



15 March 2020

## COMMUNIQUÉ FROM THE OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

### INFORMATION AND UPDATES ON THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

Dear Staff and Students

The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) recognises the concerns regarding the outbreak of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) and continues to closely monitor the ongoing national and international cases. The situation is changing rapidly, and our top priority remains the health, safety, and well-being of our community, on and off campus.

We are planning for several contingency scenarios and taking decisive, informed action to limit possible risks while ensuring continuity of our teaching, learning and research mission. We are also scaling up appropriate measures to protect the health of the UKZN community and will endeavour to keep our communication active and transparent as we implement contingency plans and additional measures.

#### **Suspension of academic programme including tests**

At this point, UKZN has not experienced any COVID-19 incidents that would be a cause for a change in normal operating procedures and the University remains open and operational. However, management are cognisant of the President's statement which has banned gatherings of more than 100 people and are seeking further guidance from the relevant ministries, through Universities South Africa (USAf). To this end, the academic programme is suspended (including test) with immediate effect until further notice pending further engagements on a sector-wide approach regarding contact classes.

Given the uncertainties surrounding timelines for normalisation of our academic programme, EMC has resolved to work with Senate to ensure that all lectures are recorded and loaded onto virtual platforms as a matter of urgency. The DVC teaching and learning will follow-up with a separate communique in due course.

#### **April 2020 Graduation Ceremonies**

In April every year, the University traditionally hosts in excess of 20 graduation ceremonies and during this time approximately 30 000 graduands and their families from all over South Africa and beyond our borders descend upon the University.

After due consideration of inputs from the University's COVID-19 team of experts and other key stakeholders, a decision has been taken to cancel the 2020 April graduation ceremonies. The University regrets the inconvenience caused, but felt it important to minimise the risks associated with such a large gathering and exposure to individuals who may have been exposed to the coronavirus.

We are exploring options to ensure that graduands receive their qualifications and other related documents by the end of April 2020. Further information will be published on the UKZN website and via email.

#### **Travel and other restrictions**

With regard to travel, it has become necessary to implement the following contingency measures and restrictions until further notice:

- All University-related international travel is prohibited.
- All University-related non-essential domestic air travel is prohibited.
- Personal international travel is strongly discouraged.
- Extreme caution and judgment should be applied for personal domestic air travel.
- Anyone returning or arriving from an international destination should advise their line manager at least 72 hours prior to arrival. The line manager will consult the COVID-19 team who will advise accordingly on the necessary protection measures.
- We strongly encourage the use of technology for non-essential meetings and events.

All staff and students are reminded that reimbursements for travel cancellations can only be processed in line with the cancellation policies of the relevant service providers and no additional reimbursements will be provided by the University.

### **Protect yourself and others**

Prevention is key to containing this once in a century pandemic and it is important to take care of your health and protect yourself and others from contracting or spreading viruses and illnesses.

Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the [WHO Website](#) and the [NICD South Africa website](#) and follow these measures to protect yourself and others:

- Wash your hands frequently and thoroughly (at least 20 seconds of scrubbing) with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Practice social distancing by maintaining at least 1 metre distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Practice respiratory hygiene by covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- If you have fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical care early and avoid contact with others. Please self-quarantine and contact emergency services rather than going to your GP on the following numbers: 0800029999

Staff in our College of Health Sciences are working diligently to ensure that we are prepared if someone presents with symptoms and a clinical history that may indicate the novel coronavirus. We will continue to update the UKZN COVID-19 War Room as additional information becomes available through World Health Organisation and United Nations. Please visit the [UKZN Website](#) for updates, information and precautions.

**Issued by**  
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