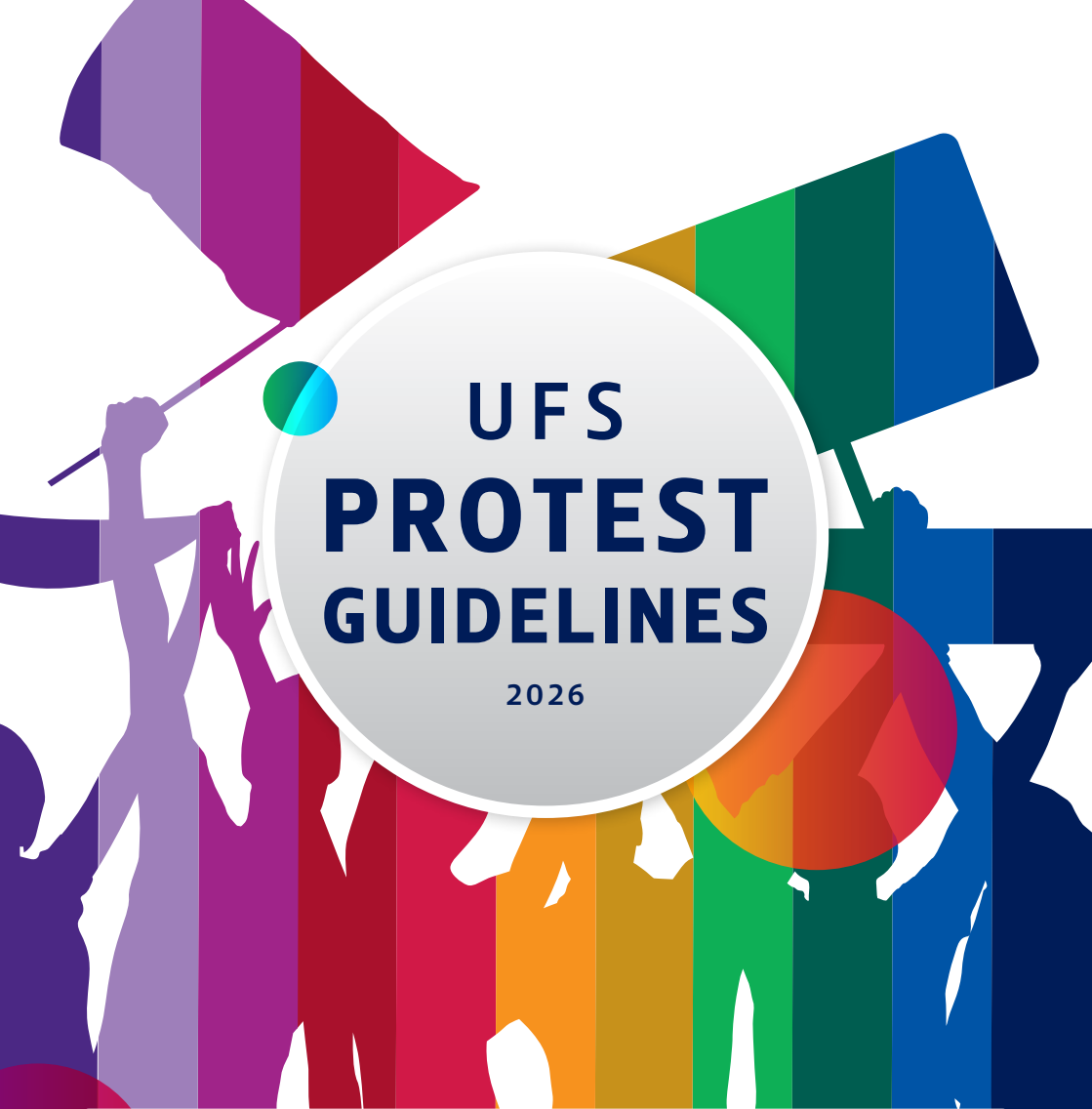




UFS PROTEST GUIDELINES

2026

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UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT
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INTRODUCTION



The University of the Free State (UFS) is not only committed to protecting its staff and students, but also respects the right of employees and students to assemble, picket, demonstrate, and protest peacefully – as long as such a right is exercised in a responsible manner, i.e., if the rights of other members of the university community are not violated.

