



## The Student Fee Protests: The Psychological Society of South Africa responds



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The Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) expresses its concern over the continuing student protests in response to tertiary education fees. We are further troubled by the escalating violence, damage to property and a reported death at one of the institutions. PsySSA supports the call for more affordable education for all and is unequivocal in its belief that students from low socioeconomic families who qualify for tertiary education programmes must be able to access such education – it is the only way in which families and communities can progress, prosper and bridge the divide of economic extremes that has characterised South African life for centuries.

We call on government to assist university managements in negotiating this period of strife that erupted with the news from government regarding the fee increase. We believe that it is unfair for universities to now be left to cope with the crisis on their own. In this respect PsySSA proposes that government engages the issue and commences discussions with students at a national level, because the students' grievance is a national one rather than a university specific one. Mobilising a higher level meeting of government, university and student representatives conceptualised as an ongoing working group mandated to deliberate tertiary education fees with a longer term plan may be advisable. It has become evident that short-term plans are not effective.

We urge restraint from all parties involved in these volatile situations. To the students, PsySSA emphasizes its support for the cause and cautions against losing sight of the broader initiative, namely the goal of affordable education. We understand the emotive context of the protest action but suggest guarding against acts of violence, endangering human life and the destruction of property. With the very limited tertiary education facilities in our country we cannot afford to lose any of these resources, and more importantly human life.

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