



31 May 2022

Dear Parent / Guardian

By way of introduction, my name is Prof Johan Oberholster and I am the former Deputy Dean of Teaching and Learning at the Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) Faculty. I have recently been appointed by the Dean, Prof Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu to specifically oversee the progress and well-being of the first-year students in the EMS Faculty at the University of Pretoria (UP).

The purpose of this letter and the associated appendix is to provide you as parents / guardians some background on your child's / charge's first year of studies in the faculty. Irrespective of whether you have studied at a university yourself or have not, things have changed dramatically over the last number of years and I believe you should be informed of the latest arrangements to provide optimal support and guidance.

By paying careful attention to the matters set out below, you will be able to contribute greatly to the success of your child / charge and will be providing your child / charge with the necessary support at the requisite time to ensure that he / she / they will complete his / her / their degree in minimum time (i.e. three years, known as N at UP for a BAdmin or BCom undergraduate degree at EMS) at the end of 2024.

Completing a degree as soon as possible is an important step towards ensuring that your child does not join the ranks of the more than 60% of young people between 18 and 24 years of age in South Africa who are unemployed. To obtain a degree is one of the most important tools used to combat unemployment and this is evidenced by the fact that graduates in the same age bracket (18 to 24) currently have an unemployment rate of merely 2.4%.

The appendix included below deals with 16 topics and I have listed these below with a brief description of what is addressed under each topic where it is not clear from the heading in an attempt to save you time. It would be ideal if you could read through the entire document (including the appendix) to get a thorough understanding of your child's or charge's first-year experience and challenges. However, we understand that time is limited and hence you can click on the relevant link should you need more information on a specific topic. I would suggest you read, **as a minimum, points 1, 2, 4, 5, 11 in detail**. The complete list of topics is as follows:

1. [Primary objective of attending a university](#) – to study and acquire skills and knowledge for the world of work.
2. [Maximum period of study allowed by the University of Pretoria for a 3-year degree and prerequisites](#) – UP allows N (minimum time for a first degree and 3 years for EMS) plus 1 additional year as a maximum. Four (4) years is the maximum allowed by NSFAS as well, so be aware!
3. [Student numbers versus number of lecturers](#) – classes 5 / 6 times larger than at school.
4. [Degree content of the first year](#) – generic subjects (modules) for BCom and BAdmin degrees.
5. [Degree credits](#) – indicates the time students should devote to their first-year studies.
6. [Other relevant first-year matters that deserve your attention](#) – 60% should be the aim and a range of help is available!
7. [Exam entrance for EMS modules](#) – first semester - 30%, second semester - 40%, otherwise they may not write the exam and this will mean that they extend their studies by another costly year of accommodation, food, study fees and books.
8. [Limit on number of credits a student is allowed to enrol for in the first-year](#) – maximum +10% of prescribed credits.
9. [Study guides](#) – “contract” with the student with all relevant information pertaining to each subject (module).
10. [ClickUP](#) – online learning management system (LMS).
11. [Lecturer consultation](#) – students must consult with lecturers or tutors immediately if they struggle after trying to solve the problem themselves.
12. [Tutors](#) – tutorials are free and students must make use of those to improve their understanding of study material.
13. [Attendance of lectures](#) – research shows that this is the key to success, but it is the student's responsibility, not ours.
14. [Reading proficiency, reading speed and reading comprehension](#) – one **reads** for a degree; thus, reading is important.
15. [In general, our male students perform much worse than our female students](#) – to solve this vexing problem we need your assistance.
16. [Dates of examinations and supplementary examinations](#) – these are provided to assist you with planning your life.

We would like to thank you in advance for the invaluable contribution that you, as a parent / guardian, will make towards the success of your child / charge in their BCom or BAdmin degree during 2022. They really do need your support in this highly taxing, but life-changing and worthwhile endeavour.

Your assistance in this regard is much appreciated. Please feel free to contact me on johan.oberholster@up.ac.za, should you have any further queries.

