

NWU Faculty of Education  
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Dear Student (Contact and Distance Learning)

### **FACULTY OF EDUCATION: TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMUNIQUÉ – STUDENTS**

After the presentation of the Faculty Assessment Plan to the Executive Committee of Senate, and subsequent to meetings held with the DVC TL leadership group and the Faculty Management Committee, this Teaching and Learning communiqué aims to keep you informed (as far as possible) and to provide guidance about important **teaching and learning matters** in the Faculty of Education amidst the COVID-19 national lockdown period as well as post-lockdown. Information about the Work Integrated Learning programme will soon follow.

The experience of some degree of anxiety and strain among students is understandable and therefore, a kind-hearted call is made to you to stay positive and to be committed to your studies during this challenging time. Be assured of the Faculty's utmost efforts to support you in your efforts to complete this academic year successfully.

#### **Some of the 'golden threads' throughout our Faculty Assessment Plan are:**

- The challenge of access to the most basic resources is acknowledged. Therefore, innovative, creative and most of all, solution-driven approaches to assessment in the Faculty are inclusive and realistic to account for the diversity of our students and to adhere to the principles of social justice and an ethic of care. Pragmatic and realistic measures are embraced to assure the continuation of quality teaching, learning and assessment to ALL students in the Faculty of Education.
- An exclusive and one-dimensional solution of online teaching, as a one-size-fits-all approach, is inappropriate in this challenging and complex situation and not in line with the principles of inclusivity and social justice. Therefore, other innovative and situation-specific strategies are explored for implementation.

Quality teaching and learning should not be compromised by different ways of teaching, learning and assessment. Each module and subject group have idiosyncratic circumstances and contexts that will be accounted for.

**Pertinent points of the Faculty Assessment Plan are:**

1. Staff members are working from home and will be reachable by email. Lecturers who are making use of WhatsApp groups may be contacted on WhatsApp or, in some cases, on other social media platforms. The return date to campus for students has not been finalised yet, but a phased-in process is being considered. If this should happen, we beg your indulgence and ask you to trust that the faculty will act in the best interest of every student. Our focus will be on final year students, especially those who need to do lab and workshop practicals, without disadvantaging other students.
2. Effective **communication** is of crucial importance – prompt responses to emails and other forms of communication are expected from all role players. *The challenge is to reach students who do not have access to online facilities.* It can be expected that the need for communication will increase drastically to share information and to deal with student queries. Communication is required to reach ALL students and NOT to exclude any student based on inaccessibility to online communication due to the COVID-19 situation. Students should do all in their power to get access to the Internet. We want to acknowledge the role of the education faculty student leadership and especially their offer to assist us and the students during this trying times.
3. The NWU learning management system, **eFundi communication tools** (announcements, messages, chatrooms and forums) is a valuable platform for those students who have online access. A zero-rate costing benefit was negotiated with service providers. The full potential of a variety of communication media will be explored to ensure that ALL students receive communication. Faculty is well-aware of the challenges with respect to connectivity and equipment, but nevertheless pleads with our students to make an effort to acquire the necessities to enable them to participate in the online learning and communication. We have a plan for those who cannot participate in the online platform, however, the onus is on you to try to be part of the online programme. An early warning is that if we have permission to revert to our plan B (alternative plan), it will place additional pressure on you during the winter school or even the next semester.
4. **The June examination is cancelled.** There is no formal, invigilated examination for the first semester. The whole of the NWU first semester's assessment is based on **CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT** and *students need to obtain duly performed (DP) credits in registered modules.* Subject Group and Module Leaders are planning diligently for the implementation of a *continuous assessment plan* (contact and distance learning) for the first semester. The weighting of assignments will be communicated with you during the next week. Please also expect an additional assessment task in lieu of the examination that was

