

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

29 May 2020

Dear staff and students

UPDATE ON UNIVERSITY OPERATIONS

On Monday, 1 June, South Africa will move to Alert Level 3 of the national lockdown, in relation to the current “State of Disaster” due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Globally, at the time of writing, close to six million people have been infected with the coronavirus and sadly, more than 362000 people have tragically passed on.

The relaxation of our alert level does not mean that we have won the war against COVID-19. Therefore, we urge you to still take all of the necessary health precautions and to observe the recommended physical distancing rules, wear a face mask whenever you leave your place of residence, wash your hands regularly, sanitize frequently touched surfaces and importantly, you must remember that when you need to cough, sneeze or yawn, only do so into your forearm, elbow or use a disposable tissue. We all need to work together to beat COVID-19 and to save lives.

Yesterday, the DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team circulated a statement to you, regarding the mandatory use of the **HealthCheck** screening tool. We remind you that all staff and students who will be accessing our campus, must use the screening tool before they enter university property.

Please click on this link to read the HealthCheck announcement:

<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/HealthCheck-Communique-Thursday-28-May-2020.pdf>

Fellow staff and students, Management is not oblivious to the many questions that you, and stakeholders, too, have about this or that aspect of our COVID-19 response and preparedness. As our Minister effectively said during his 30 April address: *Amanzi azwiwa ngobhoko, bakwethu* (fellow brethren, you use a stick to test the depth of the river waters you are crossing). Further, when a group wishes to cross a swollen river, it is the strongest that first test the depth of the waters and the strength of the river current. Members of the group that are likely to struggle to cross would be steadied along and across by the stronger ones. *Akuvele kuthiwe: hhubhu, sizowela kanye kanye* (no one insists the entire group must cross all at once). Thus, those who are of the view that before we start we must have dotted all the I's and crossed all the T's certainly live in some Utopia that, if it ever existed, COVID-19 swept it away long ago.

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 university operations as we prepare for Alert Level 3 from Monday 1 June 2020.

I. SCREENING PROTOCOLS

Please note that COVID-19 screening, using the screening tool (highlighted above) before you enter campus, is compulsory. This will require honest responses from all staff and students when completing the screening process. Earlier this week, a staff member had allegedly lied about his COVID-19 status during the screening process when he entered campus. This behaviour was not only criminal and selfish but it has compromised the health and safety of the University community.

Honesty and **Integrity** are key values of **ENVISION 2030** and we urge all staff and students to behave responsibly, to act with integrity and if you are COVID-19 positive, to remain isolated or seek medical assistance. The University will be investigating this incident and if required, we will be taking the necessary disciplinary action against the staff member who has seemingly violated the law, intentionally lied about his COVID-19 status and selfishly comprised the health and safety of his colleagues.

2. PHASED RETURN OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the 2020 academic year. In a statement on the implementation of measures by the Post School Education Sector (PSET) in response to the COVID-19 outbreak on Saturday 23 May 2020, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Dr B.E. Nzimande, announced that teaching and learning (T&L) in higher education institutions will resume on 1 June 2020. Under Alert Level 3, a maximum of 33% of the student population will be allowed to return to our campuses, delivery sites and residences - on condition that they can be safely accommodated and supported, in line with the health and safety protocols as directed by the Department. This will include the following cohorts:

- Students in all years of study that require clinical training in their programmes (provided that the clinical training platforms have sufficient space and can accommodate them while adhering to the safety protocols).
- Students in the final year of their programmes, who are on a path to graduating in 2020 may return.
- Final year students who require access to laboratories, technical equipment, data, connectivity and access to residence and private accommodation should return.
- Postgraduate (PG) students who require laboratory equipment and other technical equipment to undertake their studies.

- As from 1 June, DUT will begin to offer multi-modal teaching and learning (T&L) across all levels of study. It is anticipated that by this time, students will have the devices and data. If not, low-tech mode of teaching will be used for T&L. This will also include provision of print material and USBs with loaded learning material to students who will have challenges in accessing online T&L. Each faculty will develop a detailed plan for multi-modal T&L.
- On 5 June, residences will receive students across all levels of study that require clinical training in their programmes. Residences will accommodate students who are registered for residence accommodation. On 8 June, the university will resume blended T&L for all students across all levels of study that require clinical training in their programmes (Faculty of Health Sciences ONLY).
- As from 12-16 June, residences will begin to receive the other three categories of students as listed above. Blended T&L will resume on 17 June 2020.

