

**Subject:** COVID-19 UPDATE 48 – RETURN TO CAMPUS UNDER LOCKDOWN LEVEL 1

**Date:** Thursday, 01 October 2020 at 15:18:52 South Africa Standard Time

**From:** Shirona Patel on behalf of VCO News

**To:** VCO News

**Priority:** High

Dear Colleagues

Following the publication of lockdown level 1 regulations, in line with the University's COVID-19 policies and protocols, and after consultation with internal stakeholders, the Senior Executive Team (SET) agreed to the following as from Monday, 5 October 2020:

### 1. Academic Programme

The teaching and learning programme will continue online as far as possible.

Selected cohorts of students who are required to participate in contact teaching, laboratory/studio work, additional classes, and/or field trips, may return as determined by academics and faculties. All academic activities for these specific groups of students must be conducted with the requisite COVID-19 health and safety protocols in place.

Students will participate in online assessments and/or sit-down examinations, which will be stipulated in the schedules due to be published on the [Examinations and Graduation Office website](#) on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 2020.

### 2. Return of day students

Students are encouraged to continue studying online and from home as far as possible.

However, following requests from some day students to return to campus (some of whom find it difficult to study at home), all libraries (except the Education Library, due to construction), selected large venues and selected computer laboratories will be made available for study purposes from Monday, 5 October 2020 until the end of the examination period. Venues not cleared for day student occupancy may not be utilised under any circumstances.

**Permits will not be required** but access to all facilities will be limited to ensure physical distancing and the adherence to health and safety protocols. Security officers will manage traffic, disband congregations and gatherings, and/or deactivate access cards if required.

### 3. Return of residence students

**The return to residences is by invitation only.** In order to reduce the risk of infection in residences, it has been agreed that a total of 5 000 students will be accommodated. Preference will be given to returning **international students** and students who find it difficult to study from home. Insofar as possible, students will be placed in single occupancy rooms. No visitors will be allowed entry into residence rooms.

All shared facilities will be cleaned and managed in accordance with COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Take-away meals will continue to be provided, whilst the possibility of opening dining halls and staggering meal times is explored.

Buses are only allowed to be filled to 50% capacity and students must adhere to this rule. Intercampus buses will be scheduled to run more frequently.

### 4. Return of international students

International students who are permitted to enter the country under lockdown level 1 regulations, are permitted to return to campus and residences. A separate letter will be sent to international students.

### 5. Return of staff

University services will resume from 5 October 2020 and all professional and administrative staff will be required to return to work as directed by their line managers. Professional and administrative staff who can work productively from home may do so, with the express permission of their line manager. Managers are required to submit revised risk assessment and mitigation plans, which must be approved by the assigned Occupational Health and Safety Officer **BEFORE** staff return to the workplace. In open plan areas and congested spaces, staff may be required to return on a rotational basis, as determined by senior managers and Occupational Health and Safety Officers.

Academics will continue with the academic programme online insofar as possible, or via contact teaching, as agreed with their respective Head of School. Academic staff may return to work in their offices/laboratories with the permission of their respective Head of School.

**No permits will be required for staff members to access campuses.**

Staff with co-morbidities (as determined by a medical practitioner or the Wits-appointed healthcare practitioner based at the WDGMCC) and as described in the HR Practice Note on this matter, should for the time being, with the approval of their line manager, work productively from home and undertake work that is assigned to them.

Meetings will continue to be conducted online where possible, and face to face meetings will be limited. **No congregations in bathrooms, kitchens, tearooms and other spaces is allowed.**

## **6. COVID-19 health and safety protocols**

Any person who enters Wits' campuses must do the following:

- Complete the screening form on the [Wits Logbox App](#) every day before entering campus,
- Enter using a staff or student card, which will serve as a permit,
- **Wear a face mask that covers the mouth and nose at all times,**
- Practise good hand hygiene, and
- Maintain a physical distance of at least 1.5m to 2m from any other person.

**Anyone who does not comply with these regulations will be asked to leave the campus immediately. Please report any violations to your nearest Campus Protection Services Office or call (011) 717-4444 or (011) 717-6666.**

## **7. Retailers, contractors, visitors and suppliers**

All retailers will resume trading with the necessary health and safety protocols in place. Inspections will be undertaken by OHS&E and Services Staff to ensure that all regulations are being followed. All contractors, suppliers and visitors **will require permits** that can be issued by the relevant senior managers for whom they are working or visiting.

### **Our collective responsibility**

The lockdown restrictions may have eased but the coronavirus is still in our midst and it is up to us to prevent a resurgence of the pandemic. The return to campus plan described above can only work if we all observe health and safety protocols. We will carefully monitor the situation in the coming weeks, and will intervene or amend these plans if the risk of infection increases. We appeal to all staff and students, out of mutual respect for one another, and the collective health and safety of our community, to follow the rules above (and to encourage others to do the same). Now more than ever, it is up to us to care for one another and to act responsibly, in order to protect ourselves and those in our community who may be more vulnerable.

Access the latest Wits COVID-19 news, research and resources via [www.wits.ac.za/covid19](http://www.wits.ac.za/covid19).

Thank you

**SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM**

**1 OCTOBER 2020**