The purpose of this guideline document is to inform students and staff how to act during protests to avoid any violent confrontation, vandalism, intimidation, and undue disruption, without unduly impeding the protesters who are exercising their right to protest.



**“Everyone has the right,
peacefully and unarmed,
to assemble, to demonstrate,
to picket and to present petitions.”**

SECTION 17 OF THE CONSTITUTION

SAFETY DURING PROTESTS:

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR NON-PROTESTING STUDENTS AND STAFF

To prevent any escalation of conflict and de-escalate where possible, we have put together a list of do's and don'ts for staff and students not participating in protests. This entails refraining from engaging with protesters, not getting into arguments with protesters, and not displaying physical resistance. Such actions usually cause escalation of conflict, and do not assist the university authorities in resolving it.

Engagement should be left to the university authorities. Staff and students may, however, offer advice to the university authorities on how to resolve issues underlying the conflict – information must be confirmed with Protection Services and misuse of power and illegal activities of non-protesters must be reported to the Independent Protest Monitoring Advisory Committee.



DO'S

COMMUNICATE

- The university must be informed if it is to respond appropriately to protest action. If you are aware of ongoing or impending protest action, immediately inform the relevant 24/7 Protection Services operational centre in one of the following ways:

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CONTACT DETAILS

COMMUNICATION PLATFORM	BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS	QWAQWA CAMPUS	SOUTH CAMPUS
By phone (Protection Services operational centres)	051 401 2634 051 401 2911	058 718 5460 058 718 5175	051 505 1217
By email	investigation@ufs.ac.za		

BE INFORMED

- In order to respond appropriately to protest action (for your own protection and the protection of others), you need to know about impending or ongoing protests and stay informed on how it unfolds via official UFS communication platforms and ConnectYard. The latter provides crisis alert notifications via WhatsApp as it happens.

Sign up for ConnectYard and get:

- instant updates from the UFS – not missing out on important information; and
- information sent privately, securely, and spam-free.

Staff and **students**, register for *ConnectYard* and receive updates from the UFS on WhatsApp.

Watch for a step-by-step guide on how to set up your *ConnectYard* account and be informed.

- Make sure that you are a member of the protest WhatsApp group for your faculty, directorate, department, or unit, where up-to-date communication regarding protest action will be provided.
- Be sure to **ONLY** follow official information and **not to distribute fake news**.
- It is also important to familiarise yourself and comply with the UFS policies, procedures, and/or protocols dealing with protest and security-related matters.

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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.

HELP OTHERS

- If someone appears to be in danger or distress, intervene only if you are sure that it is safe for you to do so, and proceed calmly, without provoking protesters.
- Seek treatment for injuries.
- Should you or someone else suffer injuries of any kind during protest action, seek treatment from emergency services or Kopsie Health.
- Contact the Protection Services operational centres for any medical-related emergencies, so that they can activate the ambulance services according to available protocols.



REPORT

- Report all incidents and damages to Protection Services at the numbers provided.
- It is important that non-protesting staff and students submit statements to the UFS investigating officers for the internal disciplinary process, as to prevent similar occurrences in future.
- Be specific when providing a statement, in order to enable the investigation team to identify those involved in violent disruptions.
- Culprits cannot be brought to book if no evidence is available to link them to specific incidents.
- All reasonable steps will be taken to protect non-protesting staff and students testifying in disciplinary proceedings.



DON'TS

DO NOT ENGAGE

- As far as possible, do not engage with protesters. The Protest Management Policy sets out formal processes of engagement with protesters that staff and students should rely on. Among others, this document aims to establish and maintain a space



for peaceful and non-violent strikes and/or protests on the UFS campuses, while ensuring that the constitutional rights of non-participants and participants in strikes and/or protests are respected and protected.

[Access the Protest Management Policy here.](#)

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.



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.



DO NOT PROVOKE

- No matter how much you might disagree with protesters, do not taunt or provoke.

DO NOT PUSH THROUGH GROUPS OF PROTESTERS

- Never try to move through a group of picketing, demonstrating, protesting and/or striking employees and students. This applies particularly when protesters are blocking access to an exit from an area or a building.
- If you are caught inside a building that is barricaded by protesters from the outside – unless 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.
- Make sure that you avoid ablution facilities in the vicinity of the protests and use other safe facilities on the campus.

DO NOT RESPOND

- If a person verbally abuses you 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.



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 nearest safe area if possible.

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 others.
- 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.



