



22 April 2020

Dear colleagues, students and stakeholders,

Last night, President Cyril Ramaphosa has once again displayed true leadership and statesmanship when he announced additional economic and social measures in response to COVID-19 during his address to the nation. We look forward to his address on Thursday, when he is expected to make a further announcement on measures to be taken beyond the current lockdown to reopen the economy.

Minister to announce DHET measures and interventions on 24 April 2020

The resumption of activities in higher education and the form this will take have been on the minds of all students, staff members and parents at institutions across the country.

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Dr Blade Nzimande, has been consulting with stakeholders in the Post School Education and Training, as well as in the Science and Innovation sector on measures that the Department will be implementing in response to the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic.

On Monday, Cabinet deliberated on the DHET's post-lockdown measures, following which Dr Nzimande briefed the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Higher Education and Training, Science and Innovation, yesterday.

Yesterday, TUT also responded to the Minister's request to higher education institutions for additional information on their state of readiness for the implementation of emergency remote learning.

Following all of these consultations, Minister Nzimande is set to make a public announcement on the Department's measures and interventions during a joint media briefing with the Department of Basic Education, on Friday, 24 April 2020.

Once Minister Nzimande has announced DHET's measures, key stakeholders including staff and student representatives, will be consulted on the plans and the way forward for TUT.



Council on Higher Education – actions aimed at completing the academic year

The Council on Higher Education (CHE) has also deliberated and provided clarity on a number of critical issues brought about by the COVID-19 crisis.

According to a statement issued on 17 April 2020, the CHE has been closely monitoring the impact of the COVID 19 crisis nationally, and more particularly on the higher education and training sector, and has kept abreast of developments at individual universities and institutions, and sector-wide, especially insofar as they impact on the quality of educational provision.

The CHE provided clarity on the following:

- *We are aware of initiatives at the national level from the Ministry and USAf to negotiate for zero-rated cost access to the internet to PSET students for learning purposes. We have urged the Minister to widen the net in these negotiations to include students at both public and private higher education institutions.*
- *For students with service learning, practical, WIL, internship and related requirements, we will urge the statutory and non-statutory bodies to approach these with flexibility so that the registration requirements are revised to prevent prejudice to graduating students in particular who are affected by circumstances beyond their control. The CHE will recommend this to all the relevant professional bodies. Individual institutions are urged to make practical proposals to the professional bodies on alternative means of addressing the prescribed requirements and to share these in the sector so that there is consistency in the sector, and the approach by each of the professional bodies.*
- *The restrictions on all programmes accredited for contact delivery are lifted. All programmes accredited by the CHE for contact only can also be offered, supported and assessed through virtual and online delivery and blended learning approaches.*

In addition, the CHE is in the process of developing a national repository in which instances of good practice, innovations, and materials developed by individual institutions could be shared with the rest of the sector.

Work and planning continuing

I would like to, once again, thank our staff members who have been busy behind the scenes to ensure that the University's operations continue during the national lockdown. Different environments have activated their business continuity plans and, where applicable, staff members have been continuing with their work remotely.

Furthermore, the Executive Deans, HEDS and the EMC have regular virtual meetings to deliberate and plan for the continuation and successful conclusion of the academic year 2020



within the broader context of the challenges presented by COVID-19. Online engagement with Universities South Africa and the sector is also ongoing.

The rollout of APNs to academic staff members started two weeks ago, as well as online training sessions to prepare for emergency remote teaching and learning modes.

Student online readiness survey

The response to TUT's survey to assess students' readiness to access online learning, which will close on Friday, 24 April, currently stands at more than 50% with 31 342 students who have responded. The initial indications are that more than 70% are ready and prepared for the rollout of emergency remote learning. Thank you to students who have already responded. I would like to urge students who have not yet participated in this important survey, to visit bit.ly/2JF4Z6u, complete the questionnaire and have your voice heard.

Until we talk again, please stay safe and healthy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. van Staden', written over a light blue rectangular background.

PROF LOURENS VAN STADEN
VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRINCIPAL