

T: +27 51 401 7421 | E: advising@ufs.ac.za | www.ufs.ac.za

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Inspiring excellence. Transforming lives.





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Prepare: Understanding lockdown level 2 as a UFS student

Welcome back Kovsies

The UFS community is excited to welcome you to this 2nd semester of the 2020 academic year. It has been an interesting 8 months of the year and we know it has not been easy but yet again, we congratulate you for persisting and more importantly remaining committed to forge ahead towards success despite the global pandemic.

We wish each of you a fantastic journey this semester and reassure you that the UFS community as a collective continues to work hard to make sure you are not left behind and your pursuit this semester is academically rewarding.

We are officially on National Lockdown level 2 and many regulations still restrict us from returning fully back to what was. The majority of the classes across all faculties will thus continue online while a small percentage will be on campus as guided by national regulations.

What has informed the remote low-tech online learning and teaching strategy of the UFS?

The UFS Learning and Teaching philosophy (2019 - 2024):

- learning-centeredness,
- caring,
- inclusiveness,
- flexibility and
- quality.

Facts you need to know before you get started:

- o All your learning and teaching materials are available on Blackboard
- o All the decisions taken by the UFS relating to the return to campus are based on limiting the possible spread of COVID-19 and national lockdown regulations. The return is gradual, phased, structured, and risk controlled over a reasonable period of time. In addition, physical distancing and good hygiene are important risk prevention measures.
- o Only students who have been pre-identified by faculties according to the national directives received from the DHET, as well as the university's re-integration plan that has been approved by the DHET may return to campus under Level 2 of the national lockdown
- o Students who do not fall into the Level 2 returning category will continue to study online as guided by the revised academic calendar. The <u>#UFSLearnOn</u> material and the <u>Digital Life Portal</u> (under the Student Toolbox) on the KovsieLife website will remain available to provide guidance and support throughout this time.
- o Mental Health support is available through the <u>#WellbeingWarriors</u> campaign
- o Tutorial support +27 51 401 2444 / Astep@ufs.ac.za
- o Academic support
 - o Bloemfontein campus: advising@ufs.ac.za
 - o Qwaqwa campus: advisingqq@ufs.ac.za
 - o South campus: advisingsc@ufs.ac.za

We are walking together as a community with the commitment not to leave any student or staff member behind!

UFS 2nd semester academic calendar

Activity	
2nd Semester Registration	3 Sept – 11 Sept
Quarter 3	1 Sept – 16 Oct
Break	24 Sept – 27 Sept
Quarter 4	19 Oct – 27 Nov
Break	30 Oct – 2 Nov
Predicate Day	27 Nov
Face-to-face Main exams	30 Nov – 19 Dec
Break	21 Dec – 1 Jan

Student administration

Online self-service for module changes and additions is available until 11 September 2020. If you are unable to register online and need assistance with changes on your registration please contact your faculty for academic advice/approval.

Visit the <u>registration page</u> for all the information you need in order to get all your admin in order.

To verify your registration for the second semester:

 Download your Academic Data Summary (ADS): The ADS allows you to check your service indicators and academic advice blocks to access your ADS, you must log onto the selfservice: https://pssa.ufs.ac.za/psp/csprd/?cmd=login&languageCd=ENG

Reflection: What worked and what didn't work during semester 1

As the saying goes, "the more reflective you are, the more effective you are". You have made it through the first semester. Reflecting on what worked and what did not work is key to developing a strategy for the second semester. Ask yourself the following questions:

- What did I do that helped me perform well in my modules in the 1st semester?
- What new strategies did I learn from studying online?
- What lessons from the first semester can I apply in my 2nd semester modules?
- What strategies did not give me my desired results?
- How can I adapt my strategies to get the required results?
- What resources do I have that I can put to good use in my studies?

Want to know more? Click here to watch a video on the importance of reflection.

Managing time during lockdown level 2

By now we have come to accept the temporary 'new normal' of remote learning. Although this reality is not what is preferred, we need to manage what we can to make a success of the second semester. As academic advisors, we acknowledge the challenges our students are faced with and in another article in this edition, *Managing the Challenges so Learning can Continue*, we address these challenges as well. However, another big challenge with remote learning and working is often time management and making the most of our time despite added responsibilities at home. A few key aspects to remember include:

1. Use critical reflection

We must reflect on what worked and what did not work in the first semester to avoid previous mistakes. This includes looking critically at our time management strategies and planning (or lack of planning) we had in the first semester.

