

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

02 July 2021

Dear staff and students

IMPACT OF ADJUSTED LEVEL 4 LOCKDOWN REGULATIONS ON DUT

Last Sunday, President Ramaphosa announced that South Africa will move to Adjusted Lockdown Level 4 in the national “State of Disaster” as we respond to the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Earlier this morning, members of the Executive Management Committee (EMC) and the Senate Executive Committee (Senex) met to discuss and assess the impact of the recently gazetted regulations on DUT operations.

The joint EMC/Senex meeting reinforced the importance of abiding by the published COVID-19 protocols, in order to help limit the further spread of the disease. Therefore, we urge you to always wear your mask so that it securely covers your nose and mouth. Please practice good hand hygiene, ensuring that you regularly wash your hands with water and soap and where possible, use a minimum 70% alcohol-based hand sanitiser. It is also essential that you adopt physical and social distancing of a minimum of 1.5 metres away from the person next to you. Importantly, you should do your utmost to avoid crowds and do not assemble in groups of people.

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LECTURES, ASSESSMENTS, PRACTICALS AND LABORATORY SESSIONS

Since October 2020, DUT has allowed face-to-face engagements with students only in special cases involving practical and laboratory sessions. In line with the national legislation related to Lockdown Level 4, we are currently prohibited from hosting face-to-face engagements on our campuses, including lectures, assessments, practicals and laboratory sessions. This will also affect the functioning of our libraries, where face-to-face engagements will also be discontinued. The online resources of our library are still available to staff and students: <https://library.dut.ac.za>. Therefore, to clarify, all face-to-face or mask-to-mask, on-campus engagements, including on-campus assessments/examinations, practicals and laboratory sessions, will be suspended for the two-week period, until Monday 12 July 2021.

Furthermore, it must be reiterated that DUT is not closed. Online teaching and learning will continue. Online assessments will also continue, as previously scheduled by academic departments. We remind all staff to only conduct online teaching and learning and other online engagements with students during Lockdown Level 4.

Colleagues cannot force face-to-face engagements to avoid working on our digital platforms. The University will not allow staff to ignore the online platforms that are currently in place to support teaching, learning and assessments.

AMENDMENTS TO THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

The academic calendar has been adjusted, to take into account the Level 4 Lockdown regulations and the third wave of the pandemic. Therefore, the remainder of the First Semester face-to-face Examinations, where they had been applicable, will resume on 02 August 2021 and ends on 11 August 2021, during which time, catch-up practicals and on campus assessments will be completed. However, online assessments/examinations that had already been scheduled will continue as planned.

The second semester will now start on 01 September 2021 and it will conclude on 30 November 2021. The Second Semester Examinations will be scheduled to take place from 06 December 2021 to 20 December 2021. As a result, the academic year will terminate on 24 December 2021. Here, below, is the link for the amended DUT Academic Calendar:

<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Amended-2021-Calendar-02-July-2021.pdf>

COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AT DUT

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The Delta variant is extremely contagious, with a high infectious rate, leading to increased hospitalization and sadly, fatalities. The third wave of the pandemic is proving to be more vicious than the first two waves. Positive cases are rising rapidly in KwaZulu-Natal and we continue to urge all students and staff to remain vigilant and to follow the protocols, in order to break the chain of transmission. Please access the DUT COVID-19 online resources on our website: <https://www.dut.ac.za/coronavirus/>

IMPLICATIONS ON REAL ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Pandemic related protocols for cleaning and sanitising of DUT properties have been in place since the start of the lockdown in March 2020. These will continue during the two-week Level 4 Lockdown period. All university security CCTV cameras will be monitored by the central control room, to help ensure compliance with the regulations in our residences and on campus.

As regulations clearly state, DUT and other organisations cannot afford to have groups of people congregating, let alone without following the protocols. We remind all students and staff that the use of a face mask is compulsory and refusing to wear a mask, in terms of the existing legislation, is a criminal offence.

HUMAN RESOURCE RELATED PROTOCOLS

All Faculties, Sectors, Divisions and Departments must ensure that only essential services staff should be working on campus. Staff should work remotely, after consulting with their Line Managers. Colleagues who are working remotely must be accessible to students and staff as required. This is not a vacation period and services are still expected from all members of staff. The university remains open for business, albeit on an online basis.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION

As per the recent Presidential announcement, all DUT student residences will remain open during the Level 4 Lockdown period. Quarantine and isolation facilities will be available, if required. Residential students are urged to follow all COVID-19 protocols, including wearing face masks, washing their hands with water and soap, not gathering in groups and maintaining physical distancing.

It must be noted that one of the main reasons why residences will remain open during this lockdown period is to provide students with access to resources via the WiFi network or per data provision within an environment where there is network coverage, thereby, helping to ensure that online teaching, learning and assessments can still continue.

DATA PROVISION

EMC has approved the procurement of data (for students) for July and the provisional approval, for the months ahead depending on the installation of new WiFi points and the lockdown situation; which will be reviewed from month to month. The data that will be provided to students by the university, is to be used for online teaching, learning, research and assessments.

Staff will continue to receive data as per the approved budget for fiscal year 2021. The data that is provided by the university must be used for remote working.



CONCLUSION

We continue to live and function in unprecedented times. The coronavirus pandemic is disrupting our lives and compromising our safety - but we must remain steadfast and act responsibly. Therefore, we urge the DUT community to follow the COVID-19 guidelines and to respect the pandemic protocols. It is important that those who qualify for vaccines should register and go for the vaccine when invited. We remind you that it is mandatory to wear your face mask and it is essential that you follow the physical distancing guidelines. Critically, you must avoid crowds and do not gather in groups. The reality is that COVID-19 is claiming more lives in our country and around the world. Our behaviour, attitude and actions today will determine our health and safety tomorrow. Please stay safe, stay alert, follow the guidelines and help prevent the further spread of the disease.

Sincerely

DUT Management team