Yours faithfully,

M Chitiga-Mabugu

M Chitiga-Mabugu (Prof)
Dean: EMS Faculty

JGI Oberholster

JGI Oberholster (Prof)
First-year Co-ordinator in the office of the Dean

DETAILED DESCRIPTION AND EXPLANATION OF MATTERS UNDER EACH TOPIC LISTED IN THE BODY OF THE LETTER

1. Primary objective of attending a university

The primary objective of attending a university is to dedicate time and effort to obtain knowledge and competencies that will equip students for their future careers after completing their degrees. While your child / charge has been fortunate to be selected to study at university, you as a parent / guardian should bear in mind that UP is a full-time residential university (even if COVID rules force some online teaching and learning) and hence he / she / they will not have a lot of time for extra-curricular activities and chores around the home like cleaning, cooking and supervising siblings or playing sports at a heavy competitive level. There are exceptional students who can manage this, but they are very few and far between.

The majority of the student's time (40+ hours per week or eight hours per day, including lectures) should therefore be devoted to studying in order to succeed. Whether you or a bursar are funding the student's studies or whether the taxpayer does this via the NSFAS system is irrelevant – the student(s) under your care should complete their studies at EMS in three years or a maximum of four years as explained in the next section.

2. Maximum period of study allowed by the University of Pretoria for a 3-year degree and prerequisites

UP is a residential university and the EMS Faculty prides itself on being a faculty with one of the highest numbers of students completing their degrees in minimum time, which is three years. It is also extremely important to note that the General Regulations of UP have changed with effect on 1 January 2022 and that in future (that is commencing 2022), a student will only be allowed to spend four (4) years on completing their BCom or BAdmin degree. Thereafter a student who fails to do so will be excluded from further studies at UP. This means that your child / charge has only one opportunity to slip up and add a year to their studies, and thereafter they will not be allowed to come back and complete their degree, unless there are very compelling reasons for them taking more than 4 years to complete their degree. Forgetting to study or partying too much do not qualify as compelling reasons. Being in hospital for a year due to a COVID infection, would however be a valid reason.

The above is a very important point and you as parents / guardians should please take careful note and assist where possible to ensure that your child / charge completes their degrees in three (3) or maximum (4) years.

3. Student numbers versus number of lecturers

Approximately 1 800 first-year students have registered at the EMS Faculty during 2022. Note that class sizes are about 5 to 6 times that of school classes (around 160 to 200 students per class) and the responsibility to approach the lecturer when a student does not understand a particular topic, rests squarely on the student, not the lecturer. It should therefore be clear that students must study independently and attempt to master the work by themselves, but the lecturers provide numerous opportunities to assist students to consult and ask for assistance either in class, during consultation times or via email.

4. Degree content of the first year

All BCom students are registered for the following modules in their first year of studies:

- Academic Information Management (AIM 111 and 121) (first and second semester)
- Academic Literacy (ALL 124) (second semester with some exemptions)
- Financial Accounting (FKR 111 & 121 or 122 (first and second semester) **OR** FRK 101 (year module)
- Economics (EKN 110 & 120) (first and second semester)
- Informatics (INF 183) (first and second semester)
- Informatics (INF 112) (second semester)
- Statistics (STK 110 & STK 120 **OR** STC 122) (first and second semester)
- Business Management (OBS 114 & OBS 124) (first semester and second semester).

All BAdmin students are registered for the following modules in their first year of studies:

- Academic Information Management (AIM 111 and 121) (first and second semester)
- Academic Literacy (ALL 124) (second semester with some exemptions)
- Politics (PTO 101) (year module)
- Economics (EKN 110) (first semester)
- Public Administration (PAD 112 & 122) (first and second semester)
- Public Resource Management (PUF 110) (first semester)
- A few electives such as Statistics (STK 113 **OR** 110 & STK 120 **OR** STK 123) or a range of languages.

For some BCom degrees, KRG 110 and / or 120 and some Math modules may be prescribed and most degrees commence with specialisation modules particular to the focus areas of the degree in the second semester.

Note that if students fail a first-semester module, they will in most instances not be able to continue with the follow-up second-semester module. For example, if you failed Accounting (FRK) 111, you will not be able to continue with FRK 121 OR 122 in the second semester. This is a major setback and should be avoided at all costs because it could cost you an additional year of study.