2. Planning, planning and planning

As we start the second semester, it is crucial that we plan and manage our academic load. Tips on this appear in the article *Tips to Keep up & not have to Catch up*.

3. Make the most of quiet time

Like many students, we as advisors often have noisy households with young children who don't attend school each day. What we would do to manage our time between household chores, child care, homeschooling and work responsibilities, is to find the quietest time when most in the house is asleep. This might be in the early hours of the morning or at night. During this time, we focus on activities that require the most focus and concentration. However, we also ensure that we get enough sleep to function optimally.

4. Grab support with both hands

2020 has been a year full of team play. As advisors and students, we need to lean on the teams that are in our corner to support us to get through. This edition is full of support services that are available to Kovsies, and we also developed a short online workshop to help you manage your time in this challenging time. Click here to access this zero-rated online workshop in your own time.



Visit the Student Success Portal for additional tips, tricks and tools to help you succeed.





Tips to keep up and not have to catch up



In the article "Managing time during lockdown level 2", we as advisors encouraged the importance of reflecting on your time management strategies and planning (or lack of planning). With the continuation of remote online learning in the second semester, it is important that you plan effectively, understand the learning and teaching approach better, and improve the management of your academic load in order to keep up in the second semester, and not have to catch up when examinations or final assessments approach. Two important things to note:

Actively participate and engage in your learning

Ensure that you consistently participate in all your modules' online platforms (blackboard collaborate, discussion boards, etc.) to help you understand your content better and engage with your lecturers and classmates. Do your reading, watch video recordings, and be aware of what other students and your lecturers are saying during discussion boards for instance and always ask for clarification if you do not understand.

Seek support as soon as you need it

If you feel like a strategy or plan that you created is not working after a few weeks or a month, speak up. If you feel yourself falling behind, speak up. Do not wait until an assignment is almost due to ask questions or report issues. Email your lecturers and advisors and be proactive in asking for help.

Practicing healthy habits that will make you successful in your learning is vital.

One of the online workshops created by the academic advisors at CTL is on "10 habits of a successful online student". The zero-rated workshop will help you understand and apply the 10 habits you need to keep up with online learning this semester. Once you practice these daily, you will be able to master your academics, and come out on top this semester. Click here to access the workshop.

Write down a list of activities you need to do daily (both academic and personal), Keep a calendar and keep track of all your assessment dates for semester 2.

Set yourself time aside each week. This is to complete and upload your assignments, make notes and summaries. Leave enough time before each deadline to carefully proofread and edit your work.

Healthy tips to practice so you can keep up during the semester

When studying your module content, use effective study skills that suit your learning preference, such as rereading notes, self-testing, keyword mnemonics, interleaved practice, rewriting notes, etc. Do this on a weekly basis!

If you have public spaces in your area (such as libraries, schools, community halls, etc) that you can use to study, then use them.

Especially if you have distractions at home during the day. Remember to always have your mask & sanitizer.

Managing challenges during the new norm so learning can continue

We have experienced this pandemic attacking the whole world, and we started adapting without knowing when it will actually end. With this, we have become aware of our actual capability to push ourselves through certain circumstances just to ensure that we are actually fighting this unending battle to attain our education with the resources we can think of. Getting used to the 'new norm' is something we were never ready for, but because of the ongoing support structures from the institution we have made it together as a team and finally find ourselves in the new semester. We all are aware of the many factors hindering or rather impeding the achievement of our initially envisioned academic goals. Some of these are discussed with suggestions on how to manage our situations best.

1. Environmental factors

Firstly, we are more affected by environmental factors than ever before. The pandemic on its own may have affected our performance in various ways and to top it, we experience load shedding, data-, device-, and/or connectivity challenges. But, rest assured, there are solutions and help available:

- Load shedding: There is nothing as demotivating as having to do your work while power
 outages keep you at bay. There are, however, load shedding schedules shared on social
 media platforms for further details on when to expect it so that we can plan our time around
 that.
- Data-, and device challenges: The institution has been striving to give support to students
 who have been struggling with connectivity and devices and so far most students were
 reached and assisted. The important thing is to reach out to your lecturers. If you start to fall
 behind, reach out. The UFS is here to support our students. Connect with your lecturer and
 advisor to help you get back on track.

• Connectivity: Although it was not easy from the beginning, the Global Protect App has assisted in ensuring that students stay connected and that they too can be in communication with their fellow students and support services on campus. The various academic websites are zero-rated through this app for UFS students, so ensure that you have it on your devices. For more on this and assistance with the app, click here.

