

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

11 March 2021

Dear staff and students

2021 REGISTRATION, REVISED DUT ACADEMIC CALENDAR and IMPLICATIONS OF LOCKDOWN LEVEL 1 ON DUT OPERATIONS

Let us take this opportunity to welcome you all to the 2021 Academic Year. A special welcome to all our first time entry (FTEN) students. We wish you well in your academic career with DUT.

Yesterday, the Executive Management Committee (EMC) and the Senate Executive Committee (Senex) convened a joint meeting to discuss matters related to student registration and the revised 2021 academic calendar. The meeting also received reports from a task team of the Enrolment Planning and Management Committee, the Registry and the DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team.

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REGISTRATION PROCESS

The University is concerned about the lower than expected number of students registered so far. Whilst a number of returning students have successfully completed the online registration process, the registration numbers for FTEN students is below the projected levels.

The University reminds all FTEN students who may be experiencing challenges related to online registration to report them to the Department of Student Admissions on **0313735005**. Alternatively, you can contact Student Admissions via WhatsApp using one of these numbers: **0834451282, 0834460459, 0834541495, 0834543477, 0834516751 or 0834413766**. First year students can email: 1styrstudentreg@dut.ac.za and visit the DUT website for guidance related to online off-campus registration: https://www.dut.ac.za/student_portal/student_registration/. On the merits of their declared challenges, the relevant university officers will grant permits to those students who will then gain access to registration facilities. As a result of COVID-19 restrictions and protocols DUT will not allow any unannounced visits and access, without permits having been granted in advance.

DUT will not be accepting walk-ins, since applications for admission in 2021 closed last year. Those students who will be granted permits to access registration facilities will need to adhere to the COVID-19 public health guidelines. These include compulsory use of face masks, observing social and physical distancing guidelines and using the HealthCheck online screening form <https://healthcheck.higherhealth.ac.za> before arriving on campus.

Another important challenge is with regard to financial clearance, an important precursor to registration. The DUT Finance Department and the Financial Aid Department are both working diligently to help expedite the process of unblocking qualifying, returning students.

The University had previously submitted the entire list of FTEN students to NSFAS, seeking feedback on the confirmation status of the applicants who require funding support. As has been the case since about 2018, the University can only allow students to register once their funding status has been confirmed by NSFAS. With regard to returning students, all returning and qualifying NSFAS funded students (based on assessment of their eligibility for further NSFAS funding in 2021) will be unblocked, irrespective of whether they have fees outstanding as a result of non-payment by NSFAS.

EXTENSION OF REGISTRATION DATES



The Minister of Higher Education, Training, Science and Innovation, and NSFAS, have made announcements about the shortfall in NSFAS funds. Unfortunately, this shortfall has a serious impact on the pace of confirmation of NSFAS funding for qualifying first time entry (FTEN) students. In turn, this has a domino effect on the pace of registration, especially that of this category of students as we all wait for our Minister and government to provide the funds. Those applicants who may be affected by this, will not forfeit their firm offer as a result of the NSFAS delay.

Due to the registration challenges explained above, EMC and Senex approved the proposal to extend the current registration period by two weeks, to now end on 26 March 2021.

AMENDMENTS TO THE REVISED 2021 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

The meeting agreed on the following amendments:

1. Lectures for annual and first semester programmes will commence on 29 March 2021.
2. The 4th term will be extended by four days, from 20 December 2021 to 24 December 2021.

3. The closure of the University has now been extended by a week, from 17 December 2021 to 24 December 2021.

EMC and Senex approved a revised 2021 academic calendar. This revised calendar will be shared with all staff and students, via the DUT PinBoard (staff) and DUT4life (students) email accounts.

CAMPUS ACCESS FOR STUDENT ORIENTATION (FTEN STUDENTS)

The DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team advised that the current regulations limit the maximum amount to 100 people for an indoor gathering (or 50% of the maximum capacity of the venue), or 250 people, for outside gatherings.

During the first Lockdown Level 1 period that started around October 2020, EMC/Senex determined that teaching-learning and work by staff would continue mainly online except for laboratory and practical sessions and frontline services. Given this year's return to Lockdown Level 1, there is thus, no need for any new, let alone relaxed, protocols in this regard.

There is a need for practical orientation sessions for FTEN students who would otherwise not get to know where Student Services is and where the libraries are located, for example. Thus, the long-planned practical orientation sessions have been approved, provided all COVID-19 public health restrictions and protocols are adhered to, including the ones mentioned in the first paragraph of this section just above.

WORK INTEGRATED LEARNING (WIL)

WIL placement of some qualifying students is a challenge for various reasons. It must be remembered that WIL is not funded by government, let alone DUT. A number of our students receive financial support for WIL from organisations and companies they enrol with. Some others receive financial support from SETAs. But, there are some students who struggle to receive financial support for this important part of our curriculum.

While government and DUT do not really fund WIL, DUT's Co-Operative Education Department has some limited funding available to assist with stipends. This funding is only for those students deemed to qualify and for whom there is certainty that they are not receiving funding anywhere else. We must emphasise that this source of funding is very limited and will not cater for all of those in need. It must not be misconstrued as constituting a right, on demand. For this limited assistance and further advice, we urge all affected students to contact the Co-Operative Education Department.

DUT COVID-19 RESPONSE

There has been a significant decrease in the infection rate in our country. However, the COVID-19 Response Task Team has noted the potential threat of new variants of COVID-19, the imminent flu season and the onset of the expected third wave as we get closer to winter. The fact that yesterday over 1400 new infections were recorded together with over 100 deaths tells the story of COVID-19 being very much still with us. It is for these reasons that we cannot relax any of our COVID-19 Lockdown Level 1 protocols that we put in place in October 2020; just as yet.

All staff and students are reminded that we have a shared responsibility to limit the further spread of COVID-19. Therefore, we need to act responsibly at all times and we cannot lower our guard. The reality is that we must avoid turning DUT into a super-spreader. Please be reminded that South Africa is still firmly in a “State of National Disaster” and all relevant protocols and regulations must be consistently followed.

FINANCE, TECHNOLOGY AND DATA RELATED GLITCHES

The unfortunate technical glitches experienced with regard to financial clearance were related to a system problem between the banks and the DUT ITS system. We are pleased to advise that ITS has now resolved the interface glitches. Students who had made payment prior to the glitches being resolved, will be processed manually.

There remain technology related challenges with data provision. While some students and staff receive data on the expected dates, some do not as a result of systems their network providers use to distribute data. Various solutions will be explored in this regard to resolve this long standing problem once and for all. We hope the University community will cooperate as we implement them.

CONCLUSION

Once again, the University welcomes all FTEN students to DUT. We also wish all of our students a successful 2021 academic year. The University thanks all staff who continue to live the values and principles of ENVISION2030 and who strive to improve lives and livelihoods.

We hope that the entire DUT community has a safe and successful 2021. Please continue to adhere to the COVID-19 protocols and do everything in your ability to prevent the spread of the disease. Wear your mask, wash your hands, avoid gathering in groups and please observe social and physical distancing guidelines.

Sincerely

DUT Management team