To assist first-year students, the tests in the first semester will be conducted during test weeks where students will not have lectures, but they will be able to focus exclusively on studying for the tests. HOWEVER, in the second semester, this concession will fall away as we believe that students should by that time have adjusted fully to university studies and its challenges.

Furthermore, we provide students with progress feedback after the first test series in both semesters and give them advice on how to correct their mistakes if their marks fall below 60% and recommend visiting their Faculty Student Advisor (FSA). This early-warning alert project is called the Phafoga / Wake-up-and-smell-the-roses project and should prompt students to action.

Note that the pass rate at any university is 50% and **not** the 30% that the Department of Basic Education prescribes. Technically this means that a student achieving 50% can only answer one out of two questions posed to them. Surely, that cannot be sufficient!!

5. Degree credits

The above-mentioned first-year modules (subjects) [see lists under 4 above] carry around 120 to 151 credits in total – it varies from one degree to the next. Each credit equates to 10 hours of study time (this includes preparation for classes, class attendance, tutorials, homework, self-study and consulting).

This would mean that in the student's first year (2022), he / she / they should spend approximately 1 200 to 1 500 hours on their studies merely to pass.

Furthermore, the transition from school to university often requires students to spend even more time on their studies. This total number of hours translates into approximately 40 to 45 hours per week or 8 / 9 hours per working day of consistent work excluding time spent on writing assessments. If a first-year student devotes less time than this to his / her / their studies, the likelihood of failing one or more modules is, in our experience, high. **They are studying full-time and hence they should study 8 / 9 hours per day as would be the case for any person working full-time.**

Failing modules (not obtaining the credits) would mean that the students do not meet prerequisites and can thus not continue with the follow-up modules in the second semester or second year. In particular, students appear to struggle with modules are cumulative and require consistent and hard work throughout the semester or year.

It should be evident from the above lists of modules, that your child / charge will have a busy schedule attending class and allocating sufficient time to study for each of the modules. **Parents / Guardians are thus requested to, if at all possible, give their children sufficient time to study as was also explained under point 1 above.**

6. Other relevant first-year matters that deserve your attention

Please bear in mind that many students initially experience that their marks drop drastically compared to their Grade 12 marks, but if students continue to work hard and consistently, their marks should gradually increase as the year progresses. ***Learning is a process, not an incident!***

To have a reasonable chance of grasping their study material and to pass at the end of the year, a student's progress / semester marks for all modules should be around 60% before attempting the exam. Students with a semester or year mark below 40% after completing the first semester are at serious risk of not passing their modules by the end of the year. Such students must consult with the lecturers and Faculty Student Advisors (**they assist with time management, study techniques, goal setting and emotional challenges for free**) immediately and increase the effort put into their studies.

As mentioned before, a progress mark for Quarter 1 was calculated and made available on ClickUP (refer point 10) during the March / April recess and the same will happen at the end of Quarter 3 for the September / October holidays (recess). We encourage you to ask your child at that point what her / his / their progress mark is since matters can still be corrected fairly easily at this early stage.

Students directly from school often find it difficult to adjust to university life and studies, and we have communicated or will communicate with your child that the March / April or September / October holiday period should be used (partly) to catch up on the first or third quarter work if their progress mark is not at an acceptable level (it should be at least 50%, but preferably 60%). The first and third quarter work is the foundation of the work to be dealt with in the rest of the year, as well as the entire degree and it is crucially important that this foundation is solid. 50% is merely not sufficient to ensure a proper academic base for future studies.

7. Exam entrance for EMS modules

We would also like to draw your attention to the fact that students may only write the final exams if they have achieved a semester or year mark of at least 40% (30% is allowed in the first semester ONLY). If a student writes the exam and obtains a final mark (semester / year mark and exam mark combined) of 50% or above, they pass. If the final mark is between 45% and 49% they are allowed to write a supplementary exam and below that they fail. Let me emphasize, a pass mark of 50% is required for a student to proceed to his / her / their second semester or second year of studies and if 50% is not achieved, the student fails.