2. Family responsibilities and pressure

Secondly, while we are striving for academic excellence, we are also challenged by members of our families. Yes, you got that right. Many of us actually have family members that fail to understand that we also have the responsibilities of reaching our deadlines even when at home. We are also expected to take care of our younger siblings, which makes it difficult to actually catch up on our academics.

So, how do we avoid pressure from these challenges? This partly depends on our planning, but also on communication. I know we all have the abilities to do well and to push towards our goals. We are also sure that by now we already know that our lecturers are very understanding and readily avail themselves to provide the much needed support. Here are strategies to assist you overcome the challenges:

- Build relationships with both your lecturers and fellow students
- · Communicate often with your family on your planning
- Have high and consistent standards
- Be engaged
- Reflect and compare your work often
- Don't be afraid to be vulnerable, it's okay help is available, just ask

In all of this, communication is key. If people don't know and you don't tell them what you need, they can't help.

Engage

Learning in an asynchronous environment means that you will not have class in a specific time and place, but rather work through your learning material in your own time. Although it might still feel challenging, there are some advantages to this type of learning environment:

- *Flexibility* You can study whenever is best for you. You can connect when possible, where possible.
- Pacing You decide your own pace in asynchronous learning. You can power through
 material that you find easy, and choose to spend more time on materials that are more
 difficult.
- Affordability Since you do not have to be in the classroom, you might actually save on living expenses.

NB: Communicate and ask for clarity from your lecturers

Do not hesitate to contact your lectures. Ask questions when you are not certain of something or when you do not clearly understand anything related to your module content. Note that your lectures will respond to your emails as soon as possible but will mostly access their emails during work hours (and not over weekends).

Although there are some benefits, there are also things to look out for while learning in this manner:

- Isolation asynchronous learning can be a lonely experience. Make sure you connect with other students in your course, communicate regularly with your lecturers, and stay up to date with opportunities to participate in class activities.
- Apathy While a self-guided learning environment might sound great, one can often lose
 passion and enthusiasm for your modules. Set goals for yourself for each task, and
 constantly reflect on your progress. Remember why you are doing this, and constantly
 remind yourself of your long-term goals.

Lookout for:

Module content

The quality and content of your module will not change, however foci will be given to core learning that is required for each of your modules. The quantity will also not decrease, only reorganized in a way that differentiates core and supplementary content.

Assessment

Assessments have been altered, however the objective remains the same, to ensure you demonstrate understanding and mastery of knowledge and skills. The variety of assessments may range from online quizzes, essays (reflective or otherwise); remote lab activities, guided reading and you will also contribute to the compilation through student generated questions. For all these assessments thorough instructions will be provided so that you too know what is expected of you. Feedback for assessments will also continue to be provided. The purpose of providing feedback is to ensure you keep on track but also to motivate you and encourage improvement. Ample opportunities will be provided for the preparation of formative assessment and a variety of submission formats have also been considered to accommodate different circumstances and realities.

Scheduling + Communication

Through any change in circumstances, communication is key, so do expect communication and scheduling from your lecturers via primarily email or Blackboard announcements weekly. Firstly, you are likely to receive an <u>initial module-level communication</u>, which will include:

- an announcement to share formal information on what will happen with the module moving forward;
- · what is expected of you; and
- · instructions on assessments.

Secondly you are then likely to receive <u>weekly module-level communication</u>, this will comprise the following information:

- scheduler (detailing units/sections and additional materials) and;
- · how best to approach the content (i.e. units) and assessments for the week.

The third level of communication to expect is <u>individualized communication</u> between yourself and each of your lecturer, this will only take place as and when the need arises.

Some lecturers might communicate through other platforms such as Microsoft teams, WhatsApp, Zoom, Video or audio recordings so ensure your ear is on the ground and know what tools your lecturer will be using.

With everything that is happening make sure you stay organized, keep track of information coming in and timely submission of everything going out.

Here are 7 tips to help you succeed in an asynchronous, low-tech environment:

- 1. Set up a daily schedule Create a daily planner of what you will do when, and stick to your plan as far as possible.
- 2. Make regular contact with each module. Set times to check Blackboard and other communication platforms. Make sure you visit each module often.
- 3. Write down your assessment dates where you can constantly be reminded of them.
- 4. Download documents/content the first time you open them and save them on your learning device. This will help that you don't download content more than once, and save data.
- Stay connected Make sure you have the contact details of the lecturer of each of your modules. Let your lecturer know immediately if you struggle with content or could not submit assessments.
- 6. Learning communities Make sure you connect with other students enrolled in the module. This will help you stay on track with what is happening, and what you need to do.
- 7. Capitalize on learning opportunities If midnight is your time to study, make sure you are awake and focused. Make the best of each study opportunity by avoiding distractions, making lists of what you need to do, and doing things right the first time.

