RESUMPTION OF SEMESTER 1 LEARNING AND TEACHING ACTIVITIES

OUR APPROACH

Given our strong commitment to social justice and equality, our approach to resuming learning and teaching is to allow all students to complete their semester 1 modules through multiple, blended pathways. It is possible to switch between the pathways and it is likely that they will converge to an extent when students return to campus. The pathways will be phased-in. Some pathways may start at different dates and may take longer to complete but they will nonetheless allow students to complete their modules – which is our main aim.

Pathway 1 (P1) students will learn online until they can return to campus for lab and experiential learning work, clinical training, work-integrated learning, school-based learning and tutorial and revision sessions, where needed. **Pathway 2 (P2)** learners will learn, where possible, with materials that they have at home or that can be provided to them. When they get back to campus, they will continue to cover the same work as P1 learners, with an intensive delivery approach that blends some contact opportunities with the same online learning opportunities that P1 students accessed.

When students went on extended recess from 18 March, lecturers started preparing to teach online and developed learning activities for each module site on our Moodle Learning Management System. In addition, changes needed to assessment tasks were identified and approved by the Executive Committee of Senate. In many cases, a continuous assessment approach has been favoured over an examination at the end of the module as this approach is more appropriate to foster learning in an online context. In view of the disrupted first semester, interventions such as "pass-on-link" and relaxing pre-requisites for second semester modules are in place in certain modules. These allow academic standards to be maintained while giving students more time to meet the requirements through improved second semester performance.

> OUR APPROACH TO RESUMING LEARNING AND TEACHING IS TO ALLOW ALL STUDENTS TO COMPLETE THEIR SEMESTER 1 MODULES THROUGH MULTIPLE, BLENDED PATHWAYS

From Monday 4 May, we will intensify online learning and teaching along pathway 1 for at least 6 weeks. Given that access to data is coming on stream and some students will apply to access a device in the coming week, some challenges are likely as both students and lecturers adapt to online learning. Patience and persistence is needed as we start-up this new learning pathway.

Our most important priority from 4 to 18 May is to get as many students as possible to restart their learning. For P1 learners this means immersing themselves in online learning. P2 learners may have a slower start to actively resuming their learning, as they do not have a device or connectivity. Where possible, lecturers are assessing what the best ways are to have contact with P2 learners and what their support needs are. It might be possible for lecturers to provide some learning activities via SMS or WhatsApp, or to courier learning materials to students. P2 learners will not be expected to hand in any assignments or write tests during the time that they are learning remotely.

The necessary academic and psychosocial support is available to enable students to learn successfully and adapt to changed circumstances. Psychological and online teaching development support is also available for academics.

Principles Related to Implementing Pedagogical Flexibility

In times of rapid transition during disruptions, pedagogical flexibility allows lecturers to be innovative with assignment design, exam format, options for students such as choosing from a list of projects, interactive discussions, avenues for student submission of their work, etc. Below are the principles that we will apply while delivering LT to complete the first semester and the 2020 academic year.

The core principles that we will apply are:

a. **Be human-centred and prioritise care and kindness** – regularly connect with students, colleagues and line managers. It is important that everyone prioritises their psychological and psychical well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic.

b. **Keep it simple and adjust your expectations** - Keep it simple and choose technology tools that will support particular learning goals and needs and will make it easier for students with limited data and for those students engaging in mobile learning to access.

c. **Prioritise what is needed** – decide on the essential content students really need to cover and know/master.

d. **Practice pedagogical flexibility** - be innovative with how students can achieve their learning outcomes, with assignment design and exam (or end-of-module-assessment) format. Be flexible in delivering LT for the differing pathways via which students will achieve their outcomes.

e. **Be present as the lecturer:** Students should "see" that lecturers go online often through their posts, comments, answering students' questions and explaining difficult concepts, etc. Find ways to keep in contact with students who cannot participate in the digital LT. It will be good to give your students times when you will be online in your virtual office. A suggestion is to use the Semester 1 timetable slot for your module as a slot where students can connect with you.

f. **When curating resources, activities and tasks for digital LT** the key principle is to **"keep it simple, really simple"** as many students will be using Smartphones, and data and connectivity will be a limiting factor. In addition, many students did not take their textbooks home. The Library and Information Services has limited e-versions of textbooks available. It is thus suggested that academics identify open-textbooks and Open Educational Resources (OERs) instead that can be accessed from the Moodle module site. A list of useful OER sites is included on this webpage.

