



Office of the Vice-Chancellor

UPDATED COMMUNIQUE THAT WAS ORIGINALLY SENT ON 2ND JANUARY 2021

TO: STAFF AND STUDENTS
FROM: PROF P MBATI, VICE-CHANCELLOR
DATE: 3RD JANUARY 2021
SUBJECT: RE-OPENING OF THE UNIVERSITY ON 4 JANUARY 2021 AND THE RETURN OF DESIGNATED CATEGORIES OF STUDENTS TO THE CAMPUS AND RESIDENCES DURING ALERT LEVEL 3

- 1 South Africa has now entered the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, and both the number of infections and deaths resulting from COVID-19 have been increasing at an exponential rate, with many reported fatalities. The younger population age group, which mirrors our students, is bearing the brunt of this second wave.
2. As part of the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Cyril Ramaphosa announced on 29 December 2020, after the decision by the Cabinet, that South Africa had moved from risk alert level 1 to an adjusted risk alert level 3 in terms of the country's risk adjusted strategy. There are a number of restrictions and prohibitions fully detailed in the President's speech arising from the country's movement from alert level 1 to adjusted alert level 3.
3. On 31 December 2020, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) also issued a communique to guide universities on how to conduct their academic activities and operations during adjusted alert level 3. The full DHET communique was circulated to both staff and students a few days ago.
- 4 In light of the unprecedented speed with which the COVID-19 pandemic is spreading, and given the reality that the data available to us has shown that the risk profile on our campus has increased significantly, the University Management, inclusive of the Deans, held an emergency meeting this morning. It was resolved that teaching and learning will take place largely through online modes of delivery. **Accordingly, students who are not required to be on campus are strongly encouraged to remain at their homes in line with the requirements of adjusted**



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alert level 3 and to continue with their studies online. Management further resolved as follows:

- 4.1 The following category of undergraduate students should return to the campus and/or residences to resume their 2020 academic activities from Monday, 4 January 2021, inclusive of practical, laboratory and clinical sessions:

Name of School	Programme and Year Level	Other Programmes and Year Levels
1. School of Medicine	MBChB II, III, IV and V and MBChB VI and MBChB ECP III, IV, V, VI, VII (who are scheduled for re-examinations)	MBChB ECP I & II , MBChB I students will continue their academic activities from 4 January 2021 through online delivery modes.
	BRad I and II	
2. School of Health Care Sciences	Bachelor of Nursing III and IV	Bachelor of Nursing I and II; Bachelor of Science (Physiotherapy) I and II; Bachelor of Occupational Therapy I and II; Bachelor of Speech, Language Pathology and Audiology I, II, III and IV; and Bachelor of Science (Dietetics) I, II, and III will from 4 January 2021, continue with their academic activities through online delivery modes.
	Bachelor of Science (Physiotherapy) III	
	Bachelor of Occupational Therapy III and IV	
	Bachelor of Science (Dietetics) IV	
3. School of Pharmacy	Bachelor of Pharmacy II	BPharm I and III students will continue with their academic activities through online delivery modes.
4. School of Oral Health Sciences	Bachelor of Dental Surgery I, II, III and IV	N/A
	Bachelor of Oral Hygiene I, II and III	
	Bachelor of Dental Therapy, I, II and III	
5. School of Science and Technology	None	Bachelor of Science I, II and III and BSC ECP I, II, III and IV will continue with their academic activities through online delivery modes from 4 January 2021.

- 4.2 The above notwithstanding, only vulnerable undergraduate students who have connectivity challenges and other related challenges, who are enrolled for programmes at year levels that are designated for online teaching and learning, will also be allowed back to the campus and their residences. Such students should inform their respective Dean's Office for the purpose of monitoring and audits.
- 3.3 The following category of postgraduate students should return to the campus and/or residences to resume their 2020 academic activities from Monday, 4 January 2021, inclusive of practical and clinical sessions:

Name of School	Programme & Year Level	Other Programmes and Year Levels
1. School of Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honours • MSc • MMED (Registrars) 	Doctoral and other Masters students will continue with their academic activities from 4 January 2021 through online delivery modes as advised by their supervisors.
2. School of Health Care Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	Students enrolled for postgraduate diploma programmes, masters programmes and doctoral programmes in the School will continue with their academic activities through online delivery modes as directed by their supervisors and/or programme coordinators.
3. School of Pharmacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MPharm students (who are required to complete their clinical sessions) 	Other Masters students and all Doctoral students will continue with their academic activities from 4 January 2021 through online delivery modes as advised by their supervisors.
4. School of Oral Health Sciences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MDENT students (registrars) 	Other postgraduate diploma students, Masters students (including MDS) and Doctoral students will continue with their academic activities from 4 January 2021 through online delivery modes as advised by their supervisors.

