

## COURT ONLINE COVER PAGE

IN THE HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA  
**Gauteng Division, Pretoria**

CASE NO: **2026-192997**

In the matter between:

**THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Plaintiff / Applicant / Appellant

and

**EDNEWS.AFRICA,PREGASEN EDWIN  
NAIDU ,INDEPENDENT ONLINE**

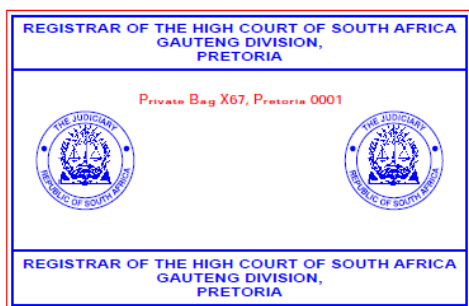
Defendant / Respondent

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### Notice of Motion (Long Form)

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**NOTE:** This document was filed electronically by the Registrar on 12/8/2026 at 12:50:27 PM South African Standard Time (SAST). The time and date the document was filed by the party is presented on the header of each page of this document.



ELECTRONICALLY SIGNED BY:

**Registrar of Pretoria , Gauteng  
Division,Pretoria**

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA  
(GAUTENG DIVISION, PRETORIA)**

**CASE NO: \_\_\_\_\_/2026**

In the matter between:

**THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

Applicant

and

**EDNEWS.AFRICA**

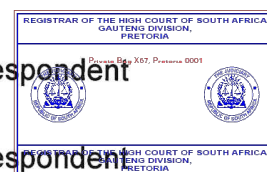
First Respondent

**PRAGASEN EDWIN NAIDU**

Second Respondent

**INDEPENDENT ONLINE**

(being a publication of **SEKUNJALO INVESTMENT HOLDINGS**) Third Respondent



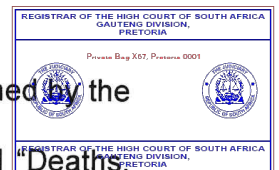
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**NOTICE OF MOTION (URGENT)**

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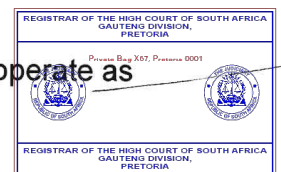
**BE PLEASED TO TAKE NOTICE THAT** an application will be made on behalf of the Applicant, as a matter of urgency, on **18 August 2026** at 10h00, or so soon thereafter as Counsel may be heard, for an order in the following terms:

1. Dispensing with the forms, service and time periods prescribed by the Uniform Rules of Court and permitting this application to be heard as one of urgency in terms of Rule 6(12) of the Uniform Rules of Court.
2. That a rule nisi do issue, calling upon the Respondents to show cause, if any, on a date to be arranged with the Registrar ("the return day"), why a final order should not be made in the following terms:



- 2.1. declaring the statements set out in paragraph 2.3 below, published by the Respondents on the ednews.africa website in the articles titled "Deaths, Burnout and Academic Collapse: The Crisis Unfolding at Unisa" (26 July 2026), "UNISA Threatens Action Over Report as Deaths, Hospitalisations and Staff Outcry Mount" (29 July 2026) and "BLOCKED! But not silenced by UNISA" (30 July 2026), to be false and defamatory of the Applicant;
- 2.2. directing the Respondents, jointly and severally, to remove and take down the aforesaid articles, and the statements referred to in paragraph 2.3, from the ednews.africa website and from every other platform under their control or influence, within 24 (twenty-four) hours of the grant of this order;
- 2.3. interdicting and restraining the Respondents, jointly and severally, from publishing or republishing, in any medium, the following statements, or any statements to similar effect, of and concerning the Applicant, namely that the Applicant caused, or is responsible for, the deaths and hospitalisation of its staff members, and that the Applicant blocked access to the ednews.africa website in order to suppress reporting of, or to conceal responsibility for, such deaths;

- 2.4. directing the Respondents, jointly and severally, to publish an unconditional retraction of the said statements and an apology to the Applicant, receiving the same or similar prominence as the articles, in a form to be approved by this Honourable Court;
  - 2.5. directing the Respondents, jointly and severally, to pay the costs of this application on the scale as between attorney and client, only in the event of opposition.
3. That, pending the return day, paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 of this order shall operate as an interim interdict with immediate effect.
  4. Directing that service of this order and the application papers be effected upon the Respondents by email at the addresses set out below, and by such further means as this Honourable Court may direct, which service shall constitute good and sufficient service.
  5. Granting the Applicant further and/or alternative relief.



**TAKE NOTICE FURTHER THAT** the accompanying founding affidavit of **TSHATSHARA LUCAS MABUSELA**, together with the annexures thereto, will be used in support of this application.

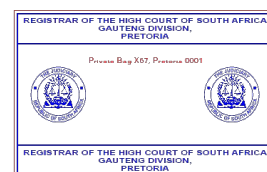
**TAKE NOTICE FURTHER THAT** the Applicant has appointed **SM Vakalisa Attorneys Inc.**, at the address set out below, as the address at which it will accept service of all process in these proceedings.

**TAKE NOTICE FURTHER THAT** any Respondent who intends to oppose the grant of this order is required to:



- a) notify the Applicant's attorneys in writing **BY 12H00 ON WEDNESDAY, 13 AUGUST 2026;**
- b) deliver your answering affidavits, if any, **BY NO LATER THAN 17h00 ON THURSDAY, 14 AUGUST 2026;**
- c) Replying affidavit will be delivered to the Respondents' attorneys, if any, **BY 12H00 ON MONDAY, 17 AUGUST 2026.**

DATED at SANDTON on this the 11<sup>th</sup> day of AUGUST 2026.



  
SM VAKALISA ATTORNEYS INC.

Applicant's Attorneys

Summer Place, 13 Summer Street,

Rivonia, Sandton

Tel: 010 054 6971

Email: [smvakalisa@smvakalisa-inc.co.za](mailto:smvakalisa@smvakalisa-inc.co.za)

Ref: SMV/UNISA/

TO: THE REGISTRAR OF THE ABOVE HONOURABLE COURT, PRETORIA

AND TO: EDNEWS.AFRICA

The First Respondent

10 Karin Close

Buccleuch

**SANDTON**

Email: [ednews.africa@gmail.com](mailto:ednews.africa@gmail.com)

**AND TO: PRAGASEN EDWIN NAIDU**

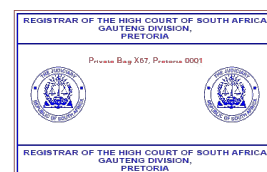
Second Respondent

10 Karin Close

Buccleuch

**SANDTON**

Email: [edwin.aidu@live.co.za](mailto:edwin.aidu@live.co.za)



**AND TO: INDEPENDENT ONLINE**

Second Floor,

Silo 5, Victoria and Alfred

Waterfront

**CAPE TOWN**

Email: [info@iol.co.za](mailto:info@iol.co.za)

IN THE HIGH COURT OF SOUTH AFRICA

(GAUTENG DIVISION, PRETORIA)

CASE NO: \_\_\_\_\_/2026

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**FOUNDING AFFIDAVIT**

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I, the undersigned,

**TSHATSHARA LUCAS MABUSELA**

do hereby make oath and state that:

1. I am an adult male, employed by the Applicant as Acting Executive Director: Legal Services, Legal Service Department, with offices situated at Main Campus, 330 Preller Street Muckleneuk Ridge, Pretoria and the deponent in this affidavit.
2. The facts contained herein are, save where otherwise stated or where otherwise stated or where the converse appears from the context, within my personal knowledge and are, to the best of my belief, both true and correct. Where I do not have personal knowledge, I rely on the records that are kept by UNISA.
3. I am duly authorised to depose to this affidavit and to institute this application on behalf of the Applicant.
4. Where I make statements of legal nature or come to some legal conclusion, I do so on the advice of the Applicant's legal representatives, which advice I have considered and accept as correct.
5. This is an urgent application to interdict and restrain the continued publication of, and to obtain the removal of, false and defamatory statements published concerning the Applicant by the Respondents on the ednews.africa website, and for ancillary relief.



*[Handwritten signature]* O.V

## **THE PARTIES**

6. The Applicant is **THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**, a public higher education institution established in terms of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997, with its principal place of business at Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, Pretoria.
  
7. The First Respondent is **HIGHER EDUCATION MEDIA SERVICES (PTY) LTD**, the publisher and owner of the online news website [www.ednews.africa](http://www.ednews.africa), whose full and further particulars are presently unknown to the Applicant, and whose email address is [ednews.africa@gmail.com](mailto:ednews.africa@gmail.com). The Applicant reserves the right to supplement these particulars once established.
  
8. The Second Respondent is **PRAGASEN EDWIN NAIDU**, an adult male journalist of [ednews.africa](http://ednews.africa), cited in his or her capacity as the author of the articles referred to below and the person responsible for the editorial content published on the said website.
  
9. The Third Respondent is **INDEPENDENT ONLINE**, an online national news website solely owned by **SEKUNJALO INVESTMENT HOLDINGS (PTY) LTD**, a company with limited liability, duly registered and incorporated in accordance with the company laws of the Republic of South Africa, with its head office and principal place of business situated at Second Floor, Silo 5, Victoria and Alfred, Waterfront, Cape Town.



