

From: VCO News VCO.news@wits.ac.za
Subject: COVID-19 UPDATE (19) – TEACHING AND LEARNING (STAFF)
Date: 01 April 2020 at 16:24
To: VCO News VCO.news@wits.ac.za



MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR: ACADEMIC

Dear Colleagues

I hope that you are all well and that you are taking the necessary precautions to keep safe!

I write to you in my capacity as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic to share the thinking of the Senior Executive Team (SET) on the resumption of the academic programme and also to solicit your ideas and advice on best practices in your area as we move into an online teaching mode. **Please read carefully through the attached Emergency Plan for Teaching.**

The SET met yesterday and agreed to the following schedule:

1-14 April 2020	All faculties will prepare to take the academic programme online. I know that many faculties are already off the starting block.
15-19 April 2020	This period will serve as the online orientation period for staff and students. All course outlines, lecture notes, reading lists and additional audio-visual material should be uploaded and tested during this period.
20 April 2020	The University opens for the second term and delivery of the academic programme begins online.

Please note that the almanac is currently being updated (we are consulting with faculties) and it will be finalised early next week.

I know that many academics are enthusiastic about taking the academic programme online while others are anxious about doing so. This is new for many people and I would like to assure you that we have established both central- and faculty-based teams to assist you through the process. I would like to acknowledge the great coordination that is taking place between colleagues in CLTD, ICT and the Library to ensure that staff and students are fully supported and assisted as we transition to online teaching. The **attached document** provides a step-by-step guide on how to begin this journey.

We have also ensured that all our Learning Management Systems (LMS) including Wits-e (Sakai) and Moodle will be hosted in the Amazon cloud to ensure that our systems have sufficient infrastructural support and are able to cope with the large numbers of users accessing the systems.

We are mindful that approximately 10% - 15% of our students may not have access to smart mobile devices (according to the results of biographical questionnaires conducted over the last four years by our Business Intelligence Unit), and Deans have been asked to develop plans to take this reality into account.

There is no doubt that we will have to consider additional support for students when we are able to resume contact teaching. This could take a variety of formats including additional lectures, boot camps, comprehensive laboratory sessions and tutorial support as required.

Conclusion

These solutions have been necessitated by the pandemic and have had to be devised quickly. We know that they are not perfect, and we are acutely aware that there is unevenness across disciplines, schools and faculties in the adoption of online teaching. In many cases, this is dictated by the particular demands of the programmes offered. However, we have to do all that we can to provide our students with a quality teaching experience so that we do not lose the academic year.

I am confident that we have some of the best academics in the sector, and coupled with our determination, resilience and ability to adapt to change, we will without a doubt succeed in these endeavours.

I envisage that there may well be some barriers along the way, but I also believe that we are well positioned to find solutions to the challenges that we may face.

Please feel free to write to me at Ruksana.Osman@wits.ac.za to share any suggestions or best practices that could be useful during this time.

Keep Safe!

Professor Ruksana Osman

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic

1 April 2020



Emergency Plan
for Tea....20.pdf