

Guidelines for students regarding moving to online learning due to disruption

Greetings to you all. We hope you are all well and safe.

The Office of Student Success has put together these guidelines in the wake of the need to move teaching and learning to online platforms due to the threat of COVID-19. Although online learning may be new to many of us, it is inevitable under the current circumstances. These guidelines have been put together based on the guidelines for academics in the Faculty of Health Sciences (FAHS Guidelines for Moving to Online Teaching Due to Disruption, 2020). Learning during a time such as this requires that you manage both your time and your learning well. We provide a few pointers below on how you can do that.

1. **Be optimistic:** Although online learning may be unfamiliar territory, there are a lot of opportunities for your lecturers to make learning much more engaging. This period will probably make you a lot more aware than you were before of the vast learning resources available to you. Use this period as an opportunity to develop your digital skills.
2. **Ask for help:** There will be a few things that you may not be familiar with on the online learning platform. Do not let unfamiliarity breed anxiety. Reach out for help as appropriate, through your Course Coordinators, Year Coordinators, ICT help desk or the OSS Academic Advisors or Counsellors. For one-on-one assistance from the OSS, please book appointments for **telephonic or online advising or counselling** through Ms Anelisa Mofakeng (Anelisa.Mofakeng1@wits.ac.za) or Mrs Kasturi Naidoo (Kasturi.Naidoo@wits.ac.za). Please provide your cell phone number and 3 alternative times that you are available for a call.
3. **Be aware:** Make sure that you are aware of what resources are being made available, and on what platforms. Look out for and note Announcements on your learning platform as Lecturers will be using this facility to send out messages.
4. **Create structure:** Just as face to face teaching has structure, you also need to create a structure in your day for engagement with learning activities. Keep up with the readings and assignments, and engaging in discussion where you are required to do so. This will help you to not quickly feel overwhelmed. Follow the weekly schedules that will be provided per subject so that you are aware of what needs to be done. Diarise dates when tasks and assignments are due. Note and follow instructions from Lecturers around all materials and activities so that you know what to submit and how.
5. **Lectures:** You will notice that lectures may be broken into shorter bits than the usual 45-60 minutes. This is to help you keep focused. Many of your lectures will have activities embedded in them. These are meant to enhance your engagement and learning. Do follow up on all activities and resources that are provided and/or referred to. Communicate with Lecturers and/or Course Coordinators when you have questions or concerns.
6. **Assessments:** Due to the disruption of face to face learning, many of your assessments are likely to be redesigned in line with the current situation. Be aware of what changes have been made and be prepared for a more continuous kind of assessment. This is likely to place you at an advantage in that you will learn more from the feedback provided. However, be aware that you may have more of these low-stakes assessments, which will demand better time management on your side.

7. **Participation:** Participation in online learning is key. Work on each activities as it comes. Plan, organise and direct your activities accordingly. Do not let work pile up as that will only cause you unnecessary anxiety. Focus on incremental understanding, and learn with the purpose of your degree in mind.

8. **Student Internet Access to Wits Systems:** As has been reiterated in the VCO Communications, students using **Vodacom, Telkom** or **MTN** networks have specific Wits URLs zero-rated. This means that these subscribers are not charged when they visit these specific sites. These URLs include Wits-e and the library. The full list of Wits sites is accessible via <http://www.wits.ac.za/mywits/zero-rated-data-to-students-and-applicants/>. Note that discussions with Cell C are taking place.

We hope that you will find these guidelines helpful as you proceed with learning online. Start with a positive mind-set, being fully aware that you are not alone in this new but exciting way of learning.