

RETURN OF STAFF TO CAMPUS AS FROM 1 OCTOBER 2020

Message by Prof Francis Petersen, Rector and Vice-Chancellor

Dear Colleagues,

I hope that you are well, healthy, and safe. On 16 September 2020, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that our country will move to Level 1 of the national lockdown as from midnight on Sunday 20 September 2020.

The management of the University of the Free State (UFS) has adjusted its measures to re-integrate staff and students on campus in line with President Ramaphosa's announcement of last week, and also in line with the new regulations issued by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Minister Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, in Government Gazette 43725 of 18 September 2020.

During Level 1 of the national lockdown, we will continue to return staff and students in a structured and phased approach. We are still unable to return all of our students to the campuses, as we have to adhere to physical distancing and hygiene measures and also have to take into account the capacity of the lecture, laboratory, studio and computer venues on the campuses, but most specifically the capacity of residences.

Therefore, the re-integration plan for staff is specifically based on the need for staff to return to work to provide maximum support for the adjusted number of students who will return to the campus. The principle of social/physical distancing and the need for health protocols will remain in place.

The safety, health, and well-being of staff and students and the saving of lives remain the university's priority in order to limit the possibility of spreading COVID-19 on the campuses and to prevent a second surge of positive cases. The UFS has had relatively low numbers of infections so far; this is being strictly monitored by Kovsie Health.

We have prepared a safe environment for our staff and students who are returning to campus during lockdown Level 1. Sufficient hygiene measures are in place, as well as re-configurations to ensure physical distancing. The wearing of masks, physical distancing, and hand sanitising remain compulsory on all the campuses.

During Level 1, campus access will remain restricted – only those with campus access permits will be allowed to enter. Although our country will be on Level 1 of the national lockdown, it is still extremely important that you remain vigilant and take ownership of your health and look out for the health of those around you. 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.

I am attaching a **document that explains the re-integration plan for Level 1 in detail**, including the arrangements for the return of staff to our campuses as from 1 October 2020, entry to the campus, wearing of cloth masks and personal protective equipment (PPE), physical distancing, environmental hygiene, protocol for on-

campus meetings, staff with minor children, public transport, and the management of visitors during this period. The plan will be amended as and when needed.

It is also important to keep your mental health in check – make use of the resources available from the Department of Human Resources, which are aimed at encouraging health and well-being among our staff. Visit the [COVID-19 website](#) for comprehensive information and updates.

Although the infection rate in our country is decreasing, remember that the COVID-19 pandemic is still testing every aspect of society; 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.

May you have a good week and a restful long weekend ahead.

Regards,

Prof Francis Petersen
Rector and Vice-Chancellor