be informed – In order to respond appropriately to protest action (for your own protection and the protection of others), you must know of impending or ongoing protest and stay informed on how it unfolds.

Make sure that you are a member of the protest WhatsApp group for your faculty, directorate, department or unit. Up-to-date communication regarding protest action will also be provided through different university communication platforms, i.e. WhatsApp groups, emails, Teams, etc.

3. Keep away – If at all possible, keep away from the area of the protest action. Try to keep others for whom you are responsible away as well.

4. Help others – If someone appears to be in danger or distress, intervene only if you are sure it is safe for you to do so and proceed calmly, without provoking protesters.

Seek treatment for injury – Should you or someone else suffer injury of any kind during protest action, seek treatment from emergency services or the university clinic. **Please contact Protection Services' operational centres for any medical-related emergencies, so that they can activate the ambulance services according to available protocols.**

5. Report – Report all damages to Protection Services at the numbers provided above.

DON'TS

1. Do not engage – As far as possible, do not engage with protesters. The Protocol for Management of Political Activity on Campus sets out formal processes of engagement with protesters that staff and students should rely on.

2. Do not take photographs – Do not take photographs or videos of protest action and protesters with your phone or any other device, unless you are convinced that it is safe to do so.

3. Do not panic – Although protest action is often intended to unsettle, provoke and distress, do not panic. Stay calm – in your interactions with protesters and in the process of communicating about protest action.

4. Do not provoke – However much you might disagree with protesters, do not taunt them or provoke them in any other way.

5. Do not push through – Never try to move through a group of picketing, demonstrating, protesting and/or striking employees or students. This applies in particular when protesters are blocking access to or egress from an area or a building. If you are caught inside a building that is barricaded by protesters from the outside, unless the circumstances dictate otherwise or you are directed to evacuate by evacuation officers, stay inside until the protesters have dispersed. Do not try to force your way through. Ensure that you also avoid the ablution facilities in the vicinity of the protests and use other safe ones within the campus

6. Do not respond – If a person abuses you verbally or tries to provoke you in any other way, do not respond. Remember, verbal abuse is intended to anger, demoralise and provoke. Do not let it serve its purpose. If you feel that the abuse amounts to a violation of your rights, try to identify and remember the person involved so that you can attend to the matter at a later stage.

7. Do not fight back – If you are attacked, do not fight back. Do only what is necessary under the circumstances to protect yourself, and rather try to escape to the closest safe area if possible.

8. Do not resist class disruptions – If protesters attempt to disrupt your class, do not try to barricade or close the doors in order to continue with the lecture. If they force you and/or others to leave the classroom, do not resist. Also, do not engage them in a verbal argument. Such actions will just inflame the situation and endanger you and your students. It is always best to leave the venue if it is impractical to continue with a lecture or activity, rather than risking the health and welfare of staff and students.

9. Do take advice from your HOD, Dean or Management during tests and examinations– If tests are disrupted without warning or early communication please observe the advice as in 8. Generally in the case of examinations it is possible to determine the possibility of disruptions a little earlier and advice from managers would follow.

Communicate

Operational Centre of Protection Services

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