## JURISDICTION

10. This Honourable Court has jurisdiction to hear this application. The impugned articles were published to, and accessed by, members of the public within this Court's area of jurisdiction, and the Applicant, whose principal place of business is within the area of jurisdiction of this Court, suffers the harm complained of within that area.

## THE IMPUGNED ARTICLES



11. On 26, 29 and 30 July 2026 respectively, the Second Respondent authored, and the First Respondent published, on the ednews.africa website, three articles concerning the Applicant, titled "Deaths, Burnout and Academic Collapse: The Crisis Unfolding at Unisa", "UNISA Threatens Action Over Report as Deaths, Hospitalisations and Staff Outcry Mount", and "BLOCKED! But not silenced by UNISA". Copies of the articles are annexed hereto marked "TLM1", "TLM2" and "TLM3".

12. On 27 July 2026, the Third Respondent republished on its online website the article authored by the Second Respondent titled "Deaths, Burnout and Academic Collapse. A copy of the article is annexed hereto marked "TLM4".



13. The articles contain, of and concerning the Applicant, the following false and defamatory statements:

13.1. "Three staff members, including two academics, died during June 2026.

They say many of the cases are linked to stress and exhaustion following the university's decision last year not to renew contracts for markers and e-tutors."

13.2. "The death of Unathi Poyo, a lecturer in the Department of Criminal and Procedural Law, has raised separate concerns... Her passing has prompted questions ... about the university's use of long term fixed-term contracts."



13.3. "... the University of South Africa (Unisa) has blocked staff from accessing education news website [www.ednews.africa](http://www.ednews.africa)."

13.4. "Academics and staff at Unisa have been barred from accessing the site while on the Unisa WI-FI amid allegations that the site was blocked after weekend reports on the deaths of three staff members who according to families succumbed to illness after their heavy workloads increased when the university scrapped the roles of 5000 markers."

**THE STATEMENTS ARE DEFAMATORY AND FALSE**

14. Read individually and cumulatively, and in their proper context, the statements are wrongful and defamatory of the Applicant, in that they are intended and understood to mean, and do mean, that:

14.1. the Applicant is responsible for, alternatively caused, the deaths of three of its staff members and the hospitalisation of others, by overworking them and disregarding their health and safety;

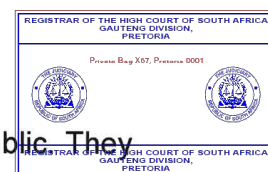
14.2. the Applicant acted with reckless disregard for the wellbeing and lives of its employees; and

14.3. the Applicant blocked access to the ednews.africa website in order to suppress reporting of, or to conceal its responsibility for, the said deaths, and thereby sought to censor the media and cover up wrongdoing.

15. The aforesaid statements and imputations are false. No post-mortem or other competent evidence has established that the deaths of the Applicant's staff members were caused by, or are attributable to, the Applicant, its restructuring, or the non-renewal of the contracts of markers and e-tutors. The Applicant's restructuring was lawfully and properly approved and implemented. The Applicant did not cause the deaths of its employees, nor did it act to censor or conceal.



16. It is trite that, once the publication of a defamatory statement concerning a person is established, the statement is presumed to be both wrongful and published with the intention to defame, and the onus rests upon the publisher to establish a recognised defence. The Respondents have, to date, advanced no defence capable of justifying the false imputation that the Applicant caused the deaths of its staff. The Applicant expressly rejected the allegations on 27 July 2026, yet the articles remain published.



17. The articles were published through the mass media, to the general public. They have attracted public debate and comment, have been widely disseminated and shared on social media platforms including X and Tik Tok, and have been reposted on numerous occasions. The harm to the Applicant is ongoing and continues to spread with each day that the articles remain published.

### **THE LETTER OF DEMAND AND NON-COMPLIANCE**

18. On 03 August 2026, the Applicant's attorneys addressed a letter of demand to the Respondents, calling upon them, within 72 hours, to remove the articles, to publish a retraction and an apology, and to undertake not to repeat the statements. A copy of the letter of demand is annexed hereto marked "TLM5".

19. Notwithstanding the said demand, and the lapse of the period stipulated therein, the Respondents have failed to remove the articles or to comply with the demand in any respect. The articles remain published to date.

### URGENCY

20. This application is urgent. The impugned articles remain published and continue to be accessed, disseminated and shared. Each day of continued publication compounds and perpetuates the harm to the Applicant's reputation and good name.

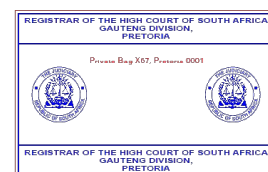


21. The Applicant cannot be afforded substantial redress at a hearing in due course. The harm occasioned by the continued publication of false and defamatory statements is ongoing, escalating and, by its nature, not adequately remediable by an award of damages after the event. Only the urgent removal of, and restraint against, the statements can prevent the continuing harm.

22. The urgency is not self-created. The Applicant acted with expedition: it rejected the allegations on 27 July 2026, addressed a letter of demand affording the Respondents until 04 August 2026 to remedy the position, released a media statement addressing allegations, and launches this application upon the Respondents' failure to comply within that period. The copies of the rejection by

UNISA, letter of demand and media statement are attached marked “TLM6”, “TLM7” and “TLM8” respectively.

23. The Applicant respectfully seeks the truncated timeframe reflected in the Notice of Motion, which affords the Respondents a fair opportunity to respond while addressing the ongoing harm.



### **THE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERDICTORY RELIEF ARE MET**

#### **A Clear Right**

24. The Applicant has a clear right, alternatively a *prima facie* right though to its reputation and good name, protected at common law and under section 10 of the Constitution. The publication of the false and defamatory statements described above infringes that right. As set out above, the statements are presumed wrongful, and the Respondents have advanced no sustainable defence.

#### **A well-grounded apprehension of irreparable harm**

25. The Applicant has a well-grounded apprehension of irreparable harm. The continued publication of the statements causes ongoing and cumulative damage



to the Applicant's reputation and standing with its students, staff, funders and the public. Such reputational harm is not readily quantifiable or fully remediable in damages, and the Respondents' ability to satisfy any award of damages is unknown and doubtful.

### **The balance of convenience**

26. The balance of convenience favours the grant of interim relief. The removal of, and restraint against, specific false statements occasions minimal prejudice to the Respondents, who have no right to publish falsehoods, whereas the continued publication causes serious and ongoing harm to the Applicant. The Applicant does not seek to prevent legitimate reporting on, or debate about, the welfare of its staff; it seeks only to restrain the false imputation that it caused the deaths of its employees and censored the media.



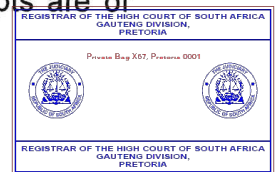
### **No Alternative Relief**

27. The Applicant has no other alternative relief. The letter of demand has been ignored. An action for damages would not stem the ongoing harm and would, in any event, be an inadequate remedy for continuing reputational injury. Only interdictory relief can prevent the continuing wrong.



## **FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

28. The Applicant is mindful of the right to freedom of expression, including freedom of the press, entrenched in section 16 of the Constitution, and of the caution with which the courts approach any restraint upon publication. This application does not seek to muzzle legitimate journalism, nor to prevent reporting on or debate about the welfare of the Applicant's staff, matters which the Applicant accepts are of public interest.



29. The relief sought is narrowly confined to specific statements of fact that are false and defamatory, in particular the imputation that the Applicant caused the deaths of its employees and censored the media to conceal responsibility. False statements of fact do not enjoy the protection afforded to legitimate expression, and the narrowly tailored relief sought is the least restrictive means of preventing the ongoing and irreparable harm to the Applicant. It is respectfully submitted that the interests of justice favour the grant of the relief.

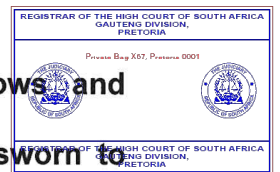
## **RELIEF SOUGHT**

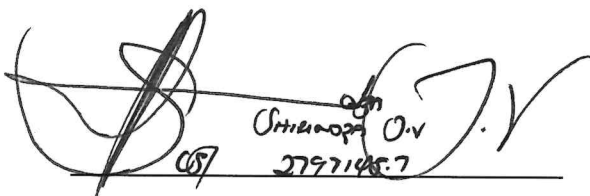
30. In the premises, the Applicant has made out a proper case for the urgent relief sought. I respectfully pray that this Honourable Court grant an order in terms of the Notice of Motion to which this affidavit is attached.

31. The conduct of the Respondents is such that it calls for an attorney and client cost order.

  
DEPONENT

I CERTIFY that the deponent has acknowledged that she knows and understands the contents of this affidavit, which was signed and sworn to before me at PRETORIA on this the 11th day of August 2026, the regulations contained in Government Notice R1258 of 21 July 1972, as amended, having been complied with.



