



HESA STATEMENT ON SASCO PROTEST ACTION

Higher Education South Africa (HESA) notes with concern the protest action that has been embarked upon at nine of our 23 public higher education institutions by the South African Students Congress (SASCO) to demand free education.

HESA understands and is very sympathetic to the plight of parents and individuals with regard to the affordability of higher education, which is exacerbated by inflationary pressures and the prevailing negative economic climate.

However, HESA does not condone violent protests around tuition fees, especially given the fact that these are integral to the current funding arrangements for public universities which make provision for three streams of income: the subsidy from the state, tuition fees, and third stream income which are typically in the region of 50%, 40% and 10%, respectively, of the total income from which universities fund their operations. "This is a status quo arrangement which can only significantly change if government revised the funding formula in line with its commitment to progressively introduce free education to the first degree level", says Professor Errol Tyobeka, the Chairperson of HESA. "The sector is committed to setting tuition fees that are not prohibitive and to ensuring, within the limits of affordability, that academically deserving students will not be denied opportunities of study solely on the basis of financial need".

HESA strongly cautions against higher education being reduced to battlegrounds for political ends. These acts impact negatively on the academic and social fibre of institutions that are central to national development. We encourage all students to maintain stability and to derive optimum benefit of the time they spend at institutions. 2010, in particular, will be a shorter academic year because of the FIFA World Cup.

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