Load-shedding threatens critical lab specimens as universities grapple with cost of SA’s energy crisis

From research hubs at risk, to rising fees amid protests, the energy crisis is exponentially catastrophic, threatening teaching and learning.

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Prof Taila Abdulkarim, who became a household name when he lobbied the ministerial advisory committee on Covid-19 to set aside more money for electricity, is still struggling with the effects of load-shedding on universities.

"This year," he says, "the electricity bill has doubled." The issue is so critical that universities are now being compelled to make significant changes to their operations.

"University managers are now looking at ways to reduce their electricity consumption," he says. "They are exploring ways to use renewable energy sources, such as solar panels, to reduce their reliance on the grid." The Department of Higher Education and Training has also issued guidelines to universities on how to manage electricity use during load-shedding.

"We are working closely with universities to ensure that they have a plan in place," he adds. "We are also offering them financial support to help them implement these measures." The government has also announced a relief package for universities affected by load-shedding.

"However," he warns, "these measures are not enough. Universities need to make significant changes to their operations to reduce their electricity consumption. This is not just a matter of saving money; it is also about ensuring that our students have access to the best possible education."