  
Commissioner of Oaths

COMMISSIONER OF OATHS





"TLM1"

NEWS

## Deaths, Burnout and Academic Collapse: The Crisis Unfolding at Unisa

Staff deaths, escalating burnout, crippling workloads and growing concerns over governance have exposed deep cracks within South Africa's largest university



EDWIN NAIDU

JUL 26, 2026



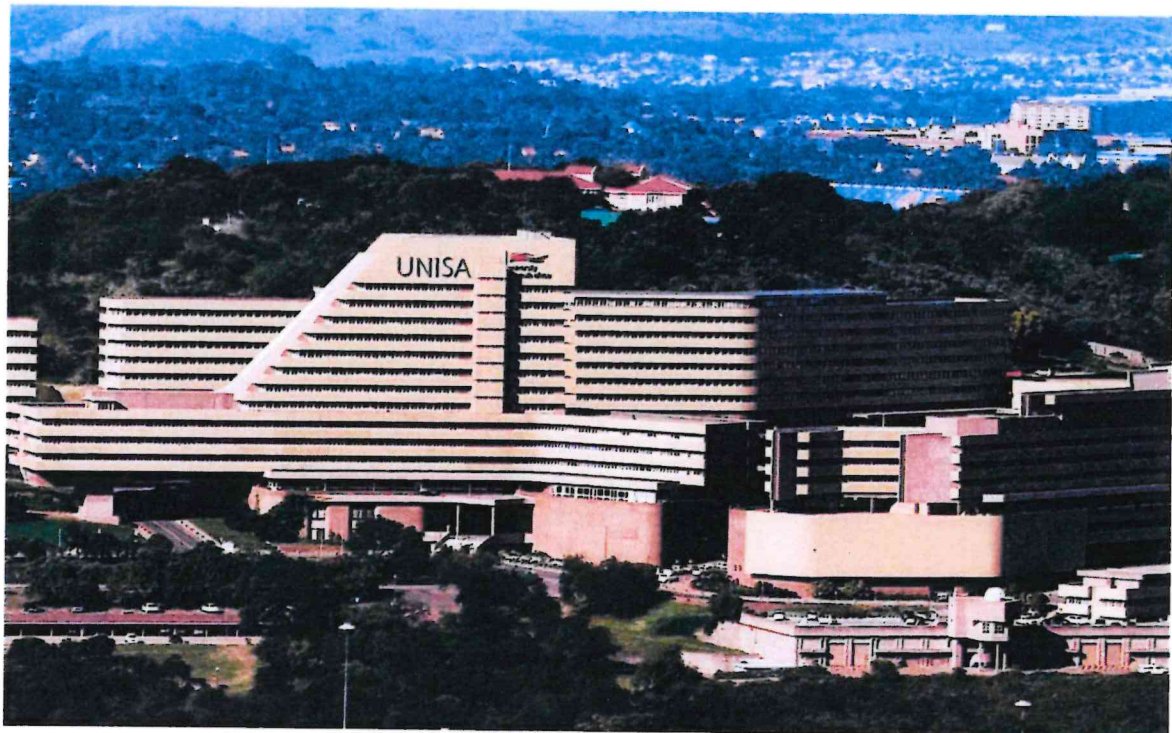
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Under Pressure...Staff health takes a pounding as workloads increase following the axing of more than 5 000 markers, while student assignments delays expected to continue until August.

Three staff deaths in June, multiple stress-related hospitalisations and a mounting workload crisis have pushed academics at the University of South Africa (Unisa) breaking point.

An investigation by education website, *ednews.africa* reveals allegations of burnout, fear, declining academic standards and growing unrest among staff and students. The university scrapped the posts of thousands of markers and e-tutors.

## A University Under Strain

Academics and staff at Unisa, Africa's largest distance-learning institution, say they are buckling under pressure following a dramatic increase in their workload, a crisis of intolerance and the lack of help from oversight bodies.

## Deaths and Hospitalisations

Three staff members, including two academics, died during June. At least nine employees have been hospitalised over the past two months, with three still receiving treatment, according to multiple university sources who spoke on condition of anonymity. They say many of the cases are linked to stress and exhaustion following the university's decision last year not to renew contracts for markers and e-tutors.

## Union Sounds the Alarm

The concerns are detailed in a leaked 37-page memorandum submitted by the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) to the university Council on 13 May. The union warned that Unisa may be exposing staff to occupational health and safety risks through chronic stress, burnout, fatigue, excessive workloads, work-related mental health harm and poor work-life balance. This was borne out by the deaths and hospitalizations of staff members, said academics.

## The Markers Decision

According to an academic, vice-chancellor, Professor Puleng LenkaBula, led the charge against markers at a workshop last year, claiming that some academics had engaged family members to carry out marking tasks. Although no evidence was provided to support LenkaBula's claims, the university insists it was a management decision to make the switch which has now boiled over onto staff – and students.



Unisa's most recent workforce data, published in its 2023 Integrated Report, shows the institution, which has more than 400 000 students, employed 3,493 permanent academics and 2,197 academics on fixed-term contracts (1 485 contracts were more than 12 months; and 712 contracts less than 12 months). Previously, the university relied heavily on 26,150 e-tutors and 5,095 markers, engaged as independent contractors. Since the start of the 2026 academic year, they were replaced by around 850 adjunct academics.

Nehawu says that the removal of markers and e-tutors engaged on contracts renewable for up to three years has destabilised the university's academic operations. Academics are now expected to teach and absorb work previously performed by markers, e-tutors and teaching assistants.

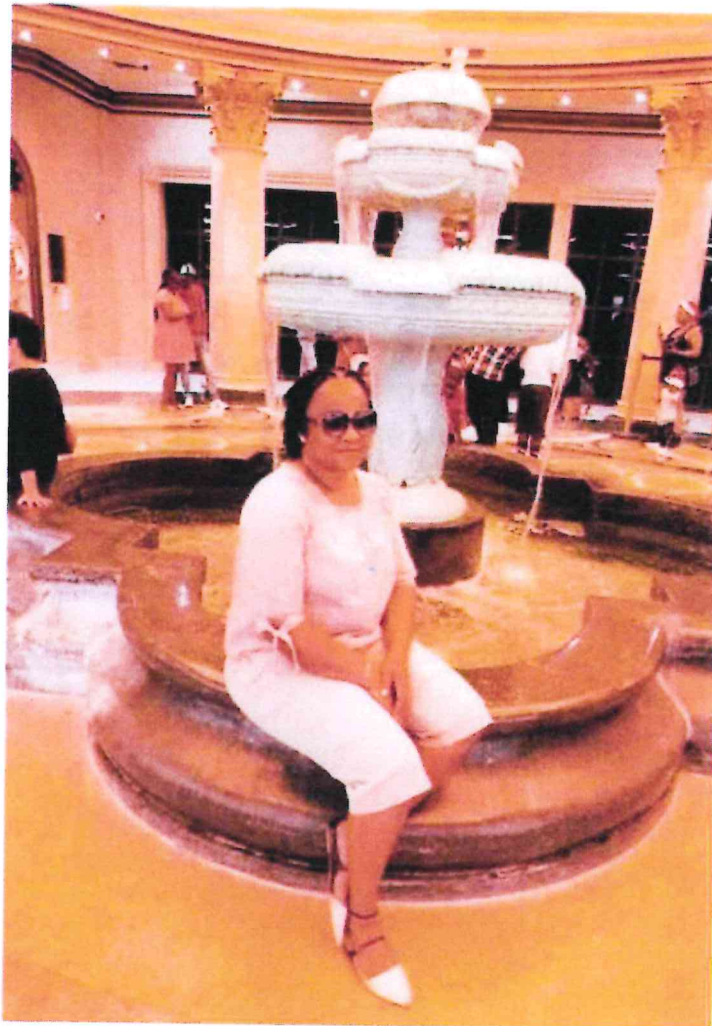
"Markers, e-tutors and teaching assistants are not optional extras. They are essential to teaching, learning, assessment, feedback, student support, throughput, retention and academic quality assurance," said Nehawu in the memorandum.

### **The Human Toll**

The human cost and its impact on staff have become increasingly visible.

Dr Mary Mmatsatsi Madileng, 64, a senior lecturer in the Department of English Studies, died on 11 June, two days after collapsing at home from an aneurysm.

Her brother, Thulare Madileng, said she was deeply committed to her work. "My sister never complained, but she just had to do it. As a mother of two, she had no option but to just carry on," he said.



Dedicated...Dr Mary Madileng died two days after collapsing at home.

During a memorial service on 18 June at Unisa, he appealed to university leaders reflect on the working conditions facing employees.

Three colleagues said Madileng had repeatedly expressed concern about her health and struggled to cope with mounting pressure. An academic in her department, recalled: "She kept saying she was not coping." On many occasions she was ill at work and in severe pain.

### Questions Over Contract Staff

The death of Unathi Poyo, a lecturer in the Department of Criminal and Procedural Law, has raised separate concerns after she had reportedly been working on contract for several years.



since 2016. Her passing has prompted questions from labour representatives about university's use of long-term fixed-term contracts.



Unathi Poyo

Colleagues have launched a collection for her two children because, as a contract staff, she did not receive a pension, medical aid and other benefits available to permanent staff.

John Mboweni was employed in the IT department which came under pressure from the hiring of new adjunct academics at the beginning of the year when new staff members had to be onboarded, while at the same time, they were swamped with existing staff computing requirements. He died on 15 June.



