



Dear First Year Students,

A warm University of Johannesburg (UJ) welcome to the 2021 academic year and to your first year at our university! Although this is not the kind of start to your university career you had anticipated, this moment is a very special and life-changing one. In a way, it is reflective of a future, inspired by the [Fourth Industrial Revolution](#) (4IR), reflective of a dynamic **World of Work** (“**WoW**”).

We are delighted that you have chosen UJ¹: <https://youtu.be/w3QBk0ef0Rg>

We are excited to have you join us on your academic journey and will be here to assist you every step of the way. While the COVID-19 pandemic has created many challenges for our country and universities, it has also allowed us to create stimulating innovations to take you through the learning process. We look forward to welcoming you all onto campus when appropriate, but until then, we have had to ensure your safety and the safety of our staff in this unprecedented time. It is for this reason that we are appropriately managing all campus-based activities and will be using **a mix of on-campus and online learning**, or what is commonly referred to as a **blended learning** approach. The lessons of 2020 were valuable, and we are sure the online teaching methods UJ uses will keep you actively engaged throughout your learning journey.

The University will be pursuing a **sensible and risk managed approach** to all campus-based activities. We remind you of the ongoing need to retain physical distancing, the [wearing of masks at all times](#) when on campus and off campus social spaces, including common spaces in student residences, and to apply all the cautions promoted by the Department of Health and the WHO in combatting the spread of the virus. It is possible that we may see a third wave of the virus, as we await active national vaccinations from the virus, and all of us must continue to take the care needed to protect ourselves and our loved ones. The COVID-19 measures will also assist in the prevention of other illnesses like the common cold, flu, etc.

A **blended learning approach to teaching for the** academic year means that:

- modules will continue to be taught using a combination of online teaching and learning (on [Blackboard](#), the University’s Learning Management System (LMS) – for more details on what all this means refer to the table below) and manageable face-to-face sessions on campus where and when necessary.
- if you need to be on campus for practical work, laboratory session, clinical work or any other reasons, your faculty / department will let you know.

¹ On your computer, access captions by pressing ‘c’ The YouTube video link allows for auto-translation of the captions, using the 4IR, into several South African and international languages. *Automated* translations are approximate but will enable for comprehension. Similar settings are also available on your mobile phone.

- you may also need to come onto campus for certain assessments such as a test. Again, the department or faculty will let you know if this is the case.
- Lecturers will continue to use Blackboard, supplemented by additional resources and platforms, to ensure that you remain on track with your learning. We continuously improve our online engagement and the Blackboard-WhatsApp (“[connectyard](#)”) integration is underway.
- **Some changes as the situation allows will occur, which may be faculty or discipline-specific. These changes will be communicated to you by your faculty or department.** Please stay on the alert for these messages and, remember, these changes are important to ensure academic programme accreditation. We are a world-class university and our strive remains to align our approach with international norms.
- UJ is committed to keeping your studies on track and your faculty will keep you informed about how to manage your learning.

Next steps:

The best way to make sure you know what to do is to **log in to uLink**.

<p>What is uLink?</p>	<p>uLink is the portal to all online facilities at UJ. You will need to use a password (that you create when you register) to log into uLink. Once you log into uLink you will find your Blackboard (Bb) learning modules, personal timetable and registration information, results for tests and examinations, and financial statements. You can also find links to free software and UJ services such as the library.</p> <p>We know that some of you are accessing our platform, from international destinations with different timezones, by default: times specified on Blackboard refer to the South African timezone (ZAZAF).</p>
<p>What is Blackboard?</p>	<p>Blackboard is UJ’s LMS. This means it is the place on the Internet where you will find everything you need to manage your studies, and to know what to do and who to ask for help.</p> <p>If you use your phone or tablet for online learning, it is best to download the Blackboard Learn app for your mobile phone or tablet (Android Apple).</p>
<p>What is on Blackboard?</p>	<p>On Blackboard, there is a menu with all the modules (subjects) you are registered for.</p> <p>If you click on the module, you will meet your lecturer, find module information and content, communicate with your lecturer and classmates, submit your assignments and take tests online, watch videos and download learning material.</p> <p>As learning will take place online, it is important to familiarise yourself with Blackboard as soon as you can.</p>

<p>How will I be able to learn to use Blackboard?</p>	<p>To help you get used to Blackboard, we have created a module in which you can practise how to submit an assignment, take a test, and take part in a discussion.</p> <p>You will find this module by logging on to uLink then selecting Blackboard – find the TC02021 First Year Orientation: Learning with Technology module, which is listed under Courses.</p> <p>Click on this module: TC02021 First Year Orientation: Learning with Technology and then work through it in your own time.</p> <p>If you need to speak to someone, you are invited to join a live, guided Blackboard session. These sessions will take place from 24th of February to the 5th of March 2021.</p> <p>There are 3 sessions every day and you can join any session that suits you. Your faculty also has an orientation module with information you may need.</p> <p>Find a session on this list. Using your phone to join: first download the Blackboard Collaborate Original App (old version)</p> <p>Need help to join a session, read this!</p>
<p>What about software?</p>	<p>To download a free copy of Microsoft Office 365 on your laptop or desktop, click on Microsoft Office 365.</p> <p>Use your University of Johannesburg email address and password (same as for uLink) to get your free copy.</p>
<p>What if I need help with Blackboard?</p>	<p>If you have any Blackboard or technology-related questions or concerns, please email us at uhelp@uj.ac.za.</p>

What else does the University offer?

The University provides **data** to registered students. Please ensure that you have the **correct cellphone number** on [uLink](#). This is very important as all registered **first-year students** will be provided with data from **08 March 2021**.

NSFAS-funded first-year students may use their book allowance to buy an **electronic study device** – this can be done by either receiving a Mercer Notebook that UJ has procured for R4400 or sourcing your own device. NSFAS students will receive an email with a link with more information regarding the process. As was the case in 2020, **non-NSFAS** funded students who need a study device may loan a device for which they can apply through a link that will be emailed to them.

The University **residences** are open, as are the **library** and **computer laboratories** and are accessible to students, which means that access to on-campus Wi-Fi is also possible. It is important to make sure that if your courses are running online, you will be able to connect. Similarly, be aware of the heightening cybersecurity attacks. UJ will ensure that the necessary safety measures and health protocols for lecture theatres and other teaching venues, laboratories and offices are in place.

The library is also accessible virtually, download the [app](#). During the COVID-19 period library access may require pre-booking, please refer to the library website for the latest information: <https://www.uj.ac.za/library> For your cross-disciplinary engagement and interest, including the [Vice-Chancellor's](#) reading club, the library arranges over 100 events annually ([@UJLibrary](#)).

We provide special support for **students living who are differently abled**. Our support includes academic support for students and lecturers (online and face-to-face), concession applications for tests and exams (online via the [PsyCaD website](#)), technological services such as the provision of editing, enlarging and formatting of studying and test material (online, and if printing is needed on-campus), mobility training for new students when on-campus, telephonic and face-to-face sessions, disability unit labs with specialised software are available at each library on each site ([accessible with pre-booking](#)), and we have an online Blackboard module with videos and guides for students.

Students experiencing psychosocial problems can walk-into any of the PsyCaD offices on any of the campuses as we are