- cancelled. If you do not pass this continuous assessment, you will only be allowed a second examination opportunity at the end of the year if you achieved a subminimum of 40%. We therefore urge you not to procrastinate in order to achieve success,
5. **17 – 30 April 2020: An orientation programme** to introduce alternative and adjusted teaching and assessment strategies. (*The orientation period is prolonged by the University Management from 17 – 21 April 2020 to 17 - 30 April 2020.*)
  6. **22 April – 11 June 2020:** An online academic programme for semester one. All continuous assessment is planned to be spread / staggered over this period and to be completed by 11 June 2020. (*See the prolonging of orientation period in 5.*)
  7. There will be no **Work Integrated Learning (WIL)** placement at schools for the first semester. Measures such as micro-lessons, catch-up programmes, portfolios of evidence and the optimisation of the second semester will be implemented as alternatives for lost WIL opportunities and time.
  8. The following **GUIDELINES in respect of the continuous assessment process** are provided to ensure clarity and alignment:
    - 8.1 Module assessments cover all set outcomes.
    - 8.2 There will be additional assessment(s) for contact and distance learning students in the module continuous assessment plan as an alternative for the cancelled June examination.
    - 8.3 Students can expect a module assessment plan (assignments, tasks, weighting, etc.) from their module lecturers by **Friday 24 April 2020**. This will enable you to plan for and pace your studies with the end date of 11 June 2020 in mind. Please note that no assignment will be received after this date. It will be a serious academic risk to leave all work for the final week or two! The closing of ODL centres poses a major challenge for the submission of ODL assignments and this matter will be clarified urgently with the UODL and the Student Academic Life Cycle Administration (SALA). Distance learning students must please check the SMS communication that you received from the UODL regarding the postponement of submission dates for assignments.
    - 8.4 It is of vital importance that you work very hard and consistently, since ALL marks of the continuous assessment process are part of the final module mark. Any outstanding work adds up to outstanding marks for the final module mark! If you participate in the online programme, you must persist and complete all work. *The alternative plan is only for those who can prove that they were unable to work remotely and for the paper-based programmes, if so required.*
    - 8.5 Phasing-out ODL programmes (NPDE, ACE & BEdHons level 7): ONE FINAL summative assessment (assignment) is planned for students in these phasing-out programmes. You will soon receive detailed information about this arrangement
    - 8.6 ODL second examination opportunity: ONE FINAL assessment is planned for the ODL second examination opportunity during June 2020. You will shortly receive detailed information about this matter.

- 9 **12 – 26 June 2020: Winter School:** An *additional catch-up* opportunity is scheduled for those students who were disadvantaged and could not fully participate in the semester academic programme (22 April – 11 June), because of circumstances caused by the state of disaster. Students should provide proof why they did not participate in the semester academic programme or did not adhere to the assessment plan for the semester. Please take note that it is the student's responsibility to keep the module lecturer informed about challenges and to communicate on a regular basis so that all possible ways may be explored for the student to continue with academic work. Contact detail of lecturers have been provided in module documents.
- 10 **29 June – 03 July 2020: Assessment Week:** The special assessment opportunity serves as a *final assessment opportunity* during which (an) outstanding assignment(s) because of difficult circumstances (see 8 above), may be finalised and submitted. It is also meant for those students who participate in the Winter School.
- 11 **No formal assessment / submission of assignments** (hard copies or electronically via the Learning Management System) are expected from students during the lockdown period.
- 12 The Faculty of Education offers both **online** and **paper-based programmes** in contact and distance learning modes of delivery. The Faculty acknowledges the reality that a single approach of online teaching is inappropriate in this challenging situation and that this is not in line with the principles of inclusivity and social justice. The Faculty adopts a **paper-based teaching and learning strategy** in addition to an online approach. Study guides and related study material will be made available - as far as possible. Of particular importance, is that the paper-based strategy is NOT a substitute for the Faculty's strategic teaching and learning priority of **Self-directed Learning**. Students are expected to be independent and self-directed learners. Lecturers will refrain from a 'spoon feeding'-approach and students need to be actively involved in the teaching-learning process.
- 13 Students are cautioned to adhere to the highest **academic and ethical standards** and to avoid any form of plagiarism. The cover sheet as declaration of original work should be included as standard operational procedure for assignments and tasks.
- 14 *Important:* No student is allowed to enter any of the NWU campuses during the lockdown period.
- 15 **06 July – 10 July 2020:** Recess. The second semester remains unchanged – for now...
- 16 **19 November – 11 December 2020:** The second examination opportunity of the second semester is also earmarked as a second assessment opportunity for the first semester. This period serves as a 'safety net' for students who could not complete the required modules during the first semester, because of the lockdown and related circumstances. Strict admission criteria to this opportunity will apply.

Thank you again for your commitment to complete your studies successfully. The Faculty of Education is also committed to ensure a successful academic programme amidst challenging times for all of us.

Kind regards and stay healthy!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. van Vuuren', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Prof Herman J van Vuuren

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