John Mboweni

### **A Growing Exodus**

At least three academics indicated that they were considering resigning or taking retirement given the toxic environment, the decline in standards, and failure by the university Council to hold management accountable on the “unilateral” axing of markers.

### **Students Feel the Impact**

While academics and staff have taken severe strain, the main losers have been students, who have been waiting for months for assignment marks, which delays their studies. Scores took to social media to vent their frustration as recently as yesterday.

There was more bad news for students following the news this week that due to maintenance of the “myUnisa”, their results would only be available in August.

### **The Marking Backlog**

An outstanding assessment marking analysis in the Nehawu memorandum given to the Council showed that the annual marking load for formative assessments for the first semester, includes around 2.1 million assignments received across 7 colleges. By 7 May 2026, 557,319 assignments had not been marked.

A professor said on average each academic marked between 12500 to 20 000 assignments a term. She was aware that some academics had included multiple answers in their assignments to manage the workload. "This will undoubtedly affect the quality of qualifications."

Nehawu said students are entitled to proper academic support, fair assessment and meaningful feedback within reasonable timelines. When marking is delayed, results performed under crisis conditions, students are prejudiced.

According to the Nehawu memorandum, their concern is that the current resource model appears to have shifted substantial marking, assessment, and student support onto academics "without proper workload adjustment, consultation, risk assessment or quality safeguards".

### Management Responds

Council Chairperson Dr Dan Mosia referred enquiries to Unisa management.

Unisa Executive Director of Institutional Advancement, Professor Boitumelo Be Senokoane confirmed that the university did not renew or extend the contracts of external markers and e-tutors, saying it had received Council approval.

He said Unisa appointed adjunct academics who are South Africans with Master or Doctoral degrees and most of whom who had been unemployed. The university followed institutional policies and procedures as well as applicable legislation.

He denied "malicious and false allegations" intended to portray Unisa as uncaring, contributing "to any ill health or any death", adding that policies regulating both performance and employee wellness are in place. "All employees, including academics, are aware of the steps to be taken to address whatever wellness challenges they may encounter."

Matshepo Seedat, the spokesperson for Minister of Higher Education and Training Buti Manamela, said he would seek a report on the matter before commenting.

Council on Higher Education chief executive Dr Whitty Green said the statutory has not been formally informed of the developments at Unisa and could not com

Universities South Africa did not comment while Higher Health, which deals wi wellness at universities, could not be reached.

Sipho Stuurman, the spokesperson for newly appointed Deputy Minister of High Education and Training Yusuf Cassim, who has oversight for Unisa, said time w needed to establish the facts around “internal governance matters”.

### **‘People Are Dying Inside’**

Prof Stewart Mothatha, a dismissed former Registrar, who had been embroiled in bitter ongoing legal battle with the university, said staff feared for their jobs.

“They may not say so publicly but they (academics and staff) are dying inside, sh by the actual deaths and hospitalizations of several people. Stress levels are high because people are protecting their livelihoods,” he said.

For many academics, however, the crisis goes beyond workloads and staffing mo

“It is about the future of the institution,” said one senior professor. “People are exhausted, frightened and losing faith. The question is how much longer Unisa c continue like this before something gives.”

### **Burnout Beyond Unisa**

A 2025 study published in Behavioral Sciences by Abraham et al. found that near (49%) of academic staff surveyed at a South African university experienced severe psychological distress, while 27% reported high levels of burnout.

Research by Naidoo-Chetty, Du Plessis and Becker (2026) found that high job dei—including workload, online teaching pressures and publication requirements significantly increase burnout among academics in South African higher educati institutions.”

A narrative review by N.G. Dlamini and N.D. Dlamini (2024) found that heavy workloads, limited resources, poor work-life balance and inadequate support systems are among the major contributors to burnout and reduced well-being among South African academics.

A staff member at a university who asked not to be named, said massification means more resources for students and less for teaching staff, amplifying the pressure.

### A Sector-Wide Concern

Thandwa Mthembu, the vice-chancellor of Durban University of Technology, said all universities made provisions for markers, as it depends on the workload and the classes one teaches.

Mthembu added that there is a “insidious practice of academic precariousness via part or short-term contracts even when there are permanent positions”.

“You find long vacancy lists and more short-term contracts. Some use the vacancies to hire people - sometimes foreign nationals - who they know would not make it via the open recruitment process.”

The vice-chancellor said he told staff at DUT that this was not the university position.

“There are some sadists who overload academics and fail to appoint permanent or relief staff even when funds have been made available. I just don’t understand why some people think academics are modern day slaves,” Mthembu said.

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**Harold Wren** 6d[❤️ Liked by ednews.africa](#)

Utterly pathetic...how on earth does a non-entity with a degree in theology get to have so much in one of the biggest universities in the world? Absolutely no proof produced of family members used as markers but LenkaBula and the UNISA Council proceeded regardless. Could it have been to disguise that funds may have gone missing and UNISA would have been unable to pay the contractors? Reinstate the e-tutors, TA's and markers as a matter of urgency if you want to save the Semester...

[❤️ LIKE \(1\)](#) [💬 REPLY](#)**Noluvuyo Gqadu** Jul 29

This is 😞 sad!

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"TLM2"

NEWS

## UNISA Threatens Action Over Report as Deaths, Hospitalisations and Staff Outcry Mount

University insists its restructuring was properly approved and implemented, but critics say replacement of thousands of contractors has left academics overburdened and exposed serious workplace risks.



EDNEWS.AFRICA

JUL 29, 2026



3



A sick university...Dr Mary Madileng died on 11 June, John Mboweni on 15 June and Unathi Poyo on 19 June and another nine staff members were hospitalised in the past three months. Pictures: Supplied

The University of South Africa has rejected as "false, malicious, and insensitive" weekend report by *ednews-africa* over its controversial removal of markers, which

placed a heavy burden on academics and staff.

Three people died within days of each other in June, and their colleagues and families cited stress and an increased workload contributed to them falling ill. Another nine Unisa staff members were hospitalised for stress-related illnesses.

In a statement yesterday, the University said the article published by Mr. Edwin :  
"is unsupported by any factual evidence".





## MEDIA RESPONSE

DATE: 27 July 2026

### RE: MEDIA RESPONSE: APPOINTMENT OF ADJUNCT ACADEMICS AT UNISA

The University unequivocally rejects the false, malicious, and insensitive article published by M Edwin Naidu on 26 July 2026 which is unsupported by any factual evidence. The University Management will not hesitate to hold Mr. Naidu, together with any individuals who contributed to or facilitated the publication of the article, accountable for any deliberate misrepresentation of facts relating to the University, its Management, and its Council.

The university confirms that it did not renew or extend the contracts of external markers and e-tutors and that it appointed adjunct academics in their stead. In so doing, the university followed institutional policies and procedures as well as applicable legislation to effect these appointments.

This intervention by the university leadership was thoroughly considered and followed all the requisite institutional governance processes. Like all strategic decisions in the university, it was preceded by all the necessary planning, consultation and approval steps by the relevant decision-making structures in the institution. Any insinuation or suggestion to the contrary is not only preposterous, but is clearly intended to belittle the management of the university and is dismissed with the contempt it deserves.

As a matter of fact, the appointment of adjunct academics, which is over a three-year period, is intended to bring stability and strengthen the student support system and the academic project. The former external markers and e-tutors were appointed on unsustainable one-year contracts. Also, they were not available full-time to the university, whereas the adjunct academics are appointed on a full-time basis and for a longer period.

The University has comprehensive policies and procedures in place to promote both employee performance and employee wellness. All employees are informed about and encouraged to make use of the University's Health and Wellness Programme, facilitated through BUA Health and Wellness Corner and internal communication, which provides a range of confidential psychosocial support and intervention services at no cost to employees. These services are available to all University employees across the various locations where UNISA has a presence through a contracted service provider. The University remains committed to the wellbeing of its employees and, as it has consistently done, will continue to intervene promptly and appropriately by providing the necessary support, care, and assistance whenever circumstances require.

Lastly, the University wishes to state that it is deeply irresponsible, deplorable, and regrettable for anyone to exploit the passing of UNISA colleagues in pursuit of a false narrative intended to bring the name and reputation of the University into disrepute. The University remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting and strengthening the academic project, fostering institutional stability, and advancing its strategic vision of propelling UNISA to even greater heights.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "M. J. V.", is located in the bottom right corner of the page.

In doing so, the University will continue to uphold the values of integrity, respect, and accountability in all its engagements.



University of South Africa  
Pretorius Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane  
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www.unisa.ac.za

The facts remain: three staff members died in June, their families blame the workload overload on poor implementation of adjunct academics to replace markers.

The report said that the university relied heavily on 26,150 e-tutors and 5,095 markers engaged as independent contractors. Since the start of the 2026 academic year, the contracts ended and they were replaced by around 850 full-time adjunct academics on three-year contracts - confirmed by the university.

This added to the burden of the academics, first raised in a leaked 37-page memorandum submitted by the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) to the university Council on 13 May.

The union warned that Unisa may be exposing staff to occupational health and safety risks through chronic stress, burnout, fatigue, excessive workloads, work-related mental health harm and poor work-life balance. This was borne out by the death hospitalizations of staff members, which council did nothing about, said academics.