g. **When curating resources and learning activities for remote LT for P2 learners,** the key principle is to **"keep it simple, really simple"**. To help these students restart their
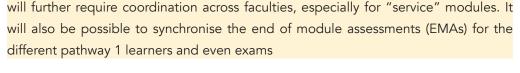
learning, it could be useful to provide OER reading materials with some questions to guide how students should work through the assignment to be able to respond to key questions, define concepts in their own words, and/or develop an argument in essay-format. SMS and WhatsApp messages could be sent to students to keep them motivated, remind students about key aspects to focus on, etc. WhatsApp and SMSs can be used for formative assessment as well. Students can answer multiple choice and true false questions, or complete a sentence related to a key element of a concept, for example. As this is for formative assessment purposes, no marks are awarded. The lecturer could SMS a memo with the answers once students have attempted the questions. Then students can self-assess their answers.

h. **Consider foregrounding the coronavirus pandemic in applied learning activities** – as the pandemic impacts on different aspects of society, this creates the possibility of considering its impact from the perspective of a large number of disciplines and professions.

i. **As a guide to both P1 students and staff, use the notional hours linked to a module** as a guide to determine:

    i. The amount of LT and assessment activities academics need to prepare for each week for students to complete the module in a maximum of 6 weeks. As a general rule of thumb, prepare activities that will take students about 5 hours a week to complete. For modules with larger credit values (≥15 credits), 6 to 7 hours of work would generally be appropriate.

    ii. How students plan their learning in a week. The rule of thumb would be to spend 5 hours per week per module. This would leave 5 to 10 additional hours per 40-hour week to work on long assignments, revision for a test, conferring with fellow students, etc.

j. **In terms of assessment, adopt a blended approach** to assessment within a continuous assessment framework that includes:

    i. Frequent short, formative assessments.

    ii. An assignment or assessment activity that enables students to integrate their learning across the module.

    iii. Summative End-of-Module Assessment (EMA), which can include exams, where needed. Online EMAs are normally open book and untimed and a Practice Assessment (PA) is needed to provide students with a "dry run" experience of an online EMA.

    iv. Preparing students in terms of the nature of assessment tasks that they will be confronted with, especially where e-assessment is used.

    v. Coordinating due dates for assignments and summative assessment and EMA dates across modules in a programme. This will minimise the chances that a student will have too many due dates or assessments on the same day. This

PRINCIPLES

will further require coordination across faculties, especially for "service" modules. It will also be possible to synchronise the end of module assessments (EMAs) for the different pathway 1 learners and even exams

vi. Weighting the range of formative and summative assessment activities in such a way that the weighting promotes continuous engagement with learning (as opposed to the summative EMA being the determining assessment).

vii. Where possible, build re-assessments into the assessment design. Provision will also be made for a re-assessment period at the end of Semester 1 or start of Semester 2.

viii. The implications of the revised assessment approach and modes require that changes to current assessment rules, approved assessment approaches and external moderation need to be formally approved by special meetings of Faculty Boards or FMCs and FLTCs, the APC and ECS. The DVC LT, Registrar and Executive Deans will coordinate and drive these approval processes.

k. **A range of capacity development and support mechanisms are available** for students, academics, academic support and PASS staff to navigate the adapted LT terrain to ensure that our students have every opportunity to achieve their learning outcomes. To support academic staff to develop and enhance their digital LT competencies, the Blended Learning team in the LT Collab and ICT Services, learning experience designers, and blended learning champions in the faculties can assist. Examples of support available are:

i. Curated online resources to assist staff with facilitating LT online, continuous assessment, e-assessment, and with practical "how to" information related to putting material online, quiz tools, integrating OERs and videos in a module site on the LMS, mastering some of the technological tools, etc. Some of these resources will be placed on the webpage on an ongoing basis. Others can be accessed by logging into the Moodle LMS (https://learn.mandela.ac.za) and on the main tab click on the red Remote Teaching Resource tile.

ii. Webinars offered by LT Collab staff and those that are available in the HE sector nationally and internationally will be publicised to staff via MEMO or an email from Executive Deans.

iii. Via the ICT Helpdesk, quick, practical training sessions in the use of some of the tools can be arranged on request. ICT personnel are available to enable access to required software and L&T platforms

iv. Access to a LT specialist in the LT Collab is possible by emailing the relevant person (e.g., Mike Swanepoel, Andrew Thuo, Elmien Waring, Noluthando Toni, Anne Olsen, Eunice Champion, Thoko Batyi, Chantal Dwyer, and Piet Roodt).

v. Executive Deans will communicate how to access faculty blended learning champions.

l. **Work-integrated (WIL) and school-based (SBL) learning, clinical training and experiential learning requirements** will be finalised at a faculty level and guided by the adjustments approved by professional bodies, where relevant.