



Communication and Marketing Department
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UCT notes apology for response to student

The University of Cape Town (UCT) has noted and appreciates an apology that was made today by a staff member in relation to a message that was written by him and which later became public after it was posted on social media.

The social media post reflects the response of this staff member to a student's legitimate questions about arrangements for those who might wish to observe Eid during the exam period.

We believe that the response was, on the face of it, inappropriate and disrespectful. Its content may no doubt have caused hurt and offence.

We appreciate that the writer of the email today released the following:

"I am writing to express an unreserved apology for the offence given by an email message I sent to a student yesterday in response to a legitimate query regarding examination protocols during Ramadan.

The student was concerned about breaking fast during the 17.00-19.00 university examination, and I replied with entirely unacceptable levity.

I see now that my response was appallingly ill-considered and hurtful, and has caused offense to the student in question, as well as to the broader UCT community and beyond.

I am deeply ashamed at the lapse in judgement present in my communication, and the hurt it has caused, and hope that my sincere apology can be accepted. "

Students should note that the facts are that UCT has measures in place to ensure that students are able to observe Eid while exams are ongoing. These measures were also communicated to deans and heads of departments again a week ago in an email on relevant protocols and rules for exams, which include:

- Students sitting for exams are allowed to sit quietly at their desks and break their fast, as has been the case in the past.

- Students are also allowed to take a short break should they wish to exit an exam session, during which they will be escorted by an invigilator.
- Students who wish to not write a paper during Eid on 15 June may apply for a deferred exam to be written early in the second semester and not later than six months, as has been the case previously.
- Students with exams scheduled for the 08:00 session on 15 June can ask for a late start – they will write the same paper at 09:00 on the same day.

There will no doubt be deep introspection within the department and the faculty about this matter. This is appropriate.

UCT as a secular institution has deep respect for all religions, as is enshrined in our values. We will continue to discuss ways in which we can improve to ensure that we give effect to these values and to ensure that this is visible in our rules and practices and is experienced on campus every day.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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