



**TO: STUDENTS AND STAFF**

**FROM: DR JM MABELEBELE, REGISTRAR**

**DATE: 17 MAY 2020**

**SUBJECT: REVISED 2020 ACADEMIC CALENDAR**

## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To inform members of the University Community of the decisions of the Executive Committee of Senate supported by MANCO regarding a final revised academic calendar of the University, informed by the stage 4 lockdown regulations announced at the end of April 2020, and the subsequent briefing to the nation by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology held on 30 April 2020.
- 1.2 It should be noted that the calendar provides a broad framework for Schools to work within. For this reason, some Schools might finish the academic year earlier than the latest date indicated in the calendar.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Covid-19 situation and the restrictions (including 21-day lockdown, which was extended to end on 30 April 2020) imposed by the government in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002, as amended, has necessitated that the academic calendar for 2020 be reviewed.
- 2.2 These restrictions, including social distancing and prohibition of gathering of certain number of people, have adversely affected the ability of the University to conduct contact teaching and learning and to convene face to face University meetings both in the operation and academic environments.
- 2.3 Although the University has resorted to work from home arrangements in order to comply with the restrictions imposed, it became apparent that the dates originally set for some of the University's academic activities will have to be changed.

## **3 RATIONALE FOR THE REVISED ACADEMIC CALENDAR**

- 3.1 Accordingly, the Executive Committee of Senate has revised the calendar, which is subject to further developments on Covid-19 and further announcements by the President of the Republic of South Africa. **The calendar was approved by the ECS meeting of 28 April 2020. For ease of reference, refer to the important dates attached as Annexure A.**
- 3.2 The calendar was developed informed by the following assumptions and principles:
  - 3.2.1 Students will be allowed back on campus **in a phased-in manner, commencing**

**with final year MBChB students.** A minimum of a two-week period is required for the campus to be prepared for occupation (deep-cleaning of the campus facilities and residences, gardening, setting of quarantine facilities, procurement of sanitisers, screening gadgets & masks for students and staff, gearing up the University for surveillance of the Covid-19 virus and communication of the procedures with the rest of the University community). Four phases are envisaged through which students will be returned to the campus, as guided by risk adjusted strategy of government.

### 3.2.2 **Phase 1** of students' return to campus: (earliest by **25 May 2020**)

Final year MBChB students (approximately between **300-350**) will be allowed back on to campus from **25 May 2020** in order to be properly prepared and trained on COVID-19 protocols and where possible be academically prepared in respect of paper cases for the formal commencement of their face to face academic activities on **1 June 2020**. The period between 25 May 2020 and 1 June 2020 is also required for the clinical training platform to be fully prepared. **Permission letters will be sent to the students during the course of the week, from 20 – 22 May 2020.**

**#**Other students who are eligible to register for final year MBChB programme, and could not do so by 17 March 2020 when the University went on an early recess, will be dealt with through the normal processes of the University. The Dean of the School is dealing with the matter, and a decision will be communicated to the affected students shortly and therefore these students cannot be categorized as final year MBChB students, pending the University's decision on the matter.

### 3.2.3 **Phase 2** (still to be determined in line the government's risk adjusted plan): All other final year students enrolled for clinical modules will return to the campus on a date to be determined soon by the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology. This will include final year students enrolled for the following qualifications:

• Bachelor of Dental Surgery V
• Bachelor of Nursing IV
• Bachelor of Pharmacy IV
• Bachelor of Radiography (Diagnostics) III
• Bachelor of Occupational Therapy IV
• Bachelor of Science (Dietetics) IV
• Bachelor of Science (Physiotherapy) IV
• Bachelor of Dental Therapy III
• Bachelor of Oral Hygiene III
• Bachelor of Speech, Language and Pathology IV

A Ministerial directive in respect of the final year students above, will be announced by the Minister shortly during the next few weeks, and Management will then communicate the date to the University community accordingly and the attendant processes for the return of this category of students.

### 3.2.4 Parallel to the two anticipated returns to campus by students (3.2.2 and 3.2.3 above, i.e. Phases 1 and 2), the University will roll out a multimodal remote (on-line, off-line, print etc) teaching and learning platforms from **1 June 2020** for the rest of the students of the University, i.e.

- a. Undergraduate students other than final year students referred to under 3.2.2.;

and 3.2.3 (the latter only if the Minister were to decide that they be allowed to return to the campus. Otherwise they will also remain at home and be taught through multi-modal on-line and/or off-line platforms)

- b. Postgraduate students enrolled for Honours' and Masters' programmes.

It should be indicated that student challenges pertaining to network connectivity, access to data bundles and prioritization of students who do not reside in conditions that are hospitable or conducive for multi-modal teaching and learning will be fully responded to by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching, Learning and Community Engagement.

3.2.5 **Phase 3:** If there were to be a further relaxation of lockdown rules and regulations for an additional number of students to return to the campus in terms of the risk-adjusted strategy, priority will be given to return of the following category of students in the "third phase":

- a. All final year BSC students with modules involving laboratory work and practicum sessions.
- b. All full-time Honours students with laboratory work and practicum sessions.
- c. All full-time Masters students with laboratory and practicum sessions. Whilst we understand the imperatives of some of these students to return to the campus to monitor their experiments and samples in laboratories and so on, the University decisions are constrained by the government regulatory framework in respect of COVID-19. These students remain, like all other students, a key priority for the students.
- d. MBChB students with clinical modules (IV and V) and BRAD II
- e. Third year level Bachelor of Nursing, Bachelor of Pharmacy, Bachelor of Occupational Therapy, BSC (dietetics), BSC (Physiotherapy) and Bachelor of Speech, Language and Audiology.

3.2.5 **Phase 4:** All other students (the balance) are envisaged to return to campus in September or October 2020 or when the country is returned to either level 2 or 1 of the risk-adjusted strategy.

3.2.6 For the 2020 academic year, the **standard mid-year summative assessments** have been cancelled. The formative assessment marks will be used in their stead, with a requirement that an average of 60% is required to pass a module. Students who have not obtained minimum average mark of 60% from continuous assessments considered as the minimum criteria for exemption for summative examination, will be given the opportunity to sit for a 'supplementary' examination, in line with the University rules.

It should be indicated that there will be a range of formative/continuous assessments (written or computer assisted) conducted between 1 June to September 2020 (remainder of the Semester 1 of 2020) through an online platform, during which the candidates will not be monitored permanently, for which control and monitoring will take place afterwards.

Formative/continuous assessment opportunities will be afforded to students who for one reason or the other, could not sit for the formative assessments during the first quarter until 16 March 2020, including those who were due to sit for sick tests. The details and further modalities in this regard will be communicated to the students, after further consultation between the Deans of School and SRC School Chairperson, taking into account the nuances and particularities of each School.

- 3.2.7 The University assumes that the lockdown and attendant restrictions can only be fully lifted later in the third quarter of the University to only re-open fully in September or October 2020 to allow for full blown contact teaching and learning combined with online learning (blended learning approach). As a result, the 2020 academic activities will have to be extended and can only be completed realistically by 28 February 2021.
- 3.2.8 Where it is reasonably practicable, and subject to School Board's support, students who are enrolled for final year MBChB programme will have their modular block duration, including assessments reduced from 7 weeks to 6 weeks. Similar consideration could be given to a reduced block duration or clinical quota requirements for certain clinical programmes, in consultation with the relevant professional bodies or councils. The details will be communicated by the relevant Schools.
- 3.2.9 The months of January/February 2021 will be used mainly for assessment (standard examination and supplementary/deferred examination) and release of both results. During this period, the University will run both the admission of first-entering, postgraduate and transfer students in parallel with the administration of end of year summative assessment and the attendant resulting processes. Details will be communicated to the University community closer to the time.
- 3.2.10 The 2-week recess periods will be sacrificed, and where it is reasonably practicable, the University will use Saturdays for teaching, practical sessions, clinical sessions in order to catch up on lost time. Similarly, Saturdays will also be used for examinations to make up for lost time. This will ensure that we are able to complete the academic year in time for the students to be given the opportunity to join the labour market.

