

# No exam hitches for NMMU students

**Siyamtanda Capa**  
capas@timesmedia.co.za

## Relief as year ends successfully, but concerns remain over possible new protests

**A** COMPLETE shutdown, #Fees-MustFall protests and several court interdicts did not stop NMMU from finishing the 2016 academic year, with most students wrapping up exams this week.

NMMU spokeswoman Zandile Mbabela said the university was relieved the first exam session had gone well.

“It has been amazing to see the university community rally around to turn what some may have seen as an insurmount-

able challenge into a positive solution,” she said.

More than 20 000 students wrote the exams at the Nelson Mandela Bay Stadium and the CSIR building in Admiralty Way this year, while only 13% opted to sit next month.

But the uncertainty around protests flaring again next year remains a major concern.

“We are mindful of the uncertainty and fears of a possible flare-up and the university is working to ensure that the shutdown does not adversely

affect the start of the 2017 academic year,” Mbabela said.

“We will employ the same mechanisms as we have for the [November/December] exams, which have to date been administered without disruptions.”

Venues and accommodation provisions for the second session of exams will be sent to students next week.

The second exam session is set to start on January 9.

Desperate attempts to salvage what was left of the aca-

demical programme saw the university adopt an online learning approach termed the “Academic Completion Plan”.

The exams were then moved to the Nelson Mandela Bay stadium and the CSIR building.

It all started when #Fees-MustFall protests erupted on September 21 following Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande’s announcement on university fees.

NMMU has since announced it will increase fees by 8% next year.

The increase comes in the wake of the lengthy and violent #FeesMustFall protests that brought campuses throughout South Africa to a halt towards the end of the academic year.

The Port Elizabeth increase is in line with the maximum fee increase proposed by the government.

And it will ensure the sustainability of the university for next year, according to NMMU.

Protests at NMMU came to a head in October when the public order policing unit clashed

with students, shutting down the university and turning its north and south campuses into a war zone.

Police were pelted with stones and retaliated with rubber bullets and stun grenades.

More than 30 students were arrested.

The university also incurred R14-million in costs as a direct result of the protests.

More than R1-million was spent on additional security and R6.7-million on restoring damaged property.

The university was then faced with a lawsuit after Captu (Concerned Association of Parents and Others for Tertiary Education at Universities) was formed to compel the university to reopen its doors, but it won the case.

Captu member Robert Griebenow said he believed NMMU would not reopen next year.

“It seems most parents are lulled into complacency by the fact that their children are writing exams or are at least obtaining a year mark, not con-

sidering what will happen next year,” Griebenow said.

NMMU SRC president Nicholas Nyati said they did not see the fee increase as a reason to protest.

“The protests might only be in the first month and die down after that because many students have experienced the consequences of the university being shut. I don’t think anyone would want a repeat of this year,” he said.

NMMU #FeesMustFall movement spokesman Azola Dayile declined to comment.

Registration starts on January 23 and lectures are set to resume on February 6.