In his initial response to a media enquiry, Unisa Executive Director of Institutional Advancement, Professor Boitumelo Ben Senokoane, said the university would act against what he termed misinformation and said journalists "such as yourself" should be upfront to congratulate Unisa for the noticeable strides it has made.

Unisa, however, confirmed that the university did not renew or extend the contracts of external markers and e-tutors, saying it had received Council approval.

In its latest statement, Unisa again attempted to again bully the writer - and staff saying that university management would not hesitate to hold Mr. Naidu, together with any individuals who contributed to or facilitated the publication of the article accountable for any deliberate misrepresentation of facts relating to the University Management, and its Council.



Again, the university confirms that it did not renew or extend the contracts of ex markers and e-tutors and that it appointed adjunct academics in their stead. In s doing, the university followed institutional policies and procedures as well as applicable legislation to effect these appointments.

Council Chairperson Dr Dan Mosia referred media enquiries to the university, ir many describe as a disregard of its governance role.

Dr Mary Mmatsatsi Madileng, 64, a senior lecturer in the Department of English Studies, died on 11 June, two days after collapsing at home from an aneurysm.

John Mboweni was employed in the IT department which come under pressure c the hiring of new adjunct academics at the beginning of the year when new staff members had to be onboarded, died on 15 June.

Mother of two children, aged 8 and three, Unathi Poyo, a lecturer in the Departm Criminal and Procedural Law, died on 19 June after working at Unisa for a decad contractor. She fell ill at work the month before with high-blood pressure and di public hospital without medical aid. Her children are being cared for by their 66-old granny.

But instead of compassion, the university issues threats, saying “it is deeply irresponsible, deplorable, and regrettable for anyone to exploit the passing of UN colleagues in pursuit of a false narrative intended to bring the name and reputati the University into disrepute”.

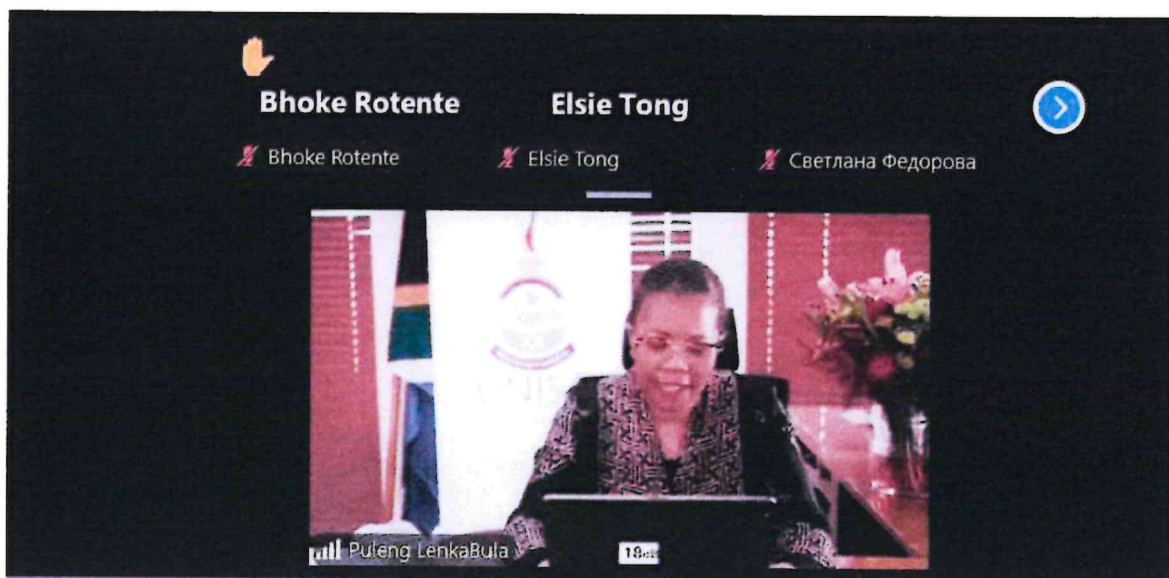
After publication of the article, ednews.africa, received several phone calls from including a senior professor, who described the Vice-Chancellor Professor Puler LenkaBula as a “bully”. Staff members who were on contract and did not have it renewed want to speak about their experience under LenkaBula.

Social media is abuzz with past and previous academics and students sharing the stories about their plight at Unisa. Students expressed relief at learning that the problems they faced were not because of themselves but the implementation

challenges at Unisa over the delays in marking of assignments. Many have not received their assignment marks as yet.

Unisa has been asked to comment - this article will be updated when Unisa responds along with another request for an interview with LenkaBula to discuss the current issues and “congratulate Unisa for the noticeable strides it has made”.

While staff and students at Unisa are setting social media on fire, Prof. LenkaBula addressed the Association of African Universities COREViP 2027 in Nairobi virtually at the weekend. She urged institutions to build universities that are resilient, relevant and globally impactful. Asked if the AAU was aware of the challenges facing Unisa, a senior AAU official said: “This is serious.”



Everything's rosy...Prof Puleng LenkaBula addressed the African Association of Universities on the need for resilient institutions.

Meanwhile under Senokoane's watch, Unisa insists that it remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting and strengthening the academic project, fostering institutional stability, and advancing its strategic vision of propelling UNISA to greater heights.

But the families of the dead – and those in hospital, however, tell a different story.

The real noise has only just begun!

**Share your Unisa stories with us – ednews.africa will listen, seek Unisa response, even Council, which continues to remain silent, as well as the education authorities, all within our goal of truthful journalism aimed at driving Unisa to “greater heights”**

**ALL CORRESPONDENCE WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL!**

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8/7/26, 12:03 PM

UNISA Threatens Action Over Report as Deaths, Hospitalisations and Staff Outcry Mount

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"TLM3"

NEWS

## BLOCKED! But not silenced by UNISA

Unisa VC Puleng LenkaBula says she's busy and will not honour several requests for comment from ednews.africa on the current staff crisis which has claimed three lives.



EDNEWS.AFRICA

JUL 30, 2026

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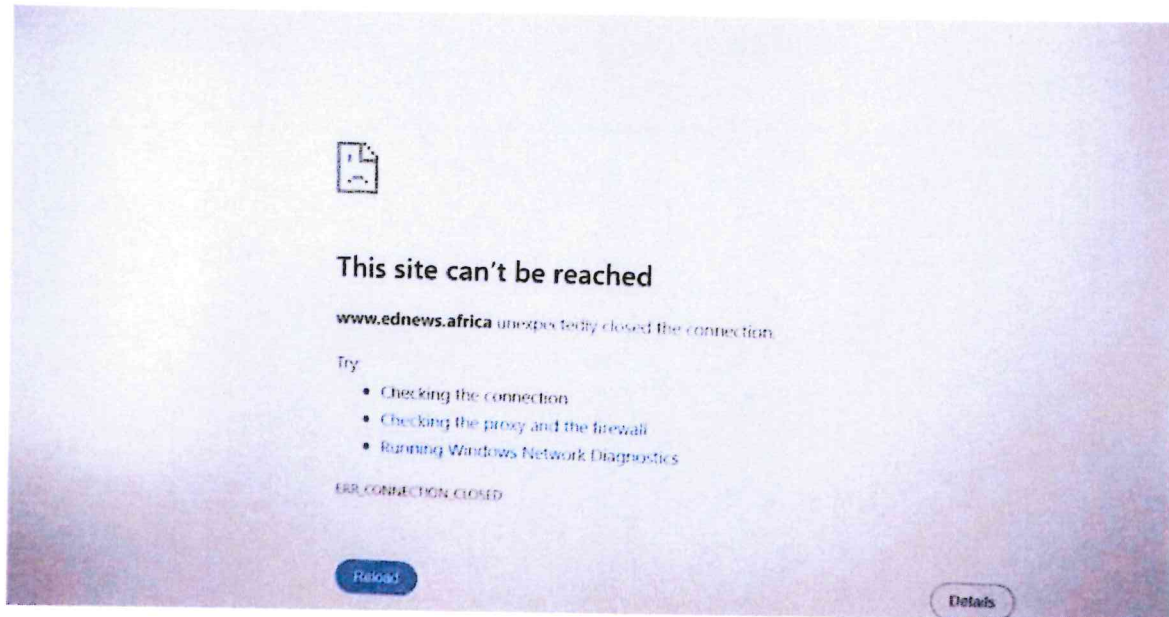
Professor Puleng LenkaBula. Picture, Instagram.

Amid an ongoing staff crisis, which has claimed the lives of three employees and hospitalised many, the University of South Africa (Unisa) has blocked staff from accessing education news website [www.ednews.africa](http://www.ednews.africa).

Academics and staff at Unisa have been barred from accessing the site while on Unisa Wi-Fi amid allegations that the site was blocked after weekend reports on deaths of three staff members who according to families succumbed to illness af



their heavy workloads increased when the university scrapped the roles of 5000 markers.



Many staffers said yesterday they could not access the site at South Africa and A largest tertiary institution. Many employees have since the reports, afraid of losing their jobs, have come out to say they are being bullied, victimised and threatened having an opinion different to that of the Vice-Chancellor Professor Puleng LenkaBula.

