

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

Council statements

Issues of public importance may suggest a University response.

In most cases the Vice-Chancellor will exercise the discretion Council has given to him/her to make statements on matters of importance to the University. He/she will do so as Vice-Chancellor and such statements will, appropriately, be associated by the public with the University.¹ The Vice-Chancellor has a particular obligation to do this where the University's interests, or those of individual members of the University, are involved.

There may also be cases where the Council may wish to make an institutional statement. (Any statement issued by Council will be seen to be an institutional one.)

The following guidelines are intended to help Council determine where it is appropriate for Council *qua* Council to adopt a public position. These take as a point of departure that the Council should do so on matters affecting UCT directly (such as : protection of academic freedoms; and the protection of UCT students and UCT constituency) and on other matters where the Council judges that this would be in the University's interest.

1. Council should make a statement only when it is clear that Council is able to do so with authority. A Council statement on a matter of public importance will be seen as the considered view of the governing body of the University and will thereby associate the University (and not just the Council) with the position it takes.
2. Council should make a statement only if it judges that the matter requires it to do so as a body, rather than, say, the Vice-Chancellor or the Chair individually doing so; in other words the Council should make public statements where it sees the need for a formal institutional response.
3. Council should be satisfied that an institutional response will command widespread (though not necessarily unanimous) support within the UCT community.

¹ Council (August 2009) confirmed that while the Vice-Chancellor should not take party political positions the Vice-Chancellor is and must be free to make statements in support of positions taken by non-partisan, non- political organisation and is free to take public positions in support of or in opposition to any tier of government when justified.

4. Where Council is persuaded of the need for an institutional response, Council should consider whether a public statement is the most appropriate response.
5. The issues on which Council might wish to take a public institutional position cover a broad scope, but will in the first place relate to the protection of academic freedoms; important educational issues affecting UCT or Universities generally; the protection of members of UCT, especially staff and students; and human rights.

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