Student voice- secrets for success from fellow students

Name: Lehlohonolo Kenneth Bula

Program enrolled for: BSc degree majoring in Genetics and Physiology

Academic Year: **3rd year** Current Residence:

What was your biggest concern about your academics when you found out the country was going into lockdown?

As a final year student, my biggest concern was the possibility of the academic program overlapping into the following year, thus delaying future plans for post-graduate studies.

What are some of the challenges you've experienced along the way?

I did not experience a lot of challenges hey, but I have to say what challenged me was the self-studying part! we literally taught ourselves during 1st semester, besides one module where the lecturer provided audio lessons, then the rest of the modules it was just additional material, so you can imagine starting a completely foreign chapter without the help of a lecture, It caused me to put in twice the effort to understand the content.

What are some of the strategies you've used to ensure your academics don't suffer?

In terms of the strategies, I have a study-buddy and we kept each other accountable throughout the lockdown study period. We had study schedules which are in sync and we habitually discussed the work we have studied every two days. That study association was very helpful because of the ACCOUNTABILITY part of it, because not only at home, but in general there are many reasons to relax and not study, so even today the association is still beneficial.



What support have you received from the institution that's helped you thus far?

The articles from the university really helped, addressing how to be positive minded during a lockdown period, and also reassuring me that, WE ARE ALL HAVING A FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE OF E-LEARNING, IAM NOTALONE.

What are you looking forward to the most in the second semester?

For 2nd semester I am looking forward to seeing how the practical sessions will be conducted, because 1st semester, all the practical's were cancelled and we did not acquire any lab experience.

What do you think the UFS could have done differently to support student success?

The university really tried its best to ensure student success, by addressing major issues that we could possibly face e.g. insufficient data for E-learning, that was settled by the Global App which was introduced, in addition, other students started receiving mobile data to help compensate for that.

What has kept you motivated?

The thought of obtaining my MSc degree, really keeps me going every day.

What advice do you have for your fellow Kovsies who are finding it difficult to keep going?

"In a world where external motivation seems to be nothing but a fallacy, review your academic goals and find an intrinsic motivation in them. Once you find it, you will start to realise that there is life during and after this pandemic, and that hope will not disappoint. You will develop perseverance because, what drives you is not that which is surrounding you but that which is engraved deep inside of you."

- Kenny

Student voice- secrets for success from fellow students

Name: Lethukuthula Nsibande

Program enrolled for: BSc in Information Technology with Business Management

Academic Year: 2nd year

Current Residence: KwaZulu Natal, Newcastle

What was your biggest concern about your academics when you found out the country was going into lockdown

I did not have any major concerns as I was academically drowning and I could foresee that my semester was going to be the worst out of all I had had so far. If I had anything, it was serenity and peace of mind from the anxiety I had.

What are some of the challenges you've experienced along the way?

- Time management having no lectures and just mere notifications on blackboard often led me to believe I have more time than I originally had, as a result I ended finishing my assignments on the days they were due, this reflected directly on my results.
- Having to be dependent again I don't know why but I missed being independent and making my own decisions. It was really taking its toll to relearn to be dependent on parents and having decisions made for you. It's getting better now though.

What are some of the strategies you've used to ensure your academics don't suffer?

- My personal strategy was sitting down with my family and agreeing on a set time where I will be doing my school work, and will thus need no distractions that are non-academic, after that time I can do chores and errands. It was quite hard at first but after a few days they acclimatized to my schedule which made doing school work a bit easier.
- In simple terms, my strategy was to manage my time doing school work and social life respectively, and staying assertive to that.

What support have you received from the institution that's helped you thus far?

- Advising Office hosted a Time Management Q&A Session during the early days of lock down, I grabbed the opportunity with both hands and viola, and it worked.
- I also had a telephone counselling with SCD and they helped me with staying assertive and setting goals, which pretty much work hand in hand.
- Easily, I'm grateful to the SCD and Academic Advising office.
- Also the GRAD book, I'm not sure if that counts as support from the institution but it helped a lot.

What are you looking forward to the most in the second semester?

Getting back on campus, I can't wait to go back and implementing what I have learnt during this period which I am positive will be evident in my results come end of the year.