Two stories have been published in ednews.africa on the allegations brought by employees and questions on the allegation sent to Unisa for a response.

Contacted by ednews.africa, LenkaBula, said on Thursday morning she was busy could not talk.

On Thursday Unisa staffers confirmed they cannot access ednews.africa which operates voluntarily without funding since 4 Feb and has gained 70 000 views.

The Unisa expose was one of the most read stories in this publication.

Our mission is to highlight inspiring stories and achievements in education, but cannot ignore allegations of wrongdoing by those entrusted with leading institut

of learning, says editor Zingisa Mkhuma.

“We hope the leadership at Unisa will choose a less emotional way to handle our coverage of the crisis at the institution and engage with this publication so we can offer our readers a balanced report on the unfolding events, that are detrimental to the services the institutions provide to learners.

“Dismissing our enquiries will not force us to ignore the calls from aggrieved Unisa staff members and we will keep publishing their stories while we will keep giving them an opportunity to respond in line with media law and ethics”.

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Handwritten signature and initials, possibly "M" and "C.V."

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PRETORIA NEWS NEWS

## Staff Crisis at Unisa: Deaths, Burnout and Academic Collapse

Edwin Naidu | Published 1 week ago

f X in v p

5min



An investigation reveals a devastating crisis at the University of South Africa (Unisa), where staff deaths and alarming burnout rates signal a breakdown in academic support and wellbeing. The death of lecturer Unathi Poyo also raised the issue of academics working on contract basis for years.

Image: SUPPLIED

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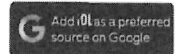
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FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2026



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Three staff deaths in June, multiple stress-related hospitalisations and a mounting workload crisis have pushed academics at the University of South Africa (Unisa) to breaking point.

An investigation by *ednews.africa* reveals allegations of burnout, fear, declining academic standards and growing unrest among staff and students after the university scrapped the posts of thousands of markers and e-tutors.

Academics and staff at Unisa, Africa's largest distance-learning institution, say they are buckling under pressure following a dramatic increase in workloads, a culture of intolerance and what they describe as inadequate intervention by oversight bodies.

Three staff members, including two academics, died in June. At least nine employees have been hospitalised over the past two months, with three still receiving treatment, according to multiple university sources who spoke on condition of anonymity. They believe many of the cases are linked to stress and exhaustion following the university's decision not to renew contracts for markers and e-tutors.

The concerns are contained in a leaked 37-page memorandum submitted by the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu) to the university Council on 13 May. The union warned that Unisa may be exposing staff to occupational health and safety risks through chronic stress, burnout, fatigue, excessive workloads and poor work-life balance.

At the centre of the controversy is the university's decision to discontinue the use of thousands of external markers and e-tutors. According to an academic, Vice-Chancellor Professor Puleng LenkaBula argued at a workshop last year that some academics had outsourced marking to family members. No evidence was provided to support the claim, but the university maintains that the move formed part of a broader management decision.

According to Unisa's latest workforce data, the institution serves more than 400,000 students and employs 3,493 permanent academics and 2,197 academics on fixed-term contracts. Previously, it relied on 26,150 e-tutors and 5,095 markers engaged as independent contractors. Since the start of the 2026 academic year, they have largely been replaced by about 850 adjunct academics.

Nehawu argues that the shift has destabilised academic operations, leaving academics responsible for work previously carried out by markers, e-tutors and teaching assistants.

"Markers, e-tutors and teaching assistants are not optional extras. They are essential to teaching, learning, assessment, feedback, student support, throughput, retention and academic quality assurance," the union said.

The human toll has become increasingly visible.

Dr Mary Mmatsetsi Madileng, 64, a senior lecturer in the Department of English Studies, died on June 11, two days after collapsing at home from an aneurysm. Her brother, Thulare Madileng, described her as deeply committed to her work.

"My sister never complained, but she just had to do it. As a mother of two, she had no option. She just carried on," he said.





*Dr Mary Mmatsatsi Madileng, 64, a senior lecturer in the Department of English Studies, died in June two days after collapsing at home.*

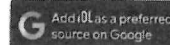
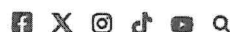
*Image: SUPPLIED*

### 'Staff Dying Inside'

<https://iol.co.za/pretoria-news/news/2026-07-27-staff-crisis-at-unisa-deaths-burnout-and-academic-collapse/>



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The impact extends beyond staff members. At least three academics said they were considering resigning or taking early retirement because of what they described as a toxic environment, declining standards and the university Council's failure to hold management accountable over the removal of markers.

Students, meanwhile, face growing delays in receiving marks and academic feedback. Many have taken to social media to complain about the backlog and its impact on their studies.

Nehawu's analysis found that Unisa received about 2.1 million assignments during the first semester across seven colleges. By 7 May, 557,319 assignments remained unmarked.

One professor estimated that academics now mark between 12,500 and 20,000 assignments a term. She said some lecturers had resorted to increasing the use of multiple-choice assessments to cope with workloads.

"This will undoubtedly affect the quality of qualifications," she said.

The union argues that students are entitled to proper academic support, fair assessment and meaningful feedback within reasonable timeframes. Delayed or rushed marking, it said, ultimately prejudices students and threatens academic quality.

Council chairperson Dr Dan Mosia referred queries to management. Unisa's Executive Director of Institutional Advancement, Professor Boitumelo Ben Senokoane, confirmed that the university had not renewed contracts for external markers and e-tutors, saying the decision had received Council approval.

He said the institution appointed adjunct academics, most of whom hold master's or doctoral qualifications, and that all processes complied with university policies and legislation.

Senokoane rejected allegations that the university was uncaring or contributed to staff illnesses or deaths.

"All employees, including academics, are aware of the steps to be taken to address whatever wellness challenges they may encounter," he said.

The Department of Higher Education and Training said it would seek a report before commenting. The Council on Higher Education said it had not been formally informed of the developments.

Prof Stewart Mothatha, a former registrar engaged in a long-running dispute with the university, said staff were afraid to speak openly.

"They may not say so publicly, but they are dying inside. Stress levels are high because people are protecting their livelihoods," he said.

For many academics, however, the crisis extends beyond workloads and staffing models.

"It is about the future of the institution," said one senior professor. "People are exhausted, frightened and losing faith. The question is how much longer Unisa can continue like this before something gives."

Research suggests the challenge extends beyond a single university. Studies conducted between 2024 and 2026 found rising levels of psychological distress and burnout among South African academics, driven by heavy workloads, limited resources and increasing institutional demands.

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An investigation reveals a devastating crisis at the University of South Africa (Unisa), where staff deaths and alarming burnout rates signal a breakdown in academic support and wellbeing.

Image: Jacques Naude | Independent Newspapers

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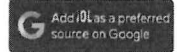
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The commission was told on Wednesday that the meeting took place under private circumstances, with Johnson's cellphones left with her protectors before she entered the residence.

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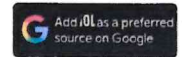
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<https://iol.co.za/pretoria-news/news/2026-07-27-staff-crisis-at-unisa-deaths-burnout-and-academic-collapse/>

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FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2026



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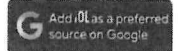


8/7/26, 11:55 AM

Staff Crisis at Unisa: Deaths, Burnout and Academic Collapse



FRIDAY, AUGUST 7, 2026



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SMVAKALISA INC

a 'TLM5'

**TO: THE ENTITY TRADING AS EDNEWS.AFRICA**

10 Karin Close, Buccleuch

Sandon

**AND TO: THE EDITOR, EDNEWS.AFRICA**

**AND TO: MR EDWIN NAIDU (author of the articles**

Per E-mail: [ednews.africa@gmail.com](mailto:ednews.africa@gmail.com)

: [edwin.aidu@live.co.za](mailto:edwin.aidu@live.co.za)

**Your Ref:**

**Our Ref:**

**Date:**

SMV/UNISA-

03 August 2026

Dear Sirs,

**RE: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA // EDNEWS.AFRICA AND MR EDWIN NAIDU – LETTER OF DEMAND**

1. We act on behalf of the University of South Africa, a public higher education institution established in terms of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (hereinafter referred to as "our Client" / "UNISA").

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Website Address: <https://smvakalisa.co.za/>

Email: [smvakalisa@smvakalisa-inc.co.za](mailto:smvakalisa@smvakalisa-inc.co.za)

REG NO: 2011/13093071

Summer Place, 13 Summer Street, Rivonia, Sandton, 2191 (Head Office)

**DIRECTORS:** SM VAKALISA Dip.Juris.B.Proc (Walter Sisulu University) Management Advancement Programme (Wits Business School). Z NKUHLU B.Juris & LLB. (University of the Western Cape).

**ASSOCIATE:** K. NKUNZANA BA (LAW) & LLB (University of the Witwatersrand). D. TEMBANI LLB (Nelson Mandela University).

**CANDIDATE ATTORNEYS:** T. MOKGOSI LLB (Northwest University). A. XOLO LLB (University of KwaZulu-Natal). N. GODIE LLB (University of South Africa).

