



## COMMUNIQUÉ TO THE CUT COMMUNITY

### FOLLOW-UP: SUPPORT & INFORMATION RELATED TO THE 21-DAY LOCKDOWN

9 April 2020

2020 #10

#### Dear CUT Community

The global COVID-19 pandemic has now almost affected all countries, with approximately 1.5 million infections recorded. After two weeks into the national lockdown announced by President Cyril Ramaphosa, in an effort to flatten our local infection curve, we have entered a new phase that may be more complicated for you to navigate. Following the initial shock response, you may have fallen into the trap of doubting, and may feel resentment towards authority figures who seem to impose overly strict measures, longing for the normality we enjoyed just a couple of weeks ago. However, as a resilient community, we should accept what has happened, acknowledge the difficulties, and adjust to life as it is now to the best of our ability, despite the circumstances and personal challenges we might be experiencing.

**Accept:** To help you accept what has happened, equip yourself with knowledge. Use reputable sources to form an understanding of what COVID-19 is, how infection happens, and what the consequences are. The CUT information hub on the coronavirus on our website should give you sufficient, verified information: <https://www.cut.ac.za/coronavirus>. Please protect yourself and others from fake news by refraining from spreading and/or consuming unconfirmed rumours.

**Acknowledge:** Change is never easy, and you do not need to pretend that it is. Being isolated is hard; working from home for the first time is difficult; moving to online learning with your studies is a challenge. Our country's economy and health sector are taking strain. Individuals are suffering financially, socially, physically and psychologically. We fully understand and empathise with the difficulties faced by our CUT community, and beyond. By acknowledging and clearly defining the challenges, we can tailor solutions.

**Adjust:** Globally, people will need to adapt to a different type of lifestyle. How that lifestyle will look and be, is uncertain. However, we need to adjust to the changes currently required. As an institution, we have already communicated various adjustments regarding our operations, and would like to remind you of some of these, whilst also elaborating on actions not mentioned before:

- ❖ We are currently busy with intensive planning to move from short-term emergency response to a long-term strategic trajectory. All CUT academic activities and lectures resume on 20 April 2020, regardless of the mode in which our academic activities will resume. Access to appropriate technology and the internet have been a significant challenge due to the deep inequalities between students. Measures are being put in place for zero-rated data on our URLs to ensure access to online learning. A number of interventions have been rolled out to upskill our academic staff on online instruction, learning platforms and online curricula. Furthermore, our students should, within their means and to the best of their ability, prepare for online delivery. On 15 April 2020, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC): Teaching and Learning and the Registrar will communicate the interventions to be put in place from 20 April 2020 onwards to all students and academic staff.
- ❖ Both our inbound and outbound international students have also been affected by the global COVID-19 regulations. Our International Office is in contact with all affected students, as well as the relevant local authorities, in order to establish the best course of action for each student. Our outbound students in Sweden and Germany are well, and are continuing with their programmes online.
- ❖ A Management Team is overseeing the well-being and safety of a few students accommodated at the Graduandi Residence at the Bloemfontein campus in accordance with the national lockdown guidelines.

- ❖ The lockdown also impacted on work-integrated learning (WIL) in varying degrees. Most students returned home, but some are continuing with their WIL training at employers regarded as delivering an essential service. The Centre for WIL and Skills Development is in contact with employers to assess the situation, and to determine the best way forward, with all relevant stakeholders' safety as a priority. In collaboration with faculties, a multitude of options on how to proceed with WIL within the context of various scenarios that may unfold, are considered and put in place. We are confident that we will be able to find creative solutions to the benefit of all concerned – where there is a “WIL”, there is a way.

Your emotional and psychological well-being during the adjustment process is very important to us. Students are encouraged to contact ER24 at 084124, or the Wellness Centre for any emotional support you may require. Please consult the CUT StuComm App for more relevant information. Our staff members are reminded of CareWays' services on various wellness-related matters that are available to them and their household dependents free of charge. Contact them at 0800 004 770, [care@carewaysgroup.com](mailto:care@carewaysgroup.com), or SMS your name to 31581. Please revisit earlier communiqués for specific well-being advice and guidelines. In order to continue cultivating a resilient community, we would like to emphasise the following:

- ❖ To protect yourself and others, and to minimise the physical, mental, social and economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, please adhere to all the government regulations. Stay home, stay safe, and adhere to social distancing and hygiene measures.
- ❖ Take care of your physical and mental well-being. Reach out to trusted family and friends, and avoid contact with people and platforms that spread panic and rumours.
- ❖ Be kind to yourself, and be kind to others.
- ❖ Keep your day-to-day life structured and purposeful.

In addition, we salute our 155 essential work employees and a few postgraduate students who have been hard at work since the lockdown period to ensure that the university's essential services, and our research and innovation programmes to support government in the COVID-19 pandemic, are continuing. They are CUT's unsung heroes! We would also like to pay tribute to the men and women that are at the forefront of the fight against this epidemic at national level. They are putting themselves at risk to secure the health and safety of our citizens.

As a higher education institution, we will continue to apply our skills and knowledge in support of efforts to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of the work that we have done was broadcasted on national television, and can be viewed on our official platforms. In addition to our immediate response, CUT is also continuously updating and researching future skills required to best equip our students for tomorrow, and beyond.

In conclusion, we want to convey our deepest gratitude to our government, who took the needed steps to protect us all. Furthermore, thank you for all the financial, social, physical and psychological support from various institutions and individuals. We also commend every small effort from each individual in pursuit of a safer and healthier environment for all.

May you all be blessed! E se e ka Ramasedi a ka le hlohonolofatsa! Mag julle almal geseënd wees!

## **Prof. Henk de Jager**

Vice-Chancellor and Principal

<b>MINDFUL HABITS</b>			
✓ Accept emotions	✓ Eat slowly	✓ Practise gratitude	✓ Listen carefully
✓ Be curious	✓ Be open-minded	✓ Notice thoughts	✓ Notice all five senses
✓ Breathe deeply	✓ Do one thing at a time	✓ Pay full attention	✓ Be less judgemental
	✓ Practise creativity	✓ Focus on the present	(source @worrywellbeing)