

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

06 January 2021

Dear staff and students

IMPLICATIONS OF LOCKDOWN LEVEL 3 ON DUT'S OPERATIONS

Earlier today, members of the Executive Management Committee (EMC) and the Senate Executive Committee (Senex) met to discuss and assess matters related to the recently imposed Lockdown Level 3 restrictions in the national State of Disaster.

The University is extremely concerned by the high rate of infection and the increasing number of fatalities, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage our province and our country. Sadly, members of the DUT community have recently passed on and some have also lost their loved ones to the pandemic. The University conveys its most sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who have departed. May their souls rest in peace!

BACK TO CAMPUS: TEACHING AND LEARNING PLANS

A total of 8709 students still require access to campus for practical assessments and laboratory work to complete the 2020 academic year. This is 25.6% of the student body. This is the only group of students who will be issued special permits to access relevant campuses, buildings and facilities. The rest of the students must stay where they are or at their homes.

According to the Amended DUT Academic Calendar, the second semester of the 2020 academic year will end on Friday, 15 January 2021, followed by relevant semester assessments to be completed by Friday, 29 January 2021. All students in this group will be supported through remote, multimodal teaching and learning and assessment, until they complete the second semester next Friday.

As noted above, only those students who require specific access for purposes as listed below will be allowed to be on campus to complete the 2020 academic year. This includes those who need to complete:

1. Practical work.
2. Laboratory work.
3. Students who are working with the DUT Wellness Centre, who required specific support to overcome individual difficulties that were declared last year.

To reiterate, students who are in these categories will be granted special permits for access to relevant campuses, buildings and facilities, provided that they follow the public health guidelines related to COVID-19. All staff and students must wear a face mask at all times. The remaining students who do not require direct academic engagement and who are not in one of the three afore-mentioned categories, must remain at their own places of residence (e.g. homes) and should not return to campus, until further notice. Students who require clarity are urged to contact their relevant academic department for advice.

It must be noted that the latest COVID-19 regulations accord the responsibility for wearing masks on each and every individual. As much as the University may assist with spare masks when there are emergencies, it must be understood that staff, students and visitors will be wearing masks from wherever they will be coming. The university community is, therefore, reminded that it's a reportable and prosecutable criminal offence, and a misconduct, too, not to have a mask on at any place at the university.

THE REVISED UNIVERSITY CALENDAR REMAINS UNCHANGED

The Lockdown Level 3 restrictions do not impact further on the DUT Academic Calendar for 2020 and 2021. Therefore, at this stage, there is no change to the revised academic calendar that was published and previously circulated. The second semester final exam dates are scheduled to take place between 18 January 2021 to 29 January 2021. As noted, some modules under the categories as listed above require physical assessments to conclude the academic programme. Venues and laboratories where such assessments will take place will be sanitized in advance and social distancing measures will be in place.

DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
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With regards to 2021 registration, all new and returning students must ALL register online. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the high level of infections in KwaZulu-Natal, the University will not be hosting in person, on campus, student registration and only online registrations will be accepted.

We also remind students that no walk-in registrations will be permitted. New first-year students who may be experiencing challenges related to online registration should contact Student Admissions at:

Tel: **0313735005**

Alternatively, you can contact Student Admissions via the What's App numbers:

0834451282, 0834460459, 0834541495, 0834543477, 0834516751, 0834413766

First year students can email: 1styrstudentreg@dut.ac.za and visit the DUT website for guidance related to online registration: <https://www.dut.ac.za>.

Students should also remember that the Chatbots are available for online enquiries. Please click the Chatbot button on the homepage of the DUT website.

The Faculties are the main contact point for postgraduate students and the relevant faculty contact details are on the DUT website: <https://www.dut.ac.za/academic/>.

Details on student registration can be found by clicking this link:

https://www.dut.ac.za/student_portal/student_registration/

STUDENT RESIDENCES

The provision of student housing is guided by the academic project. Some students who still require to complete their 2020 academic year have since returned to residence. Real Estate Management, in liaison with the faculties, will accredit eligible students with permits. The faculties will also forward the lists of names of eligible students to Student Housing and to Real Estate Management (REM) by no later than Thursday 07 January 2021. The list of eligible students for permits will be finalised and the relevant permits will be issued by the Heads of Departments on the basis of which REM will accredit the permitted students and allow access.

It must be noted that only eligible students with permits, will be allowed access to residences. The eligible students must sign an amended Checklist, as an undertaking to comply with the prescribed COVID-19 protocols and the Level 3 restrictions that have been imposed and gazetted by government. Those students in residence will need to vacate their rooms once their 2020 academic programme has concluded.

