

From the Office of the DVC: RTIP

Communique 1: Covid-19: Research, technology innovation and partnership continuity

Dear CPUT staff, colleagues and students

This communique follows the President's announcement on 23 March 2020 putting South African under lockdown for 21 days from 26 March until 16 April 2020. The CPUT Management is continuously assessing the situation around the COVID-19 pandemic by reviewing all national and international information. The CPUT Business Continuity team in particular has been mandated with monitoring decisions, reports and all information from relevant agencies such as the World Health Organisation (WHO); South African Government [i.e. Presidency; National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD); DHET and other relevant Ministers; etc.]; Private sector entities such as insurance companies (e.g. Discovery Health, Old Mutual etc.); other Higher Education Institutions and through Universities South African (USAf); etc.

Following the President's announcements on Sunday 15 March and heeding his call on Monday 16 March further restrictions were placed on travel, events and mass gatherings, which understandably will impact on our research and postgraduate activities; staff and student exchanges; partnerships and agreements; research contractual obligations and the research and innovation project.

Heeding also the Minister's announcements on Tuesday 17 March, during this period the university, will endeavour to continue operational, research related, postgraduate and other activities using alternative digital platforms and methodologies and digital networking and communication options to support the academic project. To this end, the following is available to staff and students.

Research, Innovation and Partnership activities

During this lockdown and uncertain period, with restriction on travel, events and gatherings some researchers and postgraduate students may have been funded for, and in some instances may have possibly already paid but cannot activate such as for example cannot attend conferences, workshops, seminars, mobility, etc. This is a global pandemic and researchers should stay in contact with the conference and event organisers regarding rescheduled dates and inform the Research Office and external funders accordingly so that change requests can be submitted for the funding to be moved to the new date where applicable. The Research office is already engaging the NRF on all KIC grants for this semester to be moved to next semester and will be in contact with those researchers. For all CPUT Research Exchange programme (REP) and ConfCom allocations and applications up to June alternative arrangements should be made through the research directorate. For all externally funded research with deadlines up to June please contact the Research Office; Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships office; and/or Technology Transfer and Industrial Linkages office, as applicable, in order to engage the relevant funders on a possible postponement for any contractual obligations.

Urgent agreements and contracts in progress can be vetted, concluded and approved electronically through the normal vetting and approval matrix where possible. Please engage the Strategic Initiatives or Technology Transfer office regarding this where required. All international partners have been informed of the situation at CPUT and the SIP office will continue to liaise with them on a case by case basis as needed. Researchers and research chairs are requiring support from the SIP office can stay in contact with the respective offices as indicated in the list of contacts below.

All precautions to prevent the spread of the virus is now legally required. Therefore, researchers doing research that involves direct human interaction are required to immediately postpone these planned activities and revise their research schedules accordingly. Any health related research in the Faculty of Health and Wellness Sciences or any other faculty or entity that could benefit and assist the health system in contributing to addressing this pandemic or any other life threatening disease on a case-by-case basis can be considered. These exceptional cases in strict alignment with the President's announcements can be managed on a case-by-case basis under the guidance of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC); Dean of the Faculty; Manager Research Integrity; and the DVC: Research, Technology Innovation and Partnership (DVC:RTIP). Consideration can only be given after a thorough evaluation and assessment as to how this can be continued without risking the well-being and safety of any staff, student, participants, any other personnel or the research site and with consent from all parties involved.

The Research Integrity Unit has already communicated to all the FREC chairs that all external study proposals from researchers/students external to CPUT, requiring site permission to access CPUT staff/students for face-to-face interviews/focus groups etc. will not be granted until further notice. This is an interim measure due to COVID-19 epidemic/pandemic and to protect our community. For any further advice on this please contact the Manager: Research Integrity, Dr Hester Burger (BurgerH@cput.ac.za).

Staff are encouraged to focus on postgraduate student supervision (using digital platforms); article writing; reading; and other desktop related work while off campus. This can be done with support from the Research office; Centre for Innovative Educational Technology (CIET) and the Library with more information on support services to follow below.

Please refer to the CTS broadcast message dated 23 March providing online tools that are available to all staff and students to support remote meetings and collaboration.

Contacts

For research support the research directorate is available and can be contacted through the Director, Prof Burger (BurgerD@cput.ac.za) who will direct all queries to the relevant person for support.

The strategic initiatives offices remain available and can be contacted through the Director, Prof Pellissier (PellissierR@cput.ac.za) who will direct all queries to relevant person for support.

The technology transfer office staff is available and can be contacted through the Director Dr Iyer (IyerR@cput.ac.za) who will direct all queries to the relevant person for support.

Postgraduate student research and educational activities

All postgraduate supervisors are encouraged to continue supervision using alternative digital platforms, to stay in contact with their students and provide the necessary guidance and support. Postgraduate students on course based work must follow the instructions as communicated from their respective faculties, departments and lecturers as alternative digital technologies such as blackboard are available to all staff and students.

HODs and faculties are required to link all registered PG students to supervisors and co-supervisors on the HDC digital system with immediate effect. All registered PG students (especially new first year students) that have not yet registered on the HDC digital are required to activate their digital accounts with immediate effect:

- Register online on HDC (<https://www.cput.ac.za/research-technology-and-innovation/postgraduate/digital>).
- Load their research topics and completed proposals on the HDC digital online
- Guidelines are available on the digital system on:
 - o How to login to the system.
 - o How to submit the title using the system?
 - o How to submit a proposal using the system?

All topics and proposals loaded by students can be approved on the HDC digital system by the supervisor, and HOD for approval at the next Faculty Higher Degrees Committee/Research Committee and Institutional Higher Degrees Committee, as applicable.

