Students march against ‘victimisation’

THE EFF Student Command at Stellenbosch University has accused the institution's management of trying to “silence the voice of black students” after seven students received notices of charges being brought against them.

A march organised by the Student Command took place in the town yesterday, where a memorandum of grievances was handed over to a representative of management.

Social media users reported there had been tension between marchers and supporters of AfriForum Youth, who congregated at a statue of JS Marais.

Stellenbosch University spokesman Martin Viljoen said a tense situation developed on the Rooiplein (the main square on campus), where protesters tried to prevent members of AfriForum from washing the JS Marais statue.

He said according to information at the university’s disposal, a significant number of those involved in activities on the Rooiplein were not Stellenbosch University students.

A university statement said seven students received notices in connection with charges of damage to property and an attempt to disrupt an examination during a workers’ protest against outsourcing on November 17.

“The charges are not linked to the #FeesMustFall campaign. Participants in that campaign have received amnesty. These students are being charged with damage to property and in one case a deliberate attempt to disrupt an examination during protest action by outsourced workers on the Stellenbosch campus.

“The university management launched an investigation into the matter at the end of last year. The notices have now been drawn up, after consultation, with the commencement of the new academic year.”

It said the seven students had been given 10 days to motivate why they should not have to appear before the university’s central disciplinary committee.

Zandile Mantile, secretary of the EFF SC at the university, said the charges related to an incident last year during which the Marais statue was vandalised. “If the seven students have to face disciplinary action then so should everyone who participated that day.”

She said black students had had enough of “victimisation” by the university management and wanted the charges to be withdrawn. She said black counsellors who could relate to the pain of black students should be appointed by the institution and investigations could not be conducted by white people only.