**CONSULTANTS:** GEORGE GEORGHIADES PG Dip Set (Stellenbosch), NQF Level 8 (University of South Africa), Masters – Doctoral (Nelson Mandela University), Commissioner (Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration) K. SIBEKO LLB, BA Law (University of Durban-Westville), CEL, DCL, PGDCL (Rand Afrikaans University), S. MAPHOSA LLB (Walter Sisulu University).

**BRANCHES:** MPUMALANGA | KWAZULU-NATAL | NORTHWEST | EASTERN CAPE | WESTERN CAPE/LIMPOPO

M JV



VAKALISA

2. This letter is addressed to you jointly and severally in your respective capacities as the publisher and owner of the ednews.africa website, the editor responsible for its content, and the author of the articles referred to below.
3. Our Client notes with grave concern the online articles published on the ednews.africa website on 26, 29 and 30 July 2026, authored by Mr Edwin Naidu, titled as follows:
  - 3.1. "Deaths, Burnout and Academic Collapse: The Crisis Unfolding at Unisa (Staff deaths, escalating burnout, crippling workloads and growing concerns over governance have exposed deep cracks within South Africa's largest university)", published on 26 July 2026;
  - 3.2. "UNISA Threatens Action Over Report as Deaths, Hospitalisations and Staff Outcry Mount (University insists its restructuring was properly approved and implemented, but critics say replacement of thousands of contractors has left academics overburdened and exposed serious workplace risks)", published on 29 July 2026; and
  - 3.3. "BLOCKED! But not silenced by UNISA (Unisa VC Puleng LenkaBula says she's busy and will not honour several requests for comment from ednews.africa on the current staff crisis which has claimed three lives)", published on 30 July 2026.
4. The articles, of and concerning our Client, contain the following false and defamatory statements:
  - 4.1. "Three staff members, including two academics, died during June. At least nine employees have been hospitalised over the past two months, with three



## VAKALISA

still receiving treatment, according to multiple university sources who spoke on condition of anonymity. They say many of the cases are linked to stress and exhaustion following the university's decision last year not to renew contracts for markers and e-tutors."

- 4.2. "The death of Unathi Poyo, a lecturer in the Department of Criminal and Procedural Law, has raised separate concerns after she had reportedly been working on contract since 2016. Her passing has prompted questions from labour representatives about the university's use of long term fixed-term contracts."
- 4.3. "Amid an ongoing staff crisis, which has claimed the lives of three employees and hospitalised many, the University of South Africa (Unisa) has blocked staff from accessing education news website [www.ednews.africa](http://www.ednews.africa)."
- 4.4. "Academics and staff at Unisa have been barred from accessing the site while on the Unisa WIFI amid allegations that the site was blocked after weekend reports on the deaths of three staff members who according to families succumbed to illness after their heavy workloads increased when the university scrapped the roles of 5000 markers."
5. The articles were published through the mass media, to the general public, and have attracted public debate and comment. They have been widely disseminated and shared on social media platforms, including X, TikTok, and have been reposted on numerous occasions.



VAKALISA

6. Read individually and cumulatively, and in their proper context, the articles are wrongful and defamatory of our Client in that they are intended and understood to mean, and do mean, that:
  - 6.1. our Client is responsible for, alternatively caused, the deaths of three of its staff members, and the hospitalisation of others, by overworking them and by failing to have regard to their health and safety;
  - 6.2. our Client acted with reckless disregard for the wellbeing and lives of its employees; and
  - 6.3. to the extent that the articles impute that our Client blocked access to the website in order to suppress reporting of, or to conceal its responsibility for, the said deaths, our Client sought to censor the media and to cover up wrongdoing.
7. The aforesaid statements and imputations are false. No post-mortem or other competent evidence has established that the deaths of our Client's staff members were caused by, or are attributable to, our Client, its restructuring, or the non-renewal of the contracts of markers and e-tutors. Our Client's restructuring was lawfully and properly approved and implemented. The statements are, in the premises, false, unlawful and defamatory of our Client per se, and were published with the intention of injuring our Client's reputation, alternatively negligently and without regard to their truth or falsity.
8. On 27 July 2026 our Client rejected the allegations made in the articles. Notwithstanding our Client's rejection of the allegations, you have failed and/or refused to remove the articles, which remain published on the ednews.africa website to date.





VAKALISA

9. The cumulative effect of the articles has been to cause serious and ongoing damage to our Client's reputation and good name in the eyes of the public, its staff, its students and the broader academic community.
10. In the premises, we are instructed to demand, as we hereby do, that before the end of the business day, tomorrow, 04 August 2026, you:
  - 10.1. immediately remove and take down each of the aforesaid articles from the ednews.africa website and from any other platform under your control or influence;
  - 10.2. publish an unconditional written retraction of the false and defamatory statements identified above;
  - 10.3. publish an unconditional apology to our Client, receiving the same or similar public prominence as the articles; and
  - 10.4. furnish our Client with a written undertaking that you will not repeat the said statements or publish any similar false and defamatory statements of and concerning our Client.
11. Should you fail to comply with the above within the stipulated period, our Client will, without any further notice to you, institute legal proceedings against you, including an urgent application to interdict and restrain the continued publication of the said statements and for their removal, together with orders directing a retraction and apology, as well as costs on the attorney and client scale.
12. All of our Client's rights are strictly reserved, including the right to supplement this letter.



VAKALISA

Yours faithfully.

PP   
**SM VAKALISA INC.**  
Per. MNCEDI VAKALISA

**smvakalisa@smvakalisa-inc.co.za**

---

**From:** smvakalisa@smvakalisa-inc.co.za  
**Sent:** Monday, 03 August 2026 21:25  
**To:** 'ednews.africa@gmail.com'; 'edwin.aidu@live.co.za'  
**Cc:** 'keabetswe@smvakalisa-inc.co.za'; 'dumisani@smvakalisa-inc.co.za';  
'siphathekile@smvakalisa-inc.co.za'; 'Skhumbuzo Mncedi Vakalisa';  
'thembeke@smvakalisa-inc.co.za'  
**Subject:** UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA // EDNEWS.AFRICA AND MR EDWIN NAIDU –  
LETTER OF DEMAND  
**Attachments:** Letter of Demand to Ednews Africa (03 August 2026)\_signed.pdf

| Tracking: | Recipient                           | Read                   |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
|           | 'ednews.africa@gmail.com'           |                        |
|           | 'edwin.aidu@live.co.za'             |                        |
|           | 'keabetswe@smvakalisa-inc.co.za'    |                        |
|           | 'dumisani@smvakalisa-inc.co.za'     |                        |
|           | 'siphathekile@smvakalisa-inc.co.za' |                        |
|           | 'Skhumbuzo Mncedi Vakalisa'         |                        |
|           | 'thembeke@smvakalisa-inc.co.za'     |                        |
|           | siphathekile@smvakalisa-inc.co.za   | Read: 2026/08/03 21:25 |
|           | thembeke@smvakalisa-inc.co.za       | Read: 2026/08/04 08:31 |
|           | keabetswe@smvakalisa-inc.co.za      | Read: 2026/08/04 09:10 |

Dear Sirs

The above matter refers.

Please find attached hereto, a letter of demand for purposes of service.

We trust that you will find the above in order.

Kind Regards

|                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br><b>SM VAKALISA INC.</b> | <b>SKHUMBUZO MNCEDI VAKALISA</b><br>Managing Director<br>✉ smvakalisa@smvakalisa-inc.co.za<br>☎ 010 054 6971 / 060 307 1214<br>🌐 www.smvakalisa-inc.co.za<br>📍 Summer Place, 13 Summer Street, Rivonia, Sandton, 2191 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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'TLMC'



SM VAKALISA INC.

**TO: THE ENTITY TRADING AS EDNEWS.AFRICA**

10 Karin Close, Buccleuch

Sandon

**AND TO: THE EDITOR, EDNEWS.AFRICA**

**AND TO: MR EDWIN NAIDU (author of the articles**

Per E-mail: [ednews.africa@gmail.com](mailto:ednews.africa@gmail.com)

: [edwin.aidu@live.co.za](mailto:edwin.aidu@live.co.za)

**Your Ref:**

**Our Ref:**

**Date:**

SMV/UNISA-

03 August 2026

Dear Sirs,

**RE: UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA // EDNEWS.AFRICA AND MR EDWIN NAIDU – LETTER OF DEMAND**

1. We act on behalf of the University of South Africa, a public higher education institution established in terms of the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (hereinafter referred to as "our Client" / "UNISA").

+27 10 054 6971

Website Address: <https://smvakalisa.co.za/>

Email: [smvakalisa@smvakalisa-inc.co.za](mailto:smvakalisa@smvakalisa-inc.co.za)

REG. NO: 2011/133956-71

Summer Place, 13 Summer Street, Rivonia, Sandton, 2191 (Head Office)

**DIRECTORS:** SM VAKALISA Dip.Juris.B.Proc (Walter Sisulu University) Management Advancement Programme (Wits Business School). Z NKUHLU B.Juris & LLB. (University of the Western Cape).

**ASSOCIATE:** K. NKUNZANA BA (LAW) & LLB (University of the Witwatersrand), D. TEMBANI LLB (Nelson Mandela University).

**CANDIDATE ATTORNEYS:** T. MOKGOSI LLB (Northwest University), A. XOLO LLB (University of KwaZulu-Natal), N. GODIE LLB (University of South Africa).

