



Communication to new and returning students

Dear Students,

We look forward to the start of the 2025 academic year and hope you are as excited as we are for the journey ahead. A warm welcome to all, especially our first-years embarking on this new chapter. We're glad to have you as part of the UWC community!

As we prepare for the upcoming academic semester, we recognise the opportunities and challenges within the higher education system. At an institutional level, we must address key issues together, including student accommodation, the missing middle, affordability, safety and security, and food security — critical factors that impact academic success.

The University is fully aware of the financial challenges many students face, making it difficult for them to meet their commitments. Through allocated funds and external support, the Financial Aid Office provides funding opportunities to deserving students to help them continue their studies. While every effort is made to support students, the University will continue to utilise available funds and actively pursue further fundraising initiatives.

Additionally, the SRC recently approached the Rector and Vice-Chancellor for support in raising funds for the iKamvalethu Fund. In response, the Rector and Vice-Chancellor as well as the Chancellor committed to supporting this fundraising initiative. As a result, a public call for donations to the iKamvalethu Fund will be announced soon.

At this time of year, accommodation and financial clearance are key priorities, and our university officials are working hard to assist students. We recognise that demand for accommodation exceeds supply, and proactive steps were taken last year in preparation for the 2025 academic year. To date, 1,180 additional bed spaces have been secured to support deserving and registered students.

We also understand that many students prefer to stay in university residences. However, due to limited capacity, placements are made based on our placement policy to ensure a fair and transparent process.

The University has a database of private accommodation providers to assist students in securing housing, given the limited availability of university residences. Our private accommodation support team ensures compliance with norms and standards and promptly investigates and intervenes when students raise concerns about living conditions.

The residence placement process is still ongoing. To facilitate smooth placements, short-term student support measures are in place to prevent delays. Additionally, the University has reserved a number of temporary accommodation spaces until the placement process is finalised. Each student's case is assessed individually to ensure fair and appropriate support.

For registered students eligible for accommodation but facing financial constraints, support options can be explored through our credit management processes. This is a collective effort, and we urge the campus community to work together to ensure that all processes run smoothly. Your cooperation is essential in helping us place students as quickly and efficiently as possible.

The majority of students have already been placed. Where spaces remain available, they are being assessed against the list of new first-year students who have not yet accepted their accommodation offers. The process involves allocating available spaces to the next eligible student on the waiting list.

We regularly engage with the SRC to discuss emerging issues and explore solutions together. This collective approach ensures that the responses we develop address both student needs and the University's sustainability.

Through this joint effort, we believe the outcomes serve the best interests of both students and the University. We remain committed to addressing any further challenges that arise and will actively work towards solutions where needed. Our priority is to create an environment that supports teaching, learning, and student life.

To this end, we have been working closely with the SRC, listening to student concerns. This included meetings late on Friday, 31 January 2025, and over the weekend, in addition to our regular engagements with the SRC since the start of the year.

We want to reaffirm our commitment to addressing student matters systematically within established frameworks and policies, including those related to placement and financial clearance.

In this regard, we would like to highlight the following key points about student accommodation placement:

1. Accelerating the placement of students of the 1,180 beds secured: Residential Services will provide a report of placed students no later than Wednesday, 5 February 2025.
2. We will ensure that the financial clearance continues with its defined process, which will also allow for a smoother placement of students. We are aware that there are students who are seeking accommodation but who are not registered and not funded. We are requesting such students to inquire with the student administration or faculties' help desks so that we can investigate the reasons for non-registration. Once we understand these, we will be able to advise the students on their options.
3. A high-level team consisting of the SRC, Residential Services, the Financial Aid Office, Finance (SCM), and the Office of the DVC: SDS is in place to monitor the progress in implementing the decisions made.
4. As of today, additional team members will provide extra assistance to students who present different cases for consideration. The dining hall at Reslife is designated for this purpose, and the team is waiting to assist students.
5. We are working closely with the private accommodation providers to ensure that where there are challenges, we engage with them to ensure that students are protected at all times. We request that providers register the names of students in private accommodation so that we can reconcile the numbers.
6. We have been informed, and we are still verifying the claims, that other providers are requesting deposits. This will be addressed and will not pose any placement challenge from today onwards. If there are cases like this, the students are advised to contact Residential Services or to email privatestay@uwc.ac.za and provide the full details of the accommodation provider.
7. We have received reports that some students have been placed in private accommodation that they deem unsatisfactory. We urge these requests to be channelled to the Residential Services helpdesk at Reslife or contact privatestay@uwc.ac.za to ensure compliance with student housing norms and standards.
8. The Residential Services Placement Team is busy auditing available spaces to ensure that a process for students who were invited to take their rooms and have not is finalised. Please note that there is a process and criteria in place as to how these beds are allocated. As such, we cannot offer beds to any student outside of our policy in terms of eligibility.
9. We understand that some students arrive after the registration deadline. Senior/returning students who arrive late to campus will be able to register at their respective faculties even after the registration deadline. For first-year applicants whose offers have been revoked or lapsed, we will assess each case individually. Ultimately, registration will depend on programme availability and the reasons for the delayed registration.

In respect of upfront payments of 30%, we wish to clarify the following:

- In terms of the University debt management policy, 100% of student debt must be settled by 31 July in the year of registration. Despite payment arrangements students sign at registration, many students do not honour their debt payment commitments. We therefore urge these students to pay 100% of their prior year's debt at registration.
- Where this is not possible, the student must settle a minimum of 30% of their debt in relation to fees owing for the previous year/s at the point of registration. Students who cannot pay the 30% must engage Student Credit Management for credit checking and review for financial clearance purposes.

Yours Sincerely

The Executive Management

University of the Western Cape

For enquiries contact dvcSDS@uwc.ac.za