8. Limit on number of credits a student is allowed to enrol for in the first year

As explained under point 5, modules are linked to credit loads. If the student decides that he / she / they want(s) to enrol for more credits for some or other reason, this is possible, but to a limited extent as students sometimes overextend themselves and set themselves up for failure. We have to temper their actions somewhat and **advise strongly against enrolling for extra credits!**

9. Study guides

Each module that a student registers for has a study / learners' guide. This study guide is available on ClickUP (see 10 below) once the student is enrolled for the module. This guide is the "contract" between the student and the lecturers of that module. This guide contains very important information with which the students should familiarise themselves, i.e. test dates, lecture and lecturer information, textbooks, consulting hours of lecturers, learning objectives and procedures to be followed when absent from tests with a valid reason. It also contains the weighting of the various assessment opportunities in the respective modules.

10. ClickUP

The University has an internet based educational learning management system (LMS) called ClickUP. This resource can be accessed through the University of Pretoria website and is available both on and off campus. Students can also download an application (App) for their phones. Each module for which the student is registered, appears on ClickUP. The student can obtain important information about the module, learning material (class notes, past papers and practice questions), continuous assessments, e-classes (video recordings), announcements and marks on ClickUP. Note that you will be able to access your child's grades on ClickUP if your child provides you with his / her / their username and password and we encourage you to track their progress.

11. Lecturer consultation

If students still do not understand the work explained in class after they have studied and attempted it on their own, they **must consult** with the relevant lecturers in their offices (or tutors) as soon as possible.

All lecturers have set aside time for students to come and consult with them (either face-to-face as COVID allows or electronically), but the responsibility to consult lies with the student. The lecturer consultation times are available in the study guide and on ClickUP. Again, please encourage your child to see the lecturer as soon as he / she / they encounter(s) a problem with the module content. To postpone seeing the lecturer until the end of the semester or the year is not advisable because at that stage there is very little we can do to rectify the situation.

12. Tutors

Most first-year modules have senior students as tutors who are available to assist students with work that they are struggling with. Since the tutors are closer in age to your child / charge, the student may find it easier to talk to them. Please encourage your child / charge to go to the tutor classes and consult with the tutors in their consultation times. This is voluntary but free of charge – **just do it!**

13. Attendance of lectures

Please note that as UP is a full-time university, it is **compulsory** for the EMS Faculty student to attend all his / her / their lectures and or video lectures as the case might be. Students' class attendance is extremely important and contributes greatly to their chances of passing their first-year modules.

14. Reading proficiency, reading speed and reading comprehension

You are kindly reminded that students at university level perform optimally if their reading speed is in the vicinity of around 200 to 300 words per minute, with a comprehension level of between 75% and 80% when they read at that speed. It may be worth your while to have your child's / charge's reading speed assessed at a reading clinic such as the *Tina Cowley* clinics as soon as possible and if it is not up to standard, to take corrective action during the March or July holidays. **A higher reading speed makes study time more effective and also assists students in completing their tests and exams within the time allotted.**

15. In general, our male students perform worse than our female students

This is a vexing problem for us, as our male students have to meet the same admission requirements as their female counterparts so the problem definitely does not lie in a lack of brain power. We speculate that the lower performance of male students could be attributable to the fact that they are too proud to ask for assistance and when they eventually decide to approach us for help, it is too late to rectify the situation. There are of course many brilliant male students who perform well from day one, but as a rule, male students appear to especially shine in later years as they become more mature. However, we need your assistance to convince them to ask for help immediately when they struggle and that it is not a disgrace to ask for assistance, **it is the right thing to do**. Please assist us to help your son, we really need your active participation.

16. Dates of examinations and supplementary examinations

Lastly, we would like to draw your attention to the provisional dates and time slots of the June and November examinations and supplementary examinations. Please ensure that you plan holidays outside of Pretoria around these dates, **since we cannot accommodate students who miss examinations or supplementary examinations due to holiday arrangements**. Please note that the supplementary examinations commence only after examinations have been completed and both dates are provided here.

Examination type	June	November
Examinations	11 June – 30 June	12 November – 30 November
Supplementary examinations	4 July – 9 July	1 December – 7 December