**CONSULTANTS:** GEORGE GEORGHIADES PG Dip Set (Stellenbosch), NQF Level 8 (University of South Africa), Masters – Doctoral (Nelson Mandela University), Commissioner (Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration), K. SIBEKO LLB, BA Law (University of Durban-Westville), CEL, DCL, PGDCL (Rand Afrikaans University), S. MAPHOSA LLB (Walter Sisulu University).

**BRANCHES:** MPUMALANGA | KWAZULU-NATAL | NORTHWEST | EASTERN CAPE | WESTERN CAPE/LIMPOPO

*[Handwritten signature]*



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2. This letter is addressed to you jointly and severally in your respective capacities as the publisher and owner of the ednews.africa website, the editor responsible for its content, and the author of the articles referred to below.
3. Our Client notes with grave concern the online articles published on the ednews.africa website on 26, 29 and 30 July 2026, authored by Mr Edwin Naidu, titled as follows:
  - 3.1. "Deaths, Burnout and Academic Collapse: The Crisis Unfolding at Unisa (Staff deaths, escalating burnout, crippling workloads and growing concerns over governance have exposed deep cracks within South Africa's largest university)", published on 26 July 2026;
  - 3.2. "UNISA Threatens Action Over Report as Deaths, Hospitalisations and Staff Outcry Mount (University insists its restructuring was properly approved and implemented, but critics say replacement of thousands of contractors has left academics overburdened and exposed serious workplace risks)", published on 29 July 2026; and
  - 3.3. "BLOCKED! But not silenced by UNISA (Unisa VC Puleng LenkaBula says she's busy and will not honour several requests for comment from ednews.africa on the current staff crisis which has claimed three lives)", published on 30 July 2026.
4. The articles, of and concerning our Client, contain the following false and defamatory statements:
  - 4.1. "Three staff members, including two academics, died during June. At least nine employees have been hospitalised over the past two months, with three





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still receiving treatment, according to multiple university sources who spoke on condition of anonymity. They say many of the cases are linked to stress and exhaustion following the university's decision last year not to renew contracts for markers and e-tutors."

- 4.2. "The death of Unathi Poyo, a lecturer in the Department of Criminal and Procedural Law, has raised separate concerns after she had reportedly been working on contract since 2016. Her passing has prompted questions from labour representatives about the university's use of long term fixed-term contracts."
- 4.3. "Amid an ongoing staff crisis, which has claimed the lives of three employees and hospitalised many, the University of South Africa (Unisa) has blocked staff from accessing education news website [www.ednews.africa](http://www.ednews.africa)."
- 4.4. "Academics and staff at Unisa have been barred from accessing the site while on the Unisa WIFI amid allegations that the site was blocked after weekend reports on the deaths of three staff members who according to families succumbed to illness after their heavy workloads increased when the university scrapped the roles of 5000 markers."
5. The articles were published through the mass media, to the general public, and have attracted public debate and comment. They have been widely disseminated and shared on social media platforms, including X, TikTok, and have been reposted on numerous occasions.



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6. Read individually and cumulatively, and in their proper context, the articles are wrongful and defamatory of our Client in that they are intended and understood to mean, and do mean, that:
  - 6.1. our Client is responsible for, alternatively caused, the deaths of three of its staff members, and the hospitalisation of others, by overworking them and by failing to have regard to their health and safety;
  - 6.2. our Client acted with reckless disregard for the wellbeing and lives of its employees; and
  - 6.3. to the extent that the articles impute that our Client blocked access to the website in order to suppress reporting of, or to conceal its responsibility for, the said deaths, our Client sought to censor the media and to cover up wrongdoing.
7. The aforesaid statements and imputations are false. No post-mortem or other competent evidence has established that the deaths of our Client's staff members were caused by, or are attributable to, our Client, its restructuring, or the non-renewal of the contracts of markers and e-tutors. Our Client's restructuring was lawfully and properly approved and implemented. The statements are, in the premises, false, unlawful and defamatory of our Client per se, and were published with the intention of injuring our Client's reputation, alternatively negligently and without regard to their truth or falsity.
8. On 27 July 2026 our Client rejected the allegations made in the articles. Notwithstanding our Client's rejection of the allegations, you have failed and/or refused to remove the articles, which remain published on the ednews.africa website to date.



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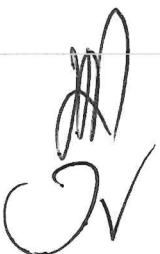
9. The cumulative effect of the articles has been to cause serious and ongoing damage to our Client's reputation and good name in the eyes of the public, its staff, its students and the broader academic community.
10. In the premises, we are instructed to demand, as we hereby do, that before the end of the business day, tomorrow, 04 August 2026, you:
  - 10.1. immediately remove and take down each of the aforesaid articles from the ednews.africa website and from any other platform under your control or influence;
  - 10.2. publish an unconditional written retraction of the false and defamatory statements identified above;
  - 10.3. publish an unconditional apology to our Client, receiving the same or similar public prominence as the articles; and
  - 10.4. furnish our Client with a written undertaking that you will not repeat the said statements or publish any similar false and defamatory statements of and concerning our Client.
11. Should you fail to comply with the above within the stipulated period, our Client will, without any further notice to you, institute legal proceedings against you, including an urgent application to interdict and restrain the continued publication of the said statements and for their removal, together with orders directing a retraction and apology, as well as costs on the attorney and client scale.
12. All of our Client's rights are strictly reserved, including the right to supplement this letter.



VAKALISA

Yours faithfully.

  
PP  
**SM VAKALISA INC.**  
*Per. MNCEDI VAKALISA*

  
6

**MEDIA RESPONSE**

**DATE:** 27 July 2026

**RE: MEDIA RESPONSE: APPOINTMENT OF ADJUNCT ACADEMICS AT UNISA**

The University unequivocally rejects the false, malicious, and insensitive article published by Mr. Edwin Naidu on 26 July 2026 which is unsupported by any factual evidence. The University Management will not hesitate to hold Mr. Naidu, together with any individuals who contributed to or facilitated the publication of the article, accountable for any deliberate misrepresentation of facts relating to the University, its Management, and its Council.

The university confirms that it did not renew or extend the contracts of external markers and e-tutors and that it appointed adjunct academics in their stead. In so doing, the university followed institutional policies and procedures as well as applicable legislation to effect these appointments.

This intervention by the university leadership was thoroughly considered and followed all the requisite institutional governance processes. Like all strategic decisions in the university, it was preceded by all the necessary planning, consultation and approval steps by the relevant decision-making structures in the institution. Any insinuation or suggestion to the contrary is not only preposterous, but is clearly intended to belittle the management of the university and is dismissed with the contempt it deserves.

As a matter of fact, the appointment of adjunct academics, which is over a three-year period, is intended to bring stability and strengthen the student support system and the academic project. The former external markers and e-tutors were appointed on unsustainable one-year contracts. Also, they were not available full-time to the university, whereas the adjunct academics are appointed on a full-time basis and for a longer period.

The University has comprehensive policies and procedures in place to promote both employee performance and employee wellness. All employees are informed about and encouraged to make use of the University's Health and Wellness Programme, facilitated through BUA Health and Wellness Corner and internal communication, which provides a range of confidential psychosocial support and intervention services at no cost to employees. These services are available to all University employees across the various locations where UNISA has a presence through a contracted service provider. The University remains committed to the wellbeing of its employees and, as it has consistently done, will continue to intervene promptly and appropriately by providing the necessary support, care, and assistance whenever circumstances require.

Lastly, the University wishes to state that it is deeply irresponsible, deplorable, and regrettable for anyone to exploit the passing of UNISA colleagues in pursuit of a false narrative intended to bring the name and reputation of the University into disrepute. The University remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting and strengthening the academic project, fostering institutional stability, and advancing its strategic vision of propelling UNISA to even greater heights.

In doing so, the University will continue to uphold the values of integrity, respect, and accountability in all its engagements.





## **MEDIA STATEMENT**

### **Unisa condemns the misuse of the passing of its staff members for propaganda and gamesmanship**

**03 August 2026**

The University of South Africa (Unisa) has noted with serious concern some recent media reports attempting to use the passing of some its staff members for what can only be described as unfortunate propaganda and gamesmanship.

Unisa is saddened and disappointed that the passing of its staff members and their well-being are being misused in unsavory agendas at a time when we should be allowing their loved ones to mourn with dignity. It also has no intention whatsoever to participate in such insensitive acts, lest it finds itself doing exactly what it is advising others not to do.

The university condemns these actions unequivocally and is looking into the matter of this deliberate and coordinated misinformation. Furthermore, it reiterates that, should there be any reason to suspect wrongdoing by anyone, it shall take all necessary steps to address such wrongdoing, including reporting any wrongful action to the relevant authorities. The University wishes to reassure the public that it respects and follows all applicable laws of the country in handling its employee affairs.

The university remains firmly committed to the well-being, dignity, and support of all its staff members, both during their service and in moments of loss. Furthermore, the University has fully established structures, including its Employee Wellness Program, Human Resources support channels, and formal grievance and reporting mechanisms, through which staff and their families can access assistance, counselling, and guidance.

**/Ends.**

