



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
INVUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

## UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

15 May 2020

Dear staff and students

### UPDATE ON DUT PHASED OPERATIONS

On Wednesday night, President Ramaphosa announced that the “National Lockdown Alert Level” will be eased from Level 4 to Level 3. However, the President also confirmed that areas with continued high Covid-19 infection rates will remain at Level 4. At this stage, government has not clarified which areas, if any, will remain on alert level 4. So, this may impact on our plans to commence with the amended 2020 academic calendar.

The University once again implores you to please observe the guidelines of the “State of Disaster” and to take all of the necessary precautions to protect yourself during the current Covid-19 outbreak. Please remember to use a face mask when you leave your place of residence, observe the physical distancing rules, avoid large gatherings, wash and sanitize your hands regularly, clean and sanitize surface areas often and equally important, you must sneeze, cough and yawn into your elbow or use a tissue, which should be safely disposed after use. We all have a responsibility to limit the spread of Covid-19 and to fight this disease.

Earlier this morning, the Executive Management Committee (EMC), the Executive Committee of Senate (SENEX) and representatives of the DUT Covid-19 Response Task Team, met to discuss plans related to the resumption university operations.

### I. DEVICE AND DATA PROVISION

The Chief Information Officer, Dr Progress Mtshali, updated the joint committee on developments related to devices and data provision. The various university sectors provided feedback on the number of colleagues who are **working remotely** from home and who would require assistance with data procurement. The university will be finalizing the data provision for those staff members who were identified by their line managers as needing data support.

The CIO and his team will also assist staff who do not have laptops, which are proving difficult to procure, and who require their office desktops to work remotely from home. Staff in this category will need to liaise with their Heads of Department and Executives in charge, who in turn, will liaise with the CIO. The relevant approvals need to be in

place and the Assets Management Department must be alerted and the requisite forms be signed by the staff member and the HOD, before transferring the desktop computer from the office to your place of residence.

We have seen announcements that government is planning to procure devices and data for NSFAS funded students. We await further details from the Department of Higher Education and Training and from NSFAS, regarding assistance for the students that they support. The Minister has also indicated that government is liaising with commercial banks to provide “soft loans” to self-paying and sponsored students, who may need funding support for devices. We are grateful to government and NSFAS for taking the responsibility to help our students.

As much as government is hard at work to procure devices, our CIO continues to engage with telecommunications companies and other related service providers, on more favourable deals on devices and data. This is for those students who, as a result of their sponsors’ support, may be in a position to purchase devices. It should be remembered that even as 1 June 2020 is the official start of online elements of our blended/multi-modal learning system, there is lots of work to be done between now and then to prepare our staff and students.

In line with the 30 April 2020 statement by the Minister, we have to start, during the month of May, to prepare for the phased return of our staff and students. Some of our staff will return as of 20 May 2020 for this purpose. Management decided on a stop-gap measure before the government plans for devices and data are actualized for purposes of assisting our staff and students, to share knowledge and information that prepares them for 1 June 2020.

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Just to get things going in the meantime, the University will, thus, provide data at its own cost to academic staff and all of our students for a period of 30 days, pending government’s planned interventions. Please ensure that your cellphone number is the most current and that the University is aware of this.

- If you are a student, please click the link and go to view, verify or update your details:

[https://mercury.dut.ac.za/pls/prodi41/w99pkg.mi\\_login?numtype=S](https://mercury.dut.ac.za/pls/prodi41/w99pkg.mi_login?numtype=S)

- If you are a staff member, please click the link to view, verify or update your details:

[https://mercury.dut.ac.za/pls/prodi41/w99pkg.mi\\_login?numtype=P](https://mercury.dut.ac.za/pls/prodi41/w99pkg.mi_login?numtype=P)

## **2. ONLINE AND MULTIMODAL TEACHING AND LEARNING**

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, Professor Nokuthula Sibiya, updated the committee on progress made towards preparing the University for blended, multimodal teaching and learning.

As noted above, we will be starting as of 20 May 2020 to prepare for the phased return to the university.

The DVC's Office will inform all staff and students, once finalized, about the online and multimodal teaching and learning plan that will be implemented from 1 June 2020.

## **3. AMENDED 2020 ACADEMIC CALENDAR**

Given the 'business unusual' circumstances we find ourselves in, we must gird our loins for many sacrifices Covid-19 will force on all of us, including losing some vacation time and working till late in December. The Deputy Registrar, Dr Karen Lazenby, presented the revised, draft, academic calendar that will be implemented from 1 June 2020. The amended 2020 academic calendar is in line with the Minister's announcement on 30 April 2020.

We will share the amended academic calendar with all staff and students.



