

Faculty of Humanities

28 April 2020

Rescheduling of the resumption of teaching and learning online

Message to Postgraduate Students

Dear Humanities Postgraduate Student

On behalf of the Faculty of Humanities, I would like to address a number of queries from postgraduate students regarding challenges experienced in respect of the COVID 19 outbreak and subsequent extension of the national lockdown to 30 April 2020.

While I will not be able to cover all your questions, I will deal with those that I believe are applicable to most of you. If there are any further questions, please contact your respective lecturers, supervisors and heads of departments.

How do I access online teaching and learning?

During the lockdown and for a period after the lifting thereof, the Faculty and the entire university will continue with online teaching and learning at both the undergraduate and postgraduate level and will follow a phased process to bring students back to our campuses. This process will be communicated to you at a later date. The university has developed a unique portal called UP Connect <https://connect.up.ac.za> for users to access – **through an Internet browser on any device**. Zero-cost agreements on data usage for normal access to online teaching and learning have already been negotiated with the four large providers namely Telkom, Vodacom, Cell C and MTN. Students who experience any challenges with access to online learning should contact their lecturers, supervisors, faculties and student services for support.

How do I continue with my research?

I am aware that a number of postgraduate research projects, for instance those that are not dependent on laboratory/practical/field work, are continuing in spite of the lockdown. The University is obliged to comply with the lockdown regulations and will do everything possible to ensure that once the lockdown is lifted, students who need to resume their laboratory/practical/field work work will be accommodated to ensure the continuation of their experiments and analyses. The Faculty and the rest of the university will do its utmost to be flexible and find alternatives to ensure that student progress is not substantially affected.

What happens when the lockdown is lifted?

The University, like any other institution that has not been classified as an essential service, is bound by the regulations for the lockdown period. For now, we continue with online teaching for the rest of the first semester. Once the lockdown is lifted and the regulations governing the easing of regulations are known, UP will follow a phased process (to be communicated in advance) to bring postgraduate students, and potentially undergraduate students, back to our campuses and to residences, where applicable. Under such conditions, we will put in place detailed precautionary hygiene and sanitation measures to ensure the

health and well-being of our students, with appropriate social distancing to continue to reduce risk.

What happens to my research grant?

The University, in collaboration with Universities South Africa (USAf), is negotiating with external funding agencies, including the National Research Foundation, to look into its current deadlines for funding to negotiate the lifting of those deadlines to a later date which have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, UP will look at its internal support programmes to accommodate the impact of the disaster in which the country now finds itself. Students who need to comply with the reporting requirements of funding agencies such as the NRF, Mellon Foundation, the NIHSS, etc. should check with their supervisors and highlight any problems by bringing this to the attention of my office.

As an international student, where can I get information and assistance regarding my study visa?

The university has received communication from the Department of Home Affairs on temporary measures they have put in place to deal with the current lockdown. Crucially, these have a bearing on you as an international student, particularly your residency status in South Africa, which is also linked to your being able to re-/register. The communication details some concessions, which apply to those with visas that expired on or after 15 February 2020 [unless you have already submitted an application for a visa extension prior to that date, and the outcome is pending]. These temporary measures, according to the communication, remain valid until 31 July 2020, unless extended officially by the Department and apply only to foreign nationals who have been legally admitted into the Republic. Please contact the UP international office for guidance and inform your supervisor and department about your particular residency/visa circumstances.

As the VC has mentioned in his message, after the extended lockdown, we will abide by any easing of the government regulations and guidelines pertaining to universities.

I know that this is not an easy time. I ask that you remain resilient and patient as we work to ensure that teaching and learning online and research resume as soon as possible. Given the current constraints, I ask you to continue your research in whatever way possible, including write-ups while at home, conducting online surveys, etc. My office will assist with requests for registration/re-registration, attending to ethical clearance applications, approval of submissions, appointment of examiners, monitoring of examination processes, etc.

The success and well-being of our students is our priority. We are committed to providing you with the necessary support to ensure your success and to do everything possible to make sure that no student is left at a disadvantage.

Please continue to check our website www.up.ac.za or follow us on UP's official social media platforms for updates and more information.

Sincerely,
Prof Innocent Pikirayi
Deputy Dean: Postgraduate Studies and Research Ethics