

## UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

12 June 2020

Dear staff and students

### UPDATE ON UNIVERSITY OPERATIONS

Today is exactly 100 days since the first COVID-19 patient returned to South Africa following a trip to Italy. Two days later, a man from Hilton in KwaZulu-Natal was confirmed as South Africa's first case of COVID-19. And our world has truly changed in these last 100 days.

South Africa has seen a major increase in coronavirus infections and yesterday, the Minister of Health confirmed that we now have a total of 58568 cases in our country. This was an increase of 3147 cases in 24 hours. Sadly, 1284 people have tragically passed on as a result of COVID-19. On a positive note, 33252 people have thankfully recovered. South Africa has tested a total of 1 028 399 people. A month ago, on 11 May 2020, we had 10652 COVID-19 cases in the country and unfortunately, 206 people had passed on at the time. This illustrates 47916 infections and 1078 fatalities in the last month. The bottom line is that COVID-19 remains a very highly infectious disease and it is still a massive threat to our health and well-being.

We continue to urge all staff and students to wear a face mask, to observe physical distancing guidelines and to sanitize hands and frequently touched areas regularly. Please ensure that you wear your face mask whenever you leave your place of residence. No person will be allowed access to University property without a face mask and the use of a face mask is compulsory at all times whilst on campus or in residence.

We also remind all staff and students who will be accessing our campus, to please use the HealthCheck COVID-19 screening tool **before** they enter university property. It is compulsory for all staff and students to be screened before entering campus. Please click on this link to read the HealthCheck announcement:

[HealthCheck-Communique](#)

It must be placed on record that the University will not tolerate any violation of our screening protocols. Failure to adhere to the University screening process and to advise our health professionals at the entry point that they are COVID-19 symptomatic, will lead to very quick and appropriate disciplinary action.

Currently, we are dealing with a case against a staff member, who had lied about his COVID-19 status and yesterday, a student entered University property and violated the screening protocols. Both of these acts have the potential to cause immense harm to others and the University will be taking disciplinary action against the individuals. The reality is that we cannot compromise the health and safety of the University community to the comfort of self-centred individuals. Please share the responsibility to strictly follow the screening protocols and the published COVID-19 guidelines.

Earlier today, there was a joint meeting of the Executive Management Committee (EMC), Executive Committee of Senate (Senex) and some members of the DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team, to discuss University operations. We would like to update you on the following.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES, LEAVE PROVISION AND REMOTE WORKING**

The meeting noted the current submissions with UIF Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) as the first point of assisting staff who are currently not working. Further consideration with respect to how they could be paid during the period of lockdown, will be subject to approval by the Executive Committee of Council. Record keeping for staff who are working remotely, is currently being revised. The envisaged process will entail staff completing their application for on-duty leave. Finalisation of the category relating to remote-working will be done under the existing on-duty leave stipulations. A form will have to accompany the submission and attached as evidence of the period of working remotely. HR will be developing this form.

## **RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

The COVID-19 epidemic has upended the Higher Education sector across South Africa and the world. It has disrupted the manner in which the university offers both undergraduate and postgraduate education and training.

At DUT, postgraduate activities have also been somewhat curtailed, due to the data restrictions, network connectivity and a lack of access to specialised laboratory equipment and facilities during the initial lockdown level 4, and remains at lockdown level 3.

The EMC/Senex meeting noted the communication from the Council on Higher Education (CHE) to institutions with respect to the National Doctoral Review for DUT, which will occur as scheduled, during 3-8 August 2020, using the remote audit methodology and approach proposed by the CHE.

The CHE was commissioned in 2018 by the National Research Foundation (NRF) to conduct audits of Doctoral qualifications. Specifically, the CHE was requested to establish the value, impact, efficacy and integrity of Doctoral degree provisioning across the Higher Education sector. In early 2019, the CHE released the framework, manuals and templates to guide preparation for the National Doctoral Review and to provide information on each facet of the rationale for the audits and the audit process.

The guidelines and documentation were supplemented by regional workshops held by the CHE and ongoing opportunities for discussion and engagement with the National Reviews sub directorate of the CHE. A final DUT Self-Evaluation Report was completed and submitted to the CHE via the CQPA on 30 March 2020. On the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 2020, the CHE informed DUT that the Doctoral Review for the institution was scheduled for 3-6 August. It must be noted that at that stage, all significant aspects of the audit were to be conducted on site at DUT campuses and DUT accepted the stipulated dates provided by the CHE.

However, due to COVID-19, the CHE has informed DUT that this audit will continue using the remote methodology with its associated challenges around not having site visits to facilities, laboratory spaces and equipment and interacting with various staff and students on a face-to face basis. Arrangements will be made following the COVID-19 protocols, should site visits be reconsidered by the CHE.



## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Students can access our multi-modal learning webpage, which has important information that was shared by the DUT Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching:

<https://www.dut.ac.za/getting-started-with-multi-modal-learning-during-covid-19-pandemic/>

You can view the programme list for DUT courses resuming in June, by clicking this link:

[PROGRAMMES-FOR-PHASED-IN-RETURN-OF-STUDENTS](#)

**Only students who have been invited to return to campus should arrive on Monday.** It is important that students who are not asked to return to campus stay at their places of residence, until they have been notified to return and have been issued with relevant permits.