TAKE ADVICE FROM YOUR HEAD OF DEPARTMENT, DEAN OR MANAGEMENT DURING TESTS AND EXAMINATIONS

- If tests are disrupted without warning or early communication, please observe the advice as in the previous point. Generally, in the case of examinations, it is possible to determine the likelihood of disruptions a little earlier, and advice from managers would follow.

ACCEPTABLE AND NON-ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR DURING PROTESTS

The university welcomes non-violent protests and is legally obliged to – peacefully and unarmed – respect, protect, promote, and fulfil the constitutional rights of all members of its community to demonstrate, picket, and present petitions.

Acceptable behaviour during protests or strikes

- **Non-violent demonstrations, picketing, striking, or protesting** on UFS campuses, satellite campuses, and/or premises where students and/or staff are aggrieved about a particular matter and seek the attention of the UFS executive management.
- Protesting or striking staff or students are **permitted to wear clothing bearing the logos of the organisations or branches to which they belong or support** during demonstrations, picketing, strikes or protests, and may not be victimised or intimidated for wearing such clothing.
- Leaders of protests or strikes may be **permitted to address their participants** on UFS campuses and may not be intimidated or threatened by the UFS executive management.
- Protesting or striking staff and students may be **provided with the required facilities for meetings** to be held or engagements to take place if such a request is made to the UFS executive management. Such a request may not be unreasonably denied.
- Aggrieved staff and students are encouraged to engage Student Affairs (for student-related matters) and Human Resources (for staff-related matters) in **debates and negotiations to resolve any disputes** and/or grievances.
- It will be in the interest of the safety of protesters and/or strikers to **give at least 48 hours written notice** to either the Executive Director: Student Affairs (in the case of students) or the Senior Director: Human Resources (in the case of staff members). They



are to **inform the Senior Director: Protection Services** of the planned protest or strike in order for the necessary safety and security measures to be put in place, and to assist with the coordination, especially if a protest or strike occurs outside the UFS premises.

- Protesting or striking staff or students may attempt to **persuade non-participating staff or students to join** or support the protest or strike; however, the use of any form of violence and/or intimidation to achieve such participation or support is strictly prohibited.

Non-acceptable behaviour during protests or strikes

- **Any unjustifiable infringement of any of the rights** contained in Chapter 2 of the Constitution, including the right to education and the right to freedom of trade, occupation, and profession, read with the requirement that employers must ensure the safety of employees during protests or strikes.
- The **disruption of any of the administrative and academic activities of the UFS** by blocking entrances and exits, disrupting classes, tests, examinations, registrations, graduations, the library, computer laboratories, or laboratory activities that prevent those activities from continuing or that results in permanent restriction of those activities, may constitute misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action being taken against a staff member or a student found to have committed such an action.
- **Any form of physical violence** during a protest or strike. This excludes the use of force or similar acts during self-defence, out of necessity and for the protection of person or property, noting that such force must be reasonable and justifiable to prevent harm, damage, or loss. If incidents of violence occur during a protest or strike, it does not necessarily mean that the protest or strike as a whole is prohibited.
- **Malicious damage to property/vandalism**, i.e., damage intentionally caused to UFS facilities or private property.

- **Holding anyone captive or hostage**, which means not only attempting to persuade or convince, but physically obstructing or preventing any person from leaving or entering a building, a room, or the campus, as well as denying any person reasonable access to any building or premises on the UFS campuses or other sites.
- **Inciting hatred or harm, acting in such a way as to cause or encourage violence or to be hurtful.** No person who is present at or participating in a gathering or demonstration may
 - a) by way of a banner, placard, speech or singing, or in any other manner, incite hatred towards other persons or any group of persons on account of differences in culture, race, sex, language, or religion; and
 - b) perform any act or utter any words that are calculated or likely to cause or encourage violence against any person or group of persons.
- **Carrying a firearm or other dangerous weapon.** This prohibition applies to air guns and firearms, as well as dangerous weapons (any object capable of causing death or inflicting serious bodily harm if used for unlawful purposes). This excludes defensive equipment such as shields but includes items that qualify as cultural weapons (pipes, iron bars, knives, etc.), where reasonable suspicion exists that the person intended to use the item for an unlawful purpose, e.g., intimidation, assault, or damage to property.
- **Engaging in intimidation** in any manner whatsoever, either before or during a gathering or demonstration, compelling or attempting to compel any person to attend, join, or participate in the gathering or demonstration.
- Intentionally **hindering or obstructing traffic** on a public road.
- **Failure** by conveners of a protest to appoint marshals to control the protesters and failure by the appointed marshals, who must be clearly identifiable, **to ensure that the protest proceeds peacefully.**
- **Wearing a mask or disguise or otherwise obscuring facial features** to prevent identification.
- **Wearing any form of apparel that resembles any of the uniforms worn by members of the security forces**, including the South African Police Service, the Municipal Police Services, and the South African National Defence Force.

