

Level 1: Learning And Teaching Update

Dear Student

In line with the revised academic calendar, our second semester is in full swing. We have also moved to lockdown level 1 as part of the national risk-adjusted strategy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

What does this mean in terms of who can return to campus and the learning and teaching approach adopted?

According to national directives released by the DHET,

institutions may now plan to return all students and staff, subject to any restrictions linked to **their own risk assessment** due to their local context and conditions.

In performing this **risk and contextual assessment** with multi-stakeholder input, we took note of the following:

As part of remaining agile during the pandemic, at each lockdown level we **performed an assessment** to build on what worked at the previous level and to adapt where needed.

At levels 2 and 3 and the start of level 1, some 16 836 Mandela University students were prioritized to return to the university, of whom 13 815 or 82% accepted the terms and conditions to return. Thus **47% of our students** have returned so far.

Some students **indicated their preference** to continue to learn online remotely, as this approach served them well to complete semester 1.

#SaveLives needs to continue to be prioritised as we **#SaveTheAcademicYear**.

While venue occupancy could be 50% to a maximum of 250 people, physical distancing also needs to be applied. As a result, **only 30% occupancy is possible** in some venues. Reduced capacity in venues implies that the normal contact LT approach is not feasible.

Instead, at levels 2 and 3 we adopted a **flexible blended learning approach** in that content teaching was online and virtual while lab and studio work, and clinical training sessions were small-group and contact or “mask-to-mask” in nature in COVID-19 compliant venues. This approach proved to be very effective in balancing health and safety with completing academic work.


The system of inviting students to campus for **experiential learning activities or making a booking** to use the general computer labs was equally effective and assisted with contact tracing, when needed.





#SaveLives as we **#SaveTheAcademicYear**




Flowing from our risk and contextual assessment, and by building on what we have found works in our context, **for the remainder of the 2020 academic year:**


 We will continue to adopt a **flexible blended learning approach** where content is taught online and virtually, and experiential learning and clinical training is done in small group contact sessions in COVID-19 compliant venues.


 The **assessment approach** of many modules has been changed to continuous assessment, while there will only be contact examinations in limited modules.


 **Contact exams** will be introduced in a phased way in certain modules to provide opportunities to adapt procedures as needed. The main semester 2 exam period, for modules that have not changed to continuous assessment, will be from the **end of January to the end of February 2021**.


 Later in the semester, **limited contact, flipped class sessions could be phased in** where necessary and feasible, and at the discretion of Faculties, to assist small groups of students with revision and content mastery as well as with catch-up opportunities. Online recorded lectures and Question and Answer sessions, and other forms of non-contact engagement (e.g. on Moodle and via voice notes) will continue.


 Students who can complete the second semester **online remotely** remain encouraged to do so. Please let your lecturers know that you are doing so.

 **Lecturers will communicate with students** who need to return to campus for experiential learning or examinations. In addition, all students are encouraged to constantly remain in contact with their lecturers.

 Any student who has not yet been notified to return to the university, but who would like to do so to **return to residence and/or to use the university's facilities** while they largely learn online, should contact their lecturers as soon as possible to indicate this.

 Access to campus will be controlled via either an invitation from a lecturer to attend an academic activity or a booking to **use facilities such as general computer labs, the library, etc.**

 Access to campus will also require students to **swipe their student card**, have their temperature checked, and show the results of the University's online COVID-19 self-screening tool (<https://webapps.mandela.ac.za/screening>). Students will be required to always wear a face mask, sanitise, practice physical and social distancing, and comply with other health hygiene requirements. Compliance is not optional as we are all responsible to look after our own health and the health of others.

 **Learning and psychosocial support** will continue to be available to students on a range of virtual and contact platforms.



Remain Vigilant

While the country has moved to a less restrictive level, our particular context and environment does not easily allow for this. An outbreak of the virus among the increasing numbers of students on campus could lead to the University's closure if not well managed, cancelling all the gains to date, but more critically putting lives at risk.

Please continue to remain vigilant. Do not drop your guard and become complacent. Continue to practice the changed behaviour to both save lives and save the academic year.

