

From the Dean of Engineering and the Built Environment (FEBE)

Communique 7: Faculty staff update 21 September 2020

Dear faculty staff members

As I write this communique I am cautiously optimistic. There has been a number of developments and activities since my last communique to you. To mention a few, (i) the marks for semester 1 have been largely concluded with some limited reassessments and deferred assessments still taking place; (ii) as the semester 1 results were concluded departments commenced with the start of semester 2 in the multi-modal approach; (iii) arrangements were made for and we have invited selective groups of students to return to campus for lockdown level 2; and (iv) the president has announced that the country will move to lockdown level 1 from mid-night on 20 September 2020.

Due to the continued COVID-19 restrictions in venues even under lockdown level 1, the faculty will not be able to accommodate all students simultaneously. After consultation with HODs it was agreed that the faculty will be taking a hybrid and phased approach with both on-line and on-campus activities. The focusing will be on and prioritising subjects that require on-campus practical's, laboratory work, specialised equipment and software. Staff related to the subjects identified by the HOD for the different lockdown level subjects will be expected to return to campus accordingly. The way forward to conclude the Academic year 2020 is as follows:

- **Lockdown level 3 (LL3):** Final year students on path to graduation and PG students that required access to laboratories and specialised equipment that were invited under LL3 are continuing their activities on campus. At this point departments should have communicated the plans for these groups of students to continue either in the multi-model mode and the on-campus activities where required for relevant subjects. Staff aligned with these subjects were also given permission letters to return to campus.
- **Lockdown level 2 (LL2):** The on-campus activities for those groups of students identified to return under LL2 will start on 28 September and all HODs should be working with their respective staff in preparing to welcome back those students. Departments must also communicate to those students the planned timetables, relevant academic activities, dates and times. Staff aligned with these subjects were also given permission letters to return to campus. The mainstream year 1 students originally planned as part of the 66% will be informed this week and they are due to start classes from 12 October 2020.
- **Lockdown level 1 (LL1):** Following the president's announcement, as a faculty we are finalising the return of students and staff for LL1 collectively, and in conjunction with other faculties, student support units and under the guidance of the institution's management. This is to ensure that while doing so we still comply with the required COVID-19 health and safety regulations. Whilst, we are allowed to return 100% of students under lockdown level 1, there will still be a number of restrictions such as for example the 50% capacity per venue up to a maximum of 250 with physical distancing. So this will again require careful consideration and planning of various academic and non-academic aspects with input from various stakeholders.

The plan is for this group to continue in the multi-modal mode in the meantime with the intension of starting the on-campus activities for this group later in October 2020. Please engage your HOD on any questions related to LL1 student return.

COVID-19 health and safety requirements: As we plan to phase back staff and students up to the 100% allowed under lockdown level 1, I want to remind all staff of the importance of adhering to the COVID-19 health and safety requirements; wearing of masks; maintaining social and physical distancing; and the regulated restrictions related to capacity and maximum numbers in venues. I have received reports of various transgressions on the part of staff and my reminder to all of you is to adhere to the regulations. My concern is

for the safety and well-being of all staff and students while on campus. Health and safety is not only a compliance requirement but it is everyone's responsibility to protect each other.

My appreciation: I want to use this opportunity to thank all staff members that have continued to do sterling work both on- and off -campus. My sincerest appreciation to all academic and non-academic staff members that have gone the extra mile to accommodate and responded to the various student needs and requests. The success of those students who completed the first semester would not have been possible without your dedication.

In conclusion

The cautious optimism is amidst the continued existence of the pandemic that will remain with us for months to come. We remain mindful of those staff, students, families, friends, colleagues that have been affected during this time. The wellbeing, health and safety of everyone off- and on-campus is of utmost importance as we move forward as a faculty community, institution and a country.

Prof Marshall Sheldon

Dean of Engineering and the Built Environment

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

