

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

28 August 2020

Dear staff and students

DUT Lockdown Level 2 update

The University is extremely grateful to all staff and students for their unwavering support during these unprecedented times. We realize that everybody has had to adjust to a new normal, as the global pandemic disrupted our lives. The success of our efforts to date, illustrates the relevancy of our values and principles as espoused in ENVISION 2030. Thank you for living these values and for promoting our principles.

Earlier this morning, a joint meeting between the Executive Management Committee and the Executive Committee of Senate was held to finalize our plans for Lockdown Level 2, as per the recently published guidelines in the Government Gazette.

RETURN OF STAFF AND STUDENTS IN LINE WITH LOCKDOWN LEVEL 2 OF THE RISK ADJUSTED STRATEGY

For all staff and student returns, the University's carrying capacity under COVID-19 related health and safety protocols (e.g. social/physical distancing), must be taken into consideration. Therefore, there should be no demands that this or that number of staff or students must return, regardless of what the protocols dictate Management should allow.

CRITERIA FOR STUDENT RETURNS

Following the pronouncement by the President of Lockdown Level 2, a maximum of 66% of the student population will return to campus for teaching, learning and assessment, still in the blended mode, in line with the following criteria:

- All groups that have already returned or had been prioritised to return in Level 3 but could not be accommodated, due the maximum campus carrying capacity having been reached;
- Students in all years of study who require laboratory and technical equipment to complete the academic year;

- Students in all years of study who require practical placements/experiential learning/workplace-based learning, to complete the academic year (provided the workplaces and platforms are open and prepared).
- First year students in all undergraduate programmes.

CRITERIA FOR STAFF RETURNS

To cater for the maximum of 66% of student returns, the following criteria, in order of prioritization, have been agreed for staff returns:

a. Essential services

Staff who would, in line with the principles laid down by the Presidential Statement (such as in laboratories, essential financial and payment services, health care providers, security services, IT) be provided with permission to undertake work on campus, provided that strict adherence to health and safety measures be followed.

b. Academic continuity support

This category refers to staff who are compelled to return to campus to facilitate and support the continuity of student services and/or completion of the academic year. This includes: -

- Laboratory and technical equipment resources on campus
- Practical placements/experiential learning/workplace-based learning

c. Residence advisors/student support

This category of staff refers to staff who are responsible for student support in student residences/accommodation, that would be required to ensure the following:

- Ensuring that the necessary protocols are adhered to by students, including social distancing, residential access and hygiene promotion.
- This also includes staff who are provisioning/facilitating emotional support to students, in their “home away from home.”

d. Fully Remote Working Arrangement

This is the category of staff who have been working remotely since June, having been resourced to do so by way of data provisioning and desktop/laptop transfers to their homes. It combines mission-critical and frontline categories.

e. Partial Remote Working Arrangement

This category of staff generally are able to work remotely, however, from time to time, may be required to be on campus, on a rotational basis. This group of staff will include those facilitating first year students. It should be noted that in some instances, the academic programme for first year students may be online, which could be done from student residences, as opposed to physically on campus, thereby, keeping the staff who support this academic programme, who should return to campus, to a minimal level.

f. Vulnerable Employees

This category of staff must remain off campus, however, as far as possible, be encouraged and supported in working remotely. In the event that they cannot work at all, the normal leave, sick leave or temporary boarding, must be considered.

STUDENT RESIDENCES

In-residence students, who will be returning as part of the group allowed, in terms of the Level 2 guidelines, can access their residential accommodation from 04 September to 06 September 2020. The Student Services Department and Student Housing will issue more details early next week. Students who qualify for residential accommodation must continue to monitor their DUT4life email accounts.

TEACHING & LEARNING

The extra 33% of students who will be invited to return to campus will join the 33% group who were allowed under Level 3. This takes the student population to a maximum of 66%, as per the Level 2 guidelines that were recently published in the Government Gazette. This increased group of students will resume their on-campus, academic programmes on 07 September 2020.

A total of 13 571 students, additional to the about 9500 allowed at Level 3, have been **proposed** by the Faculties for the Level 2 return. But, at over 23 000, these two groups combined, exceed the 66%, which is 21 780. Further, the carrying capacity of residences and lecture halls still has to be factored in; which will inevitably result in the additional number of 13 751 being reduced.

The university will continue to offer blended or multi-modal T&L across all other levels of study. During level 3, almost 90% of students actively participated in online teaching and learning. Further details will be provided to all students and staff early next week regarding the final number of students and staff that will return in line with the criteria stated above.

DEVICES AND DATA FOR NSFAS FUNDED STUDENTS AND STAFF

As per the Minister's announcement earlier this week, NSFAS is finalizing the procurement of devices for qualifying students. The agreement for the devices will be between NSFAS and the NSFAS funded students, with the University playing its facilitative role on behalf of NSFAS and DHET. It is anticipated that by the 07 September 2020, NSFAS funded students will have the devices as committed to by the Minister. If not, low-tech mode of teaching will continue to 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.

Eligible staff and students were provided with data for a period of three months. Given that students who have returned will have access to the WiFi network – which will be beefed up with 300 additional access points on our campuses – there is no need to continue to provide data for the returned students. Given that one or another form of online learning will continue even for students who have returned, arrangements will be made for staff data in accordance with the categories provided above. Further details will be provided to all students and staff early next week regarding students and staff who will continue to be eligible for university provided data.

AMENDED ACADEMIC CALENDAR – 2020

The Registrar's Office has revised the 2020 Academic Calendar. This includes term dates, examination dates, a date for the Spring virtual graduation ceremony and dates for the commencement of the 2021 academic programme. Please click on this link to view the amended academic calendar:

<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Senate-revised-amended-academic-calendar-2020.pdf>

CONCLUSION

We remind all students and staff that whilst the Lockdown Level may have eased, COVID-19 is still a cause for concern. Therefore, we urge you to continue taking strict precautions to protect yourself by wearing a cloth face mask, wash your hands regularly with water and soap, consider using a 70% alcohol-based hand sanitizer, disinfect frequently touched surface areas, practice social and physical distancing and do not gather in groups.

The use of a face mask is compulsory at all times whilst you are on campus or in public areas in residence. Security staff have been instructed to enforce this rule and any person who refuses to wear a mask, will be removed from the University property. *All staff and students must use the HealthCheck online form before they enter campus.*

Here is the link to the HealthCheck online form:

<https://healthcheck.higherhealth.ac.za/login/?next=/>

If you cannot access the online form, manual screening will be available however, this could delay your entry onto campus.

We all have a responsibility to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. So please, play your part and let's keep the DUT community safe.

Sincerely



DUT Management team