#### **4 CURRICULA CONSIDERATIONS BY THE SCHOOLS**

- 4.1 Digital tools are complements, not substitutes, for the intimacy and immediacy of face-to-face learning, which is anticipated to commence for all students around by September 2020, depending on how COVID-19 behaves.
- 4.2 A calendar that assumes the need for remote teaching throughout the second and third terms, with a return to contact teaching on campus during the end of third term (September 2020) for majority of students.
- 4.3 Whilst every effort will be made for the Schools to restructure the academic year so that all the requirements for the completion of the academic year are fully complied with, where it is reasonably practicable, the academic Departments could consider restructuring the curricula for various modules at year levels 1 and 2, with the understanding that the curricula content not covered in 2020 academic year can always be covered in subsequent years thereby ensuring that all the programme exit level outcomes are not compromised. Details will be communicated to staff and students once firm decisions have been taken.
- 4.4 The current proposed calendar makes allowances for the academic programme to run into 2021, pushing out the beginning of the new academic year to March 2021.
- 4.5 Since the calendar provides a broad framework within which the Schools are required to operate, with the 28 February 2021, as the last day of the 2020 academic year, School may determine that some programmes be completed earlier than 21 February 2021, particularly for final year students enrolled for clinical programmes. In such cases, the amendments should be submitted to the Registrar's Office to keep a master record of the deviations.

## 5 SUMMARY OF THE DECISIONS OF THE ECS MEETING OF 28 APRIL 2020

The ECS approved the following:

- 5.1 The revised dates attached as **Annexure A**, with an understanding that this approval is subject to further developments on Covid-19 and further announcements by the President of the Republic of South Africa and the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology;
- 5.2 That the final year MBChB students will return to campus towards the end of May 2020 to commence their academic activities on 1 June 2020. Management was also urged to prepare the campus for occupation through deep-cleaning, identification of a quarantine site, purchasing of Personal Protective Equipment (i.e. masks, sanitizers, temperature scanners, etc.) and training of staff and students on COVID-19 and related protocols.
- 5.3 Management was also urged to expedite the processes of finalising the purchasing and delivery of laptop devices and data bundles to ensure that the University commences with multi-modal teaching and learning fully on 1 June 2020.
- 5.4 Whilst the revised calendar was approved as indicated under 5.1 above, this was done with an understanding that:
  - 5.4.1 **The Schools, in consultation with the SRC School Chairpersons, would meet and work out finer details of the calendar informed by the nuances and particularities of each School and their respective programmes. The Calendar merely provides a broad framework for Schools to work within.**
  - 5.4.2 Further directives from the government and the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology related to the management of COVID-19 pandemic may require further amendments to the calendar.
- 5.5 A Ministerial directive on the return of all other final year clinical students other final year MBChB students, will be acted upon swiftly to ensure the return of those students to the campus. Until then, the clinical final year students, other than the final year MBChB students, shall remain at their homes.

**DR JM MABELEBELE**  
**REGISTRAR**

(transmitted electronically and therefore unsigned)

# MAIN REVISED DATES OF THE 2020 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

[1 MAY 2020 – 28 FEBRUARY 2021]

