

## **E-MAIL FROM PROF STAN DU PLESSIS TO ALL SU STUDENTS**

**DATE: 8 APRIL 2020**

### **Revised 2020 academic calendar and online connectivity**

Dear Student

This communication contains important information about adjustments to the 2020 academic year to accommodate the period of national lockdown.

There has been a number of communiqués, the latest from the Registrar's office yesterday on registration, discontinuation of undergraduate studies for 2020, interruptions of postgraduate studies and the issuing of academic documents during the COVID-19 lockdown. Read the communiqué [here](#).

#### **ONLINE TEACHING IN TERM 2**

Planning for the rest of this semester is based on the assumption that students will not be permitted to return to our campuses during the first semester. All undergraduate teaching and assessments (including the first and second mid-year examination opportunities) will be online only. Postgraduate coursework teaching and assessments will also be conducted online. For modules where professional bodies require invigilated examinations or in-person moderation, faculties may schedule these assessments after students have returned to campus and before the start of the 2021 academic year.

Where a Semester 1 module is a prerequisite for admission to a Semester 2 module students will be allowed to continue with semester 2, irrespective of having passed the prerequisite module or not.

#### **Online connectivity**

The recent survey has shown us that a number of students may not have, either the necessary technology or internet connectivity (or both) from home to enable them to proceed fully online for the rest of the first semester. The University is exploring ways to assist specifically socio-economically disadvantaged students who indicated on the survey that they do not have access to a device to be assisted at home with computers within the constraints of the lockdown regulations and what is practically possible. Students who have not responded to the survey should urgently contact the SU Client Services at [info@sun.ac.za](mailto:info@sun.ac.za) or 021 808-9111 to be considered for learning technology assistance.

The SU computers and internet connectivity devices will be on a loan basis to students - not a donation. A deposit to the value of the equipment will be charged to the student's fee account. If the equipment is returned to SU at the end of the 2020 academic year, the deposit due will be reversed on the student's account. The student will also have the option to keep the computer if his/her bursary provider pays for the equipment.

For students who cannot complete Semester 1 online due to online connectivity issues (device or internet or both), a re-run of Semester 1 modules in hybrid learning mode will be available in the second half of 2020, with an exam opportunity in January 2021 for specifically Semester 1 (2020) modules. The hybrid learning mode will consist of mostly online learning of archived first-semester lectures and other materials, with limited contact teaching sessions as far as practicable.

#### **ACADEMIC CALENDAR 2020**

On Monday, 6 April, the Executive Committee of Senate approved the following changes to the academic calendar for 2020. The adjustments were necessitated by the extended recess period that will now end on 17 April, instead of the originally scheduled 27 March.

**Semester 1 - term 2:**

- Term 2 starts on 20 April 2020;
- A seven-week teaching block will run from 20 April to 5 June;
- First examination cycle: 8 to 26 June;
- Second examination cycle: 27 June to 11 July (Saturdays included).

**Recess between semesters:** The second term will be followed by a recess period of two weeks from 13 to 24 July.

**Semester 2 - term 3:**

- Term 3 starts on 27 July 2020;
- The teaching block of seven weeks ends on 11 September;
- The recess will run from 14 to 18 September.

**Semester 2 - term 4:**

- Term 4 starts on 21 September;
- The teaching block of six weeks ends on 30 October;
- First examination cycle: 3 to 25 November;
- Second examination cycle: 26 November to 12 December.
- December graduation: 14 to 19 December

After two weeks of the lockdown period, we are all becoming aware of the multifaceted impact on our lives. Through the Institutional Committee for Business Continuity (ICBC) the University has been actively working to ensure that we can start term 2 on 20 April via our online platforms. However, it will not be 'business as usual'. Online learning and teaching will require your dedication, focus and working independently. For the foreseeable future SUNLearn will be your primary academic resource platform.

Please seek help if you need academic support or assistance with your personal wellbeing. The relevant information is available on the [COVID-19 webpage](#). It is your responsibility to ensure that you are informed of all the resources available to you. Contact your lecturers via SUNLearn and connect with your fellow students – peer learning is a powerful mechanism for academic success.

The circumstances under which we will work for the next few weeks are profoundly uncertain. We realise that the situation is evolving and that it may necessitate further changes by the University, even at short notice. Nevertheless, I am impressed by the dedication and hard work of so many colleagues during the lockdown. SU has a sound approach to mitigating this disruption and I am confident that we will complete the academic year successfully.

Let us remain positive, focussed on the tasks ahead and please adhere to the lockdown regulations for your own safety and that of your families.

With best wishes

Prof Stan du Plessis  
Chair: ICBC