

# **Vice-Chancellor's Statement on Initiation**

The University of the Witwatersrand reaffirms its support for all orientation programmes and social events that add value to the holistic developmental experiences of new students. It is essential that we create the enabling conditions for our diverse and cosmopolitan student body, both to achieve academic excellence and to be moulded as committed and creative citizens for the future.

This university, like all other South African public higher education institutions, is strongly opposed to the extreme nature of some initiation practices that go beyond preparing students to settle into a new environment. We therefore condemn any form of initiation practice that is humiliating, intimidating or discriminatory.

The University takes great pride in its leadership role as one of the top academic institutions in the country and is enriched by the diversity of its people, programmes and ideas. It has a huge responsibility to ensure that its values of respect, spirit of tolerance and openness are upheld. Under no circumstances should new university entrants be subjected to potentially dangerous activities, including enforced consumption of alcohol or other substances. The University condemns the harassment (sexual or otherwise), bullying, belittling, embarrassing, frightening or humiliation of other persons, and all other forms of demeaning behaviour, including shouting or screaming at new students. It is strongly opposed to inhumane behaviour, cultural insensitivity and all other forms of abuse.

The University will take swift action against any individual or groups found not to be honouring the spirit of respect that should be inherent in all orientation programmes and activities.

Any student who feels victimised, harassed or abused during the Orientation period is urged to report the matter to any member of staff or to the Dean of Students (puleng.lenka-bula@wits.ac.za). Confidentiality will be observed, where appropriate.

