



UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE  
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE VRYSTAAT  
YUNIVESITHI YA FREISTATA

Office of the Rector and Vice-Chancellor  
Kantoor van die Rektor en Visekanselier  
Ofisi ya Morekoto le Motlatsa Mokanseliri  
IHhovisi loMphathi neSekelashansela

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27 August 2020

Dear Students,

## UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENTS AT THE UFS

I hope you are well, healthy, and safe. We have reached the end of the first semester despite the unusual circumstances we find ourselves in. I know that it has not always been easy for you. The national lockdown has been a true test of the resilience and ability of us all to adapt to a changing environment.

Some of you have written examinations and tests, and I trust that your efforts have been rewarded. Overall, I have experienced an overwhelming sense of commitment from staff and students across the university to make a success of the 2020 academic year. Thank you for working together towards this common goal.

Currently, we have a number of students back on campus, and others are continuing with online learning. Each environment requires dedication, effort, and discipline. Data shows that most of you have adapted well to the blended learning modes – I find it encouraging and commendable. Be assured that your lecturers are working hard to deliver a quality teaching and learning experience in the current circumstances and they will continue to do so, whatever the circumstances may be. Please use the [#LearnOn](#) material as a guide to plan for the second semester.

While we have been reintegrating staff and students on campus through a structured and phased approach since 1 June 2020, your safety, health, and well-being remain a priority. During Level 2 of the national lockdown, we will continue with the university's reintegration plan for staff and students. Our focus during this level is on students in all years of study who, for instance, require laboratory and technical equipment to complete the academic year; students in all years of study who require practical placements/experiential learning/workplace-based learning to complete the academic year; first-year students in all undergraduate programmes; and selected students in all other years of study and programmes who face extreme difficulties in their home-learning environments.

***Please note that you will be informed by your faculty if you are required to return to campus during Level 2. If you have not been contacted by your faculty, you will be supported through remote multimodal teaching, learning, and assessment until you are informed by your faculty that you can return to campus.***

The university is aware of the statement on COVID-19 alert Level 2 measures in the post-school education and training sector delivered by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande on 26 August 2020. Information about operational matters relating to the statement will be shared soon.

The second semester of any academic year is always challenging, and this year will be no different. However, I am confident that you will remain focused and committed until the end. The [academic calendar](#) for the second semester is as follows:

1 September 2020: Second semester commences  
27 November 2020: Predicate date  
30 November 2020 to 19 December 2020: Main examinations  
21 December 2020 to 1 January 2021: Break

We have prepared a safe environment for students who are returning to campus during Level 2. Sufficient hygiene measures are in place, as well as adaptations to ensure physical distancing. The wearing of masks, physical distancing, and hand sanitising remain compulsory on all the campuses. Although our country is on Level 2 of the national lockdown, it is still extremely important that you remain vigilant. Ultimately, your health is your responsibility. Please do not let your guard down and adhere to the protocols and regulations – for your own safety, and for the safety of others.

During Level 2, campus access will remain restricted – only those with campus access permits will be allowed to enter. Familiarise yourself with our [Fast guide for the return of students to campus](#), which provides guidelines on measures put in place by the university in accordance with the Reintegration Plan. Residence students should also comply with the protocols in their respective residences. Visit the [COVID-19 website](#) for comprehensive information and updates.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt by the UFS community in many ways. I am aware that some of our students have lost family members and/or friends due to COVID-19 and express our sincere condolences and wish them strength during this difficult time.

It is also important to keep your mental health in check – make use of the [#WellbeingWarriors](#) campaign from our Department of Student Counselling and Development, which is aimed at encouraging health and well-being among students.

Remember that the COVID-19 pandemic is still testing every aspect of society, and although the infection rate is slowly decreasing, we must not underestimate the impact that the pandemic still has on local and global communities. Take care of yourselves and those around you and comply with the national guidelines and regulations.

I wish you all the best with your studies and hope to see you on our campuses soon.

Best regards,



**Prof Francis W Petersen**

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