DATE	ACADEMIC ACTIVITY
17 March 2020 – 24 May 2020	University closed for face to face lectures, clinical and practical sessions and assessments due to COVID-19 pandemic
11-13 May 2020	Virtual Graduation Ceremonies
1 June 2020	<b>Return of final year students MBChB students to commence with lectures and clinical sessions:</b>
1 June 2020	<b>Commencement Date:</b> On-line teaching and learning to all students who are off-campus due to lockdown regulations
June/July 2020 (exact day to be determined by the Minister)	<b>Return of final year students (Category 2) with clinical modules and commencement of lectures and clinical sessions (subject to approval by the Minister – If permission is not granted, these students will remain at home with the rest of the student populace):</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BDS V</li> <li>• BANS IV</li> <li>• BPHARM IV</li> <li>• Bachelor of Radiography (Diagnostics) III</li> <li>• Bachelor Occupational Therapy IV</li> <li>• Bachelor of Speech, Language and Audiology IV</li> <li>• Bachelor of Science (Physiotherapy) IV</li> <li>• Bachelor of Science (Dietetics) IV</li> <li>• Bachelor of Dental Therapy III</li> <li>• Bachelor of Oral Hygiene III</li> </ul>
7 September 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-year supplementary/deferred examinations commence</li> <li>• Closing date for submission of 2021 undergraduate Applications for: MBChB, BDS, BSc Physio, BPharm, B Dent Ther, B Rad (Diagn), BNSA, BSc, BSc Diet, B Speech Lang Path &amp; Audio, B Occ Ther, B Oral, Hygiene, BNSc</li> <li>• Closing date for submission of 2021 applications for Honours and Masters programmes</li> </ul>
18 September 2020	<b>Mid-year Supplementary/deferred examinations end</b>
25 September 2020	Latest Date: Release of all mid-year results.
28 September 2020	<b>SECOND SEMESTER COMMENCES</b> Lectures, clinical and practicum sessions commence
15 December 2020	<b>Final date for the publishing of Formative/continuous Assessment marks for Undergraduate and Postgraduate (average year marks)</b>
18 December 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University closes: All academic and administrative activities end for 2020</li> <li>• University Recess commences</li> </ul>
4 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University re-opens</li> <li>• Academic and administrative activities commence</li> </ul>
4 – 8 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revision period before the commencement of Standard examination. (NB: Oath-taking for School of Medicine for those with no re-exam)</li> </ul>
11 January 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End-of-year standard examinations (undergraduate and postgraduate programmes) Commence</li> </ul>
6 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End – of –year standard examinations end.</li> </ul>
9 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latest Date: Examination Commissions</li> <li>• Latest Date: Publishing of the names of candidates qualifying for supplementary and deferred examinations or graduation/oath-taking</li> </ul>
12 February 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Latest Date: Standard Examination results released to all students</li> </ul>

13 February 2021	Supplementary/Deferred Examination Commence
23 February 2021	<b>End of year Supplementary/Deferred Examination End.</b>
26 February 2021	<b>Latest Date:</b> School Examination Commission: <b>Supplementary</b> Examinations
26 January 2021	<b>Last date:</b> Submission of final examination marks and annual results codes <b>for supplementary examination</b> to Examination Section by the Schools
28 February 2021	<b>Release of supplementary/deferred examination 2020 results</b>
1 MARCH 2021	<b>COMMENCEMENT OF ACADEMIC YEAR 2021 (FIRST SEMESTER ACTIVITIES FOR 2021)</b>

Exact dates for **Oath Taking Ceremonies dates** will be confirmed and communicated by the Schools closer to the end of 2020, after monitoring the implementation of academic activities.

#### Summary of teaching and assessment time

ACTIVITY	PERIOD	NUMBER OF WEEKS
1. Continuation of 2020 1 <sup>st</sup> semester academic activities	1 June 2020 – 25 September 2020	18 weeks (maximum), of which two weeks set aside for supplementary/deferred summative assessments.
2. Second semester academic activities period	28 September 2020 – 28 February 2021	20 weeks (maximum), and <u>five (5)</u> of which assigned for end of year assessments, including supplementary/deferred assessments. Accordingly, 14 weeks of teaching will be set aside for the semester.
3. Total number of teaching weeks (maximum) for both 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Semester		(16 + 15) = <b>31 weeks</b>
4. Total number of weeks (for all academic activities including teaching) for the 2020 academic year.		18 + 20 weeks = <b>38 weeks</b>

~ends~