In light of the country's lockdown guidelines until 16 April all PG students busy with field work (off campus) should, in conjunction with their supervisors immediately make an assessment and evaluate whether this work can continue with the aim of minimising the spread of the virus, safeguarding the researchers, students and individuals at the research sites. All attempts must be made to reschedule as required.

PG students that already have an approved proposal and ethical clearance involving electronic surveys and data collection, should engage their supervisors to make an assessment and evaluate if this work can continue. Things to consider is whether a representative sample and response can be ensured and the decision to proceed can therefore include advice from the FHDC; in conjunction with the Faculty Research Manager/Coordinator or Assistant Dean: Research and Innovation.

PG students are encouraged to use this time to focus on proposal writing, ethics applications, thesis, dissertation and article writing; literature reviews; reading, and other desktop related work while off campus. This can be done with support from their supervisors, the library and the CPGS, with more information on support services to follow below. For more postgraduate information, funding opportunities, postgraduate fellowships; supervisor and examination processes please visit: <http://www.cput.ac.za/research-technology-and-innovation/postgraduate>

Contacts:

The CPGS staff is available and can be contacted through the Manager Dr Uys (UysC@cput.ac.za).

Turnitin support

A free Online Turnitin User Group Webinar is set for this week Thursday, the 26th of March 2020, starting at 12pm Central African Time (UTC +2).

Simply click the link below to join the meeting:

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/110533827>

Meeting ID: 110 533 827

Please watch out for Newsflash announcements from Centre for Postgraduate Studies (CPGS) and further free online webinars. For any further queries on this please contact the CPGS Manager, Dr Uys (UysC@cput.ac.za).

Library support

While the Library is physically closed the services remain open. Staff and students can access most of the library resources online where eBooks, Journal articles and more are available to support research activities.

To access:

- Open the CPUT website (www.cput.ac.za)
- Click "Library"
- See the search box
- Type your keywords and click the search button

Library Research support

The library's electronic resources for research support remains available and can be accessed at the following links:

- Electronic Theses and Dissertations (<http://etd.cput.ac.za/>)
- Institutional Repository
- Research Support Guides (<http://libguides.library.cput.ac.za/c.php?g=903373>)

eBooks

In addition to the CPUT's available digital resources, engagements are ongoing with publishers and some have already lifted the restrictions on the use of their available resources and material during this period. Some universities have also made their resources available. Please use the links previously provided and also explore other universities' resources relevant to your research for availability.

Returning of borrowed library material

All Library users who borrowed books and other library material that are due on a date when the while the country is on lockdown should note that the due date has been extended to 20 April 2020 or the first day of the University opening. Thereafter all outstanding material will attract a fine as per normal library service.

Please note that renewal is automatic twice after the initial due date. For manual renewals please visit and login on Primo with Network ID and access the mylibrary card link.

Primo link:

https://cput.primo.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/search?vid=27CPUT_INST:CPUT&sortby=rank

Electronic resources are available off campus for all library users and the starting point is the primo link above and for certain resources users might be required to authenticate with their campus network ID and password.

Contacts:

Through the virtual support available on the CPUT library website at <https://www.cput.ac.za/lib> and on the right-hand side of your screen, you will see a blue button called "Ask Us":

"Ask Us" allows you to send a query and you receive a reply within 24 hours. The librarians are on hand to assist regardless of its complexity. This service is available from 08:00 to 16:30 Monday to Friday.

If you need further support, there are a number of Library Guides available to assist you, see the list at: <http://libguides.library.cput.ac.za/?b=g&d=a>

For any other queries please email: librarysupport@cput.ac.za and your queries will be re-directed to the correct support librarian for your area/faculty.

Operational systems research support

The DVC's office, together with finance and CTS is exploring the option to facilitate the continuation of some research activities such as for example an automated procurement process for essential resources required to continue research once back on campus. More information will follow on this.

Contacts

CTS Service Desk: ctsservicedesk@cput.ac.za

Finally, in this digital era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Internet of Things some work can continue uninterrupted while exercising social distancing. CPUT management continue to encourage all CPUT staff and students to continue with their research activities as far as is possible and to safeguard themselves from the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic by not participating in any gatherings of more than 100 people; exercising social distancing; vacating the residences; and practicing self-isolation where possible and as required and adhere to all the COVID-19 and lockdown guidelines and requirements.

TOOLS AND TIPS ON WORKING FROM HOME

Staff and students that experience challenges with access to WiFi and data can make use of the following available resources and sources:

Available WiFi

Free WiFi links made available for students to access Internet (access to institutional websites only) through: <https://www.wiman.me/south-africa>

- Cape Town (<https://www.wiman.me/south-africa/free-wifi-cape-town>)
- Cape Town (<https://www.wifimap.io/4144-cape-town-free-wifi/map>)
- Durban (<https://www.wiman.me/south-africa/free-wifi-durban>)
- Johannesburg (<https://www.wiman.me/south-africa/free-wifi-johannesburg>)
- Soweto (<https://www.wiman.me/south-africa/free-wifi-soweto>)
- Pretoria (<https://www.wiman.me/south-africa/free-wifi-pretoria>)
- Port Elizabeth (<https://www.wifimap.io/4153-port-elizabeth-free-wifi>)

Service providers

Telkom and many other service providers have announced Free Access to Educational Websites

Resources

Handbook on Facilitating Flexible Learning During Educational Disruption

<https://iite.unesco.org/news/handbook-on-facilitating-flexible-learning-during-educational-disruption>

<https://sites.dartmouth.edu/teachremote/remote-lab-activities-and-experiences>

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