
From the Dean of Engineering and the Built Environment

Communique 1: FEBE update and status to staff: 1 – 15 May 2020

Dear faculty staff

This communique is my first communication since resuming office on 1 May 2020. I am excited to be back in the faculty, although under very difficult circumstances. There will be a transition and handover period from Prof Moll to myself. During this period, Ms Stringer will remain as the Assistant Dean Teaching and Learning (Acting), Prof Ojumu will remain as the Faculty Research coordinator (acting) while, Mr Cloete will continue as the Faculty manager. As your Dean I look forward to engaging with all of you and collectively taking this faculty forward. This communication is framed within the current Covid-19 pandemic under lockdown level 4 conditions and what the institution is allowed and permitted to do under these conditions. It further aligns with the institutional updates, the institution's business continuity plan (BCP); the BCP for Teaching and Learning (T&L); the BCP for postgraduate (PG) studies; the revised academic year 2020 (AY2020) report and the Carousel Delivery models framework as proposed by the DVC:T&L all guided by the government regulations, the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation's risk-adjusted strategy for the post-school education and training sector and the national Higher Education sectorial approaches.

The Faculty Management is continuously assessing the situation around the COVID-19 pandemic and will attempt to keep you updated on a weekly basis with regards to the status and plans for the faculty. The purpose of this communication is to provide a faculty status update and way forward on (i) teaching and learning (T&L); (ii) research and innovation (R&I) and other related matters in light of the revised AY2020.

Revised AY2020

The minister has announced that AY2020 should be reorganised to complete the academic year with the prospect of extending into 2021. The faculty has provided input into the institutional proposal for the revised AY2020 terms and dates through the institutional working group. These revised term dates will be communicated as soon as it has been approved. The faculty BCP towards completing AY2020 will be framed within the revised scenario planning and may change should the circumstances of the pandemic require us to do so.

Teaching and Learning

In line with the minister's risk adjusted strategy the faculty is in the process of putting in place a plan to support remote and flexible multi-model student learning suited to our context to resume from 1 Jun 2020 until the return to contact teaching and learning is feasible and permitted under lower risk levels. As from 1 May the time will be used to put critical interventions in place and prepare for mobilisation of resources to put appropriate remote learning support systems in place.

Postgraduate student activities

The Institutional CHE Doctoral qualification self-evaluation review document was completed and submitted to the CHE on 30 April 2020. The planned onsite visit for July 2020 has been postponed and we await the CHE's further communication on this matter. I want to use this opportunity to thank all the faculty staff who contributed to the faculty and the institutional CHE self-evaluation reports with specific gratitude to Prof Veruscha Fester who served as the Senate representative and Dr Bronwyn Swartz who was instrumental in the writing and finalising of the documents as the faculty representative.

The past week was used to:

- Assess the 2019 renewals and 2020 new applications for postdoctoral fellows and a further update on this will be provided shortly.

The upcoming week of 11 – 15 May will be used to:

- Update the status of postgraduate registrations in line with our faculty enrolment targets.
- Update the status of PG student HDC digital registration and presence.
- HODs are required to link all registered PG students to supervisors and co-supervisors on the HDC digital system with immediate effect.
- All supervisors in conjunction with their PG students must make an assessment and evaluate the current state of the research, revise research objectives if required and align and revise experimental plans and research methodologies (this might also require changes to existing signed supervisor and student agreements).
- Plan the faculty online proposal, article, theses/dissertation writing support

Contacts

- Faculty Research Coordinator: Prof Tunde Ojumu (OjumuT@cput.ac.za)
- Postgraduate studies: Ms Taylia Green (GreenT@cput.ac.za)
- Research and Innovation: Nonyaniso Didiza (DidizaN@cput.ac.za)



Staff readiness: Access; training and development

In order for the faculty to be ready by 1 June as required I am aware that we have some stars in the faculty that has been doing online learning for years. However, we also have many staff that require some support, guidance, and training to transition to the remote learning environment.

Prof Eunice Ivala and her team at the Centre for Innovative Educational Technology (CIET) as well as Ms Shahieda Hendricks and her team at the Learning Development unit are ready to support staff with training and development on the use of available and CPUT supported digital platforms such as Blackboard, Blackboard collaborate, Respondus, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, other Office 365 applications and other online learning related modules. Please make use of every opportunity for training and development on your specific needs. This situation provides an opportunity to develop practices not only for now but for the future as well. CTS is also currently working on securing additional laptops and is in engagement with suppliers to provide staff with internet connectivity in the next few weeks (please refer to the Covid-19 BCP staff booklet for more information). The faculty management is working closely with CTS and will provide you with an update as soon as that is available.

I also want to thank all those staff members that have completed the training under very difficult circumstances and have stayed connected and engaged their students.

Contacts

- Centre for Innovative Educational Technology (CIET), Prof Eunice Ivala (IvalaE@cput.ac.za)



Student queries and communication

A similar but separate faculty communication will be sent to students. I urge all staff to please respond to student queries timeously with care, understanding and flexibility. Establish the most appropriate means of communication for each student in your class.

Communicate clear expectations; how learning material will be made available; any changes to the planned modules from what was originally set out in the learner guide; and changes to planned assessments timeously.

Finally, I acknowledge that this is a very challenging time for everyone and the well-being of all our staff and students is of utmost importance. To this end there is an institutional wellness unit to support staff during this period. Please do not hesitate to contact them should you require personal support. Thank you to all our amazing staff that are working so hard, persevering under very difficult circumstances and doing everything they can to assist our students. You are all doing a great job.

I urge all staff and students as far as is possible to safeguard themselves from the spread of the Covid-19 virus by exercising physical and social distancing; self-isolation where possible and as required, and adhere to all the COVID-19 and lockdown regulations, guidelines and requirements.

In conclusion

While we all work our way through this uncertain and unfamiliar period, please remember that you are not alone. Your wellbeing is important to us. Please stay safe and we will get through this together.

Covid-19 Emergency Hotline: 0800 029 999 | WhatsApp Support Line: 0600-123456

Prof Marshall Sheldon

7 May 2020