No deviations from this will be allowed. In other words, if any student just pitches up uninvited and without a permit, they will not be allowed to enter the University or any residence; no matter how far they come.

## **DATA AND DEVICES**

The Mobile Network Operators (MNOs) have provisioned students with data onto their cell numbers. However, there were students who have since reported that they did not receive the data. One of the reasons is that the students may have changed or updated their cell phone numbers after 12 May 2020, when the list of registered students and cell phone numbers was extracted from the ITS system.

The ITS system has been reopened from June 10 – June 12, 2020 so that students can update their cell phones numbers if necessary. Another list will be extracted on 15 June 2020 and students who have already been provisioned with data for June, will be removed from the list and a new list for remaining students will be submitted to the MNOs for data provisioning. Any failures to load data will have to be handled by the student and their MNO.

Staff have also been provisioned with data by their MNOs. Cell © is still loading data for staff and hopefully that will be concluded today. Mobile Wi-Fi (Mi-Fi) devices have been delivered to DUT Stores. The Assets Management team is busy tagging the Mi-Fi devices as DUT property. The distribution of Mi-Fi devices to staff who requested one, will commence on Monday, 15 June 2020.

The Minister of the Department of Higher Education, Dr Blade Nzimande has publicly stated that the laptops for qualifying students will be handled in a centralized manner. He stated that more information will be provided in two to three weeks.

## **CAMPUS ACCESS CONTROL**

The University is currently finalising the electronic accreditation system, which will be used to grant access to students and staff who are permitted to be on campus, under level 3 lockdown. In this regard, Protection Services will be issuing accreditation cards from Monday 15 June 2020.

Students who have been issued with permits are requested to take their permits to Protection Services, in order to obtain the accreditation card. Staff who have been issued with permits to return back to campus, should also bring along their permits to Protection Services from Monday 15 June 2020, in order to obtain their accreditation cards. Staff and students who do not have accreditation cards will not be granted access onto our campuses.

## **SANITIZATION AND DEEP CLEANING**

Deep cleaning in all of our residences, as well as in lecture venues, has now been completed. We are proceeding with the routine, daily disinfection of our facilities, that are currently in use. With regard to outsourced residences, the University has received assurances from the landlords that they will comply with the COVID-19 health and safety requirements. To ensure uniformity, detailed cleaning procedures and specification for detergents have been forwarded to all of the landlords.

## **STUDENT SERVICES AND RESIDENCES**

In response to the phased return of 33% of the total student enrolment, Student Housing, in partnership with other relevant role players, have ensured that our in-sourced residences are ready to receive our returning students who are registered for residences. DUT leased residences will be ready to receive students from Monday 15 June 2020, as they are currently being deep cleaned to ensure COVID-19 compliance. Eligible returning students, as per the widely published designated fields and levels of study, are expected to produce faculty-issued permits and accreditation cards before being allowed access to residences.

This is in line with the Minister's directive that only students invited by universities/faculties may return to campuses. No student will be allowed access to residences without the necessary accreditation, in the form of a permit to return and a relevant accreditation card.



Our Student Health and Counselling Unit, as well as our Disability Unit, are currently assessing an additional cohort of students deemed vulnerable and living with disabilities, who are not necessarily within the first 33% designated to return. Once permits have been generated for this cohort, they may return as from Monday 22 June 2020 to continue with multi-modal learning, from the comfort of their residences. Students with comorbidities that could potentially compromise their well-being are advised to remain at home.

However, these students should continue to liaise with Student Health and Counselling via online counselling platforms to ensure the necessary psycho-social support. Should a need arise to do so, Student Health and Counselling will also facilitate further academic support in liaison with the Faculties and the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT), for those students who may not be able to return during Lockdown Alert Levels 3 & 2, due to comorbidities that could endanger their well-being.

## **DUT SOLIDARITY FUND**

We remain extremely grateful to those who have already donated to the DUT COVID-19 Solidarity Fund. Our University 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>

## **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 that we have posted on the website. Please continue to monitor this page for future COVID-19 related information. You can access the relevant webpage page via this link:

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

## **CONCLUSION**

On Wednesday this week, we hosted our first ever virtual graduation ceremony. This was in response to lockdown restrictions on public events and gatherings, which prevented us from staging a traditional graduation ceremony. We were honoured to have had our Chancellor, Madam Nonkululeko Nyembezi officiate at the virtual graduation event. The University would like to congratulate all graduates and wish them continued success in the years ahead. We are also very thankful to our staff, who worked hard and invested their time and energy to make the DUT 2020 Virtual Graduation ceremony a success.

For those who missed the ceremony, please click on the link to view the 13 minute virtual graduation ceremony:

[DUT 2020 Virtual Graduation Ceremony](#)

Please remember to follow the screening protocols and use the HealthCheck screening online form before you arrive on campus. And if you are feeling sick, please rather seek medical assistance and do not visit the University.

Finally, whilst we are welcoming an increased number of students onto campus from next week, we remind our student body that you should only arrive on campus once your Faculty/Department has invited you to attend. Please do not arrive on campus without a permit and an invitation to return from the University.

**Stay safe. Wear a mask. Stay put. Save lives...**

Sincerely

DUT Management Team



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY  
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