What do you think the UFS could have done differently to support student success?

- Personally I think if UFS loaned students laptops for free from the get go, it would have been much better for many disadvantaged students, also the implementation of data should have been an institutional thing long before Minister Blade Nzimande implemented it as it helps so much.
- Additionally, I feel data should continue to be provided to students after the 3 months set period provided lock down regulations continue, as most students only got a break after that was implemented.

What has kept you motivated?

The fact that I am not alone and the people that love me want to see me succeed, so I am doing everything in my power to graduate and do the work that I love thus making my family proud. That is what keeps me motivated to do the work almost every day. "After the storm comes a calm"

What advice do you have for your fellow Kovsies who are finding it difficult to keep going?

You have to keep the main thing the main thing, by understanding why you are studying what
you are studying, you will get a motivation as the end goal will be visibly clear.
 For example, whenever I feel unmotivated and procrastination seems inevitable, I ask myself
why I have to go through all of this, and my answer is that my love for Information Technology
far exceeds my desire to procrastinate.



Alternative mental health resources

SCD's latest edition of #WellbeingWarriors on goal setting is currently available to help you sustain your healthy habits and plan SMART goals.

Find the latest as well as the other editions for support on https://www.ufs.ac.za/wellbeing-warriors

Student Counselling and Development

Email to SCD@ufs.ac.za / SCDQQ@ufs.ac.za / SCDSouth@ufs.ac.za

telephonic online

Adcock Ingram Depression and Anxiety Line (0800 70 80 90)

ADHD Helpline (0800 55 44 33)

Befrienders Bloemfontein 24hr Helpline (051 444 5000)

Cipla 24hr Mental Health Helpline (0800 456 789)

Pharmadynamics Police & Trauma Line (0800 20 50 26)

SADAG Mental Health Line (011 234 4837)

Substance Abuse 24hr Line (0800 12 13 14 / SMS: 32312)

Suicide Crisis Line (0800 567 567)

Gift of the Givers COVID-19 Counselling (0800 786 786)

www.mobieg.co.za (online chat, articles and app) www.helpguide.org (online resources)

Meet your academic advisor and Faculty Manager

Meet your Faculty Manager:

All your curriculum needs – registration queries, module codes, programme codes.

Faculty	Name and Surname	Email Address
Economic and Management Sciences	Lizette Pretorius	LPretorius@ufs.ac.za
Humanities	Marica Coetsee	Humanities@ufs.ac.za
Education	Thandi Buso	BusoNH@ufs.ac.za
Law:	William Awusi	AwusiWK@ufs.ac.za
Theology & Religion	Ingrid Mostert	MostertIE@ufs.ac.za
Natural and Agricultural Sciences	Velaphi Makgwahla	MakgwahlaMVT@ufs.ac.za
Health Sciences	Lydia Du Toit	StudentAdminFHS@ufs.ac.za
Economic and Management Sciences - QQ	Jabulile Zim	ZimJN@ufs.ac.za
Natural and Agricultural Sciences - QQ	Maria Mohono	MohonoDM@ufs.ac.za
Education - QQ	Tshidi Mosea	MoseaTM@ufs.ac.za
Humanities - QQ	Grey Magaiza	MagaizaG@ufs.ac.za
Economic and Management Sciences - South	Lerato Sekonyela	SekonyelaLE@ufs.ac.za
Natural and Agricultural Sciences - South	Elzmarie Oosthuizen	OosthuizenME@ufs.ac.za

Meet your academic advisor and Faculty Manager

Meet your Academic Advisor:

Get all your general academic related support – time management, study strategies and more.

Faculty	Name and Surname	Email Address
Economic and Management Sciences	Masabata Mosoeu	MosoeuMP@ufs.ac.za
The Humanities	Monique Schoeman	DuToitM2@ufs.ac.za
Education	Keitumetse Poen	PoenKR@ufs.ac.za
Law	Boitumelo Mokhatla	MokhatlaBJ@ufs.ac.za
Theology and Religion	Keitumetse Poen	PoenKR@ufs.ac.za
Natural and Agricultural Sciences	Ninette Aucamp	AucampJJ@ufs.ac.za
Health Sciences	Gugu Tiroyabone	TiroyaboneGW@ufs.ac.za
Humanities and Edu - QQ	Khethiwe Bhiyo	BiyoKC@ufs.ac.za
EMS and NAS - QQ	Sharon Marumo	MarumoSR@ufs.ac.za
South Campus	Chwaro Shuping	ShupingCN@ufs.ac.za