## **4. PHASED-IN RETURN OF STAFF**

The Senior Director of Human Resources, Dr Vuyo Mthethwa, tabled the report and plan that detailed the phased-in return of staff onto our various university campuses. As noted above, some categories of staff, based on need, numbers, health and safety requirements, will return to campus from Wednesday 20 May 2020. These colleagues have already been identified by their Sector Executives as being either "Essential Service, Mission Critical, Frontline and Non-Frontline staff."

Colleagues are advised to contact Human Resources via Employee Wellness, to confidentially disclose any illness that is considered high risk in relation to Covid-19. These varying chronic illnesses, or as a result of their age being above 60, are indicated in the staff reintegration protocols and guidelines. All declarations must be accompanied by supporting documentation obtained either from their medical aid or a medical practitioner. Staff who are "at risk" medically but

who wish to continue working on campus, are required to complete an indemnity form. Please contact Employee Wellness for the relevant form.

## **5. INTEGRATED PLAN FOR CLEANING, SECURITY AND OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

The Infrastructure Development Advisor, My Nyiko Gudlhuza, presented the final plan in this regard to the joint committee. The University will be deep-cleaned before the phased-in return of staff next Wednesday, 20 May 2020. Periodically, there will be disinfection, depending on the buildings and spaces that the few staff members (and perhaps some students) who would have returned, would be exposed to. Sanitisation processes will continue at both the individual and institutional levels.

Our Faculty of Applied Sciences is hard at work producing many litres of sanitisers. Management applauds the relevant members who have sacrificed so much to produce sanitisers for our needs and those of the communities we would wish to support.

## **6. LEAVE PROTOCOL FOR EXTENDED LOCKDOWN PERIOD**

Decisions on leave are not part of Management's prerogative. While the current arrangement – of exchanging leave days for salary payments worked relatively well during the period to the end of April, there is a serious challenge now. A number of staff members no longer have any leave to exchange for salary payments as of this month of May.

The EXCO of Council will be meeting next week to receive Management and Union proposals on the best way to treat leave at DUT for May and going forward. Staff will be updated about the decision related to the May (and the other months, as the case may be) leave protocol, as a result of the extended lockdown period which was announced by the President. In the interregnum, all staff will receive their salaries on 20 May as we all wait in anticipation for EXCO's decision. This notwithstanding, serious implications for everyone going into the year 2021 and further are unavoidable.

## **7. STAFF SCREENING, FACE MASKS AND PPE**

All staff, during the phased-in return to campus, will be screened upon entering University property. The screening will take place at appointed entry gates. We urge all colleagues to be patient and to assist our screening staff on campus. Sanitizers will also be used when staff enter campus.

Staff are reminded that the long-term use of a face mask is compulsory. If you have disposable ones, please make sure you bring an adequate supply for the time you will be at the university. Please wear your face mask when leaving your place of residence. Colleagues without a face mask will not be allowed to enter campus. In emergency situations, the University may provide face masks to affected staff, only in order to deal with such an emergency that may require use of a different type of mask. Relevant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be provided to categories of staff, as will be deemed necessary and appropriate.

A number of faculties have been involved in producing PPEs, including Engineering and the Built Environment and Accounting and Informatics, courtesy our new Luban Workshop (just launched on 16 December 2019) and the Plastics Technology Station. The Faculty of Arts and Design, through the Fashion Design department, has produced hundreds of masks for internal and external use.

## **8. DUT SOLIDARITY FUND**



We remain extremely grateful to those who have already generously donated to the DUT Covid-19 Solidarity Fund. The University values and appreciates your kind support.

We remind all staff and students that you can still make a donation to our Solidarity Fund, by visiting the DUT website or by clicking on this link: <https://www.dutalumni.com/dutcovid-19>.

## **9. COVID-19 PROJECTS**

We are thankful to our colleagues and students who are working on several key projects under the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Innovation and Research, Professor Sibusiso Moyo. This includes the team at the Urban Futures Centre, the Luban Workshop, the Drones team, amongst others. As noted above, the University also acknowledges the team from the Faculty of Applied Sciences who have produced sanitizers and the team from the Faculty of Arts and Design working on masks and the photographic project. We also appreciate the efforts of the Data Analysis team

at DUT, who have produced a web-based data resource for Covid-19 statistics. This will be available on the DUT Covid-19 webpage: <https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Covid-Hyperlink-v3.1.pdf>

## 10. CONCLUSION

Over the last seven weeks, our colleagues who were working remotely from home, have invested their time and energy in developing plans that will result in the return of University operations once the regulations allow. We want to thank our colleagues for their hard work and contribution during the national lockdown. This commitment and dedication illustrates that ENVISION 2030 is alive and well at DUT.

Finally, as you know, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed our world and DUT will need the support of all staff and students, as we work together, to ensure a safe and healthy campus environment. Please continue to observe the guidelines of the national lockdown and take the necessary precautions to protect yourself and your loved ones.

Sincerely

DUT Management Team