NB: Students MUST refer to the list of modules that will be offered on our campuses in June, with the rest remaining in the blended/multi-modal mode. Only students who fall within the category of cohorts and listed modules will be expected to be on our campuses. All students MUST complete the HealthCheck App BEFORE arrival, to allow the security, nursing, residence advisors and other support personnel to ensure that only those students eligible to return are allowed on campuses. A *communiqué* regarding permits for travel will soon be communicated to students to be eligible to return to campus. Please click on this link to see the list of modules that will be offered in June:

<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/PROGRAMMES-FOR-PHASED-IN-RETURN-OF-STUDENTS-ON-17-JUNE-2020.htm>

3. REVISED UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

On 15 May 2020, we updated you on the revised academic calendar. As previously indicated, given the 'business unusual' circumstances that we find ourselves in, we must gird our loins for many sacrifices that COVID-19 will force on all of us, including losing some vacation time and working till late in December. The amended 2020 academic calendar is in line with the Minister's announcement on 30 April 2020. Here is the link to the revised academic calendar:

<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Amended-DUT-Academic-Calendar-Commencing-01-June-2020.pdf>

4. DATA AND DEVICES

DHET and the university are working with Telkom, MTN, Vodacom and CellC to provide students with data so that they can use it for their online modules. MTN has started to provision the data to MTN subscribers. The university is liaising with Telkom, Vodacom and CellC to start provisioning data once the logistics have been finalized. The initial

idea was for a starter-pack that costs R99 to be purchased by non-MTN subscribers, in order to avoid roaming charges for non-MTN subscribers. However, some people wrongly interpreted this to be an attempt to drive subscribers away from other network providers. Partly as a result, that idea has been set aside in favour of negotiations with the Telkom, Vodacom and CellC, to directly provide data to their subscribers to avoid the extra roaming charges.

The negotiations have already commenced. The hope is that all students who have updated their cell phone numbers on the iEnabler system, will be provisioned with data early next week. Students are once again encouraged to update their cell phone numbers so that they can receive the data. There are currently 584 cell phone numbers for students that are either incorrect or inactive. If these students do not update their cell phone numbers, then they will miss out on the data provision.

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

- 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

Kindly note that it is your responsibility to ensure that your contact details are updated on the system.



5. STAFF LEAVE PROTOCOLS

The leave protocols with various categories of staff, are detailed in the document “*Staff Protocols and Guidelines for Phased Integration*” - which can be viewed on the DUT Staff Portal. The specific guidelines with respect to staff who are classified as “at risk” - including those who are 60 years and above; and colleagues with identified comorbidities, are also posted onto the staff portal. Of particular note, as related to these staff, is a special appeal for remote-working whenever work could be done in that way.

In the event that such staff cannot work remotely and cannot work on campus due to the nature of their role, once confirmation of their status has been received, such staff could be considered for application of temporary incapacity, through Human Resources Employee Wellness. The alternate arrangement would be an application via the UIF Temporary Employee Relief Scheme, whilst on leave.

Colleagues can click on this link to view the documents on the DUT Staff Portal or access the Staff Portal in the regular manner in order to get detailed information:

<http://staffportal/HR%20LOCKDOWN%20PROTOCOLS/Forms/AllItems.aspx>

6. VIRTUAL GRADUATION CEREMONY

Due to the current restrictions on mass gatherings and events, the University will be hosting a virtual graduation ceremony on Wednesday, 10 June 2020 at 12H00. The virtual graduation will be streamed online *via* the DUT website. The names of all graduates will be printed on the graduation roll, which will be posted onto the DUT website it will also be published in the newspapers. We congratulate all of our students who will be graduating next month.

We are all extremely sad that COVID-19 has made it impossible for our graduates, their parents, guardians and sponsors to enjoy the day in the manner we are all used to. In a world that has been turned upside down, graduation ceremonies cannot be expected to remain the way they used to be.

Faculty Offices will contact graduates with details of the delivery of their qualifications to them, via a courier service.

7. DUT SOLIDARITY FUND

We are very grateful to those who have already donated to the DUT COVID-19 Solidarity Fund. The University truly values and appreciates your kind and generous 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>

8. USEFUL COVID-19 RELATED DOCUMENTATION

On 6 March 2020, we launched our COVID-19 webpage on the DUT website. This page is an archive of our coronavirus updates for the last three months. You can also find the various University Statements and related documentation that we have posted on the website. Please continue to monitor this page for past and future COVID-19 related information. You can access the page via this link:

<https://www.dut.ac.za/coronavirus/>

9. CONCLUSION

Thank you for your continued support and understanding as we navigate these very challenging times. Please remember that you must adopt all of the published health guidelines to protect yourself and your loved ones. The health and safety of the DUT community must come first. Secondly, under the current Level 3 lockdown guidelines, we are preparing for the resumption of the academic programme and we are working towards a phased return of specific students (a maximum of 33% of total student population), in identified courses, from 17 June 2020.

We, therefore, advise students who are not registered for the prioritised programmes in the published list **NOT** to arrive on campus next Monday 1 June 2020, or anytime in June, or later, until they have been invited. The University will not take any responsibility if they arrive uninvited. We may even be forced to take disciplinary action against them if they attempt to gain unauthorized access to the University. The University will advise all students about the relevant protocols and processes that need to be followed in the days ahead. We will clarify the courses and identify the groups of students who will be part of the 33% who will be returning to campus from 17 June 2020. Please continue to monitor your University email accounts for further updates.

Finally, we remind all staff and students to please use the HealthCheck screening tool before entering University property and to always use their face masks when leaving their place of residence.

Stay safe...

Sincerely

DUT Management Team


DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
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