5. School of Science and Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honours 	MSc and Doctoral students will continue with their academic activities through online delivery modes from 4 January 2021, unless if they require access to laboratory.
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- 4.4 All students with comorbidities and chronic conditions should enlist their names in their respective schools with evidentiary proof for them to be properly supported.
- 4.5 Consistent with the health and safety protocols, permit letters will be issued to students designated to return to campus/residences as indicated above. Students returning to residences and campuses will be expected to sign an agreement upon their return that they will commit to safe behavior and will not participate in off campus activities that are risky during this time;
- 4.6 There is a complete ban on all social gatherings on campus including conferences, workshops, parties and other super-spreader events; and
- 4.7 International students who are designated to return to the campus must follow the protocols put in place by Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO). This includes bringing along verifiable results of COVID-19 tests that were administered no more than 72hrs before arrival in South Africa. Otherwise, those students must self-quarantine for 10 days at a facility outside campus at their own cost.

5 MANDATORY COVID-19 SCREENING

Daily screening for COVID-19 using the SMU COVID 19 App is now mandatory in order to be allowed entry to campus (see link: www.smu.ac.za/covid19). In line with previously published protocol, entry to university premises for staff, students and visitors will be subject to presentation of screenshot proof that you have subjected yourself to screening using the SMU COVID-19 App or complete a paper version at the point of entry.

6 TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF SECURITY CAR SEARCHES

During this unprecedented period of the alert level 3, we shall temporarily suspend interior physical security car searches for staff and *bona fide* students to protect both the security personnel and occupants of cars. However all visitors will be subjected to the normal vigorous physical security checks of their cars.

7 HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

It is compulsory to strictly adhere to all the health and safety protocols that have been developed and shared with all of you in the past when on campus and also when on off campus facilities such as leased university residences. You can reach the SMU COVID-19 response team for questions or information using the email: covid19@smu.ac.za

8 WORK FROM HOME STRATEGY

All staff will continue to observe the work from home strategy as reflected in my memo of 15th December 2020. Management has taken a decision to return to the Work from Home (WFH) strategy with teams working on a rotational basis, and having a physical presence on Campus. So unlike previously, during this WFH approach, on a daily basis there must be a physical presence on Campus with team members sharing the different dates and/or times to 'man' the offices. The HR protocols previously issued in March and May 2020 remain the guiding documents, and the principles stated therein will remain in force for this period.


Line management remains responsible to manage its human resources to meet its operational needs. No employee can refuse a reasonable instruction to return physically to Campus if required to do so for operational needs, unless they have applied for leave and this has been granted by their line manager. In other words, there cannot be a situation where there is not a line management presence and staff to support the operations in any given department.

Employees who are not able to work from home as a result of the nature of their functions, will report physically to work, albeit on a rotational basis to ensure the effectiveness of the preventative measures. Employees with comorbidities, must comply with the necessary protocols, and must engage the Campus doctor, Dr Mathebula, who will provide Management with necessary medical advice on each case, and will be in position to guide the employees

As the University re-opens on 4 January 2021, our academic calendar remains very tight, and we cannot afford to lose a single day. I urge both staff and students to work cooperatively in ensuring that we conclude the 2020 academic calendar and move swiftly into the 2021 academic year without any hindrance, while adhering to the COVID-19 regulations, health and safety protocols applicable to alert level 3. Management will meet regularly from 4 January 2021 to deal with urgent matters and a comprehensive communicate will be issued after each meeting, including on matters relating to end-of year and end of block assessments.

Now more than ever before, each one of us, staff and students, are responsible for their own safety and for the safety of our colleagues and fellow students with whom we interact. Do not be the reason someone else gets infected and loses their life! Observe all health protocols!

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'P' followed by a horizontal line and a vertical line, with a small 'm' or similar mark below the horizontal line.

PROF PETER MBATI
VICE-CHANCELLOR