RETURN OF STAFF

Under Lockdown Level 3, there should be a maximum 33.3% of staff who may return to campus. This group includes:

1. Essential services
2. Frontline staff
3. Mission-critical staff
4. Non-frontline staff who cannot work remotely

All departments must provide their lists of returning staff belonging to the groups identified above to HR. This number must not exceed 33.3%. Given the surge of the pandemic in KZN, all departments are urged to reduce staff entry to as low as possible. Therefore, we advise line managers to encourage staff to work remotely. We also recommend that Line Managers should close-off common areas in their departments and to continue to enforce strict social distancing protocols.

Line Managers, working via their Sector Executives and HR, will need to provide returning staff with permits. These permit requests must be lodged online, following the same procedure used from last June, July and August. As with students, Line Managers must liaise with REM for purposes of accreditation and access to relevant campuses where staff are permitted.

All staff who return to campus must wear their face masks at all times - and they have to adhere to the public health guidelines. As noted above, failure to adhere to these, including wearing a mask, has now become a criminal offence and a misconduct.

We remind staff that all public events, in person meetings and conferences and other group gatherings should be postponed until further notice. Therefore:

1. Given the current lockdown and the rise in infections in KZN, staff members should work remotely, except those providing essential services.
2. Only staff members who are involved with essential services or staff who assist with practical and/or laboratory-based sessions, should be allowed onto campus. Faculties and departments must identify those staff members, indicating which periods that they will need to be on campus and then, the relevant permits need to be issued. HR, security and Real Estate Management will need to be informed about the names of the returning staff per department.

STATE OF READINESS (SANITISATION, DISINFECTION, CLEANING)

All lecture venues, laboratories and common areas have been cleaned and sanitized on our Durban and Midlands campuses. All air conditioners in venues have been cleaned and serviced. Deep cleaning of residences has also commenced. Anyone who arrives on campus without completing the Higher Health online screening form, will be subject to physical screening at the entry gate.

We recommend that all staff and students who are eligible to return to campus must use the HealthCheck online screening form whenever they arrive on campus. There are three ways for you to access the online form before you arrive on campus:

1. <https://healthcheck.higherhealth.ac.za>
2. WhatsApp to contacts: 0600 110 000 / <https://wa.me/27600110000?text=hi>
3. Dial HealthCheck tollfree on *134*832*2#

As noted above, government has declared and gazetted that failure to wear a face mask is now a criminal offence. Therefore, we urge all staff and students to wear their face masks at all times to prevent possible prosecution. Besides, wearing your face mask is the safe and responsible thing to do, as we all have to work together to limit the further spread of COVID-19 and to save the lives of our family, friends and colleagues.

DEVICES AND DATA PROVISION

Provision of devices for NSFAS students is a national competence via DHET. The DUT Finance team has been working with NSFAS regarding the handling and distribution of students' devices. NSFAS is currently updating the circular regarding these devices. The circular was supposed to be sent out before the end of December 2020. Students will be informed once the updated NSFAS circular has been received.

However, just as multi-modal/blended learning continued in various other ways in 2020 without these devices having been delivered, absence thereof shall not hinder the academic programme. Several strategies have been employed by students individually and staff, too, to circumvent this challenge. Students who are not NSFAS recipients have the responsibility to provide their own devices as DUT's Solidary Fund is very limited.

The University will provide data for eligible students who are engaged in academic activity during January 2021. These students are part of the group of 8709 that still have academic work to complete before the end of January 2021. Going into February 2021, further investigations will be conducted to determine the best course of action, if any, with regard to data for students.

Students in this group, who have been identified by the faculties as being eligible students, can apply for data by clicking this link: <http://bit.ly/38jxBPX>. This link will only allow eligible students to submit a request. If ineligible students use the link to apply, the system will reject their applications.

The University will also provide data for January 2021 and February 2021 for staff working remotely and those staff working to assist students who are completing the academic programme in January 2021. Eligible staff should apply by clicking on this link: <http://bit.ly/3nhU2cA>. This link will only allow eligible staff to submit a request. If ineligible staff use the link to apply, the system will reject the application.

If you have any issues with data secured via DUT, please click on this link: <http://bit.ly/3rYU3FE>. This link is the preferred method of submitting data issue queries, however, the datasupport@dut.ac.za email address can also be used to submit data issues.

CONCLUSION

The University reminds all staff and students that we must work harder to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus. This second wave of the pandemic has been devastating and we need to ensure that we follow the public health guidelines.

So please, wear your face mask, wash your hands regularly with water and soap, use a 70% alcohol-based hand sanitiser, practice physical and social distancing, do not gather in groups and avoid shaking hands with other people. The epidemiology experts have confirmed that we have not reached the peak of the second wave so please, do not lower your guard, remain alert and stay safe.

Evidently, given the prevailing urgency and the fast pace of developments around COVID-19, new and different announcements with the necessary decisions may be made within the next few days; some of which may change what is being announced here. EMC and Senex will keep vigilant and meet as urgently as may be required to.

We therefore appeal for patience, calm and unity of purpose at DUT as we navigate this treacherous terrain the country and our university find themselves in.

Sincerely

DUT Management team