DEALING WITH PROTESTS ACCORDING TO THE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

The UFS will only allow protests that are peaceful and undertaken in accordance with the requirements stipulated by the relevant legislation. Demonstrations and/or protests that develop into violent riots and a threat to campus safety will be dealt with according to our Standard Operating Procedures.

The university has a legal obligation to protect lives, property, and the rights of all people, and will take steps to ensure that its mandate regarding the safety of staff and students is executed effectively, by

- applying for a court interdict to prohibit disruption of both academic and administrative activities;
- sourcing specialist security service providers to assist;
- involving the SAPS; and
- establishing a joint operating centre to ensure joint decision-making for effective management of the situation.

EMERGENCY CONTACT NUMBERS

	BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS	QWAQWA CAMPUS	SOUTH CAMPUS
Kovsie Health	051 401 2603 051 401 3537	058 718 5228 058 718 5090	051 505 1495
SAPS	Park Road SAPS 051 507 6027 051 507 6000	Phuthaditjhaba SAPS 058 718 0895 058 718 0896	Kagisanong SAPS 051 409 5608
ER 24	084 124		

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

SERVICE	BLOEMFONTEIN CAMPUS/ SOUTH CAMPUS	QWAQWA CAMPUS/ PHUTHADITJHABA
Protection Services 24/7 Duty Room	051 401 2911/051 401 2634 Bloemfontein Campus 051 505 1217 South Campus	058 718 5460 051 718 5175
Occupational Health and Safety Officer	Thato Block: 072 758 2070 Dipholo Modise: 078 347 7704	Thato Block: 072 758 2070
Social Worker	Elizabeth Msadu 051 401 9117	Selloane Phoofolo 058 718 5091
Sexual Assault Response Team	051 401 3982 Bloemfontein Campus 051 401 7544 South Campus	058 718 5431
Student Counselling and Development	Petro Herbst (Bloemfontein Campus) 051 401 2853 (office hours) 0800 00 63 63 (24/7 toll free) Obakeng Makgale (South Campus) 051 505 1298 (office hours) 0800 00 63 63 (24/7 toll free)	Nonhlanhla Moleleki 058 718 5032 (office hours) 0800 00 63 63 (24/7 toll free)
Kovsie Health	051 401 2603/051 401 3537 (Bloemfontein Campus) 051 505 1495 (South Campus)	058 718 5228 058 718 5090
Municipal emergency services	Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality: 051 409 9107	Maluti-a-Phofung Local Municipality: 058 718 3700
Power failures	Centlec customer care 0860 076 937 Centlec after hours: 051 409 2345	
Fire brigade	Mangaung Fire Department 051 406 6666/051 409 9600	Phuthaditjhaba Fire Stations and Services 058 713 1777/064 970 0931

Water and drainage	Water and Sanitation: Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality 0800 111 300/051 412 4000	Maluti-a-Phofung Water 058 718 1100 058 623 0305
SADAG 24-hour Suicide Emergency Helpline	0800 567 567	
Adcock Ingram Depression and Anxiety Helpline	0800 70 80 90	
Befrienders Bloemfontein 24-hour Helpline	051 444 5000	
South African Police Service	10111 and 112 Park Road SAPS: 051 507 6027/051 507 6000 Kagisanong SAPS: 051 409 5608 Phuthaditjhaba SAPS: 058 718 0895/058 718 0896	
ER 24 Bloemfontein	084 124/0102053000	
ER 24 Qwaqwa	084 124/0102053000	
Netcare 911	082 911	
Free State Emergency Medical Services	051 407 6000	
Eskom	0860 843 243	
Poison Information Centre	082 491 0160 0861 555 777	
Aids Helpline	0800 012 322	
National Institute for Communicable Diseases	011 386 6400 (Switchboard)	





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The Department of
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+27 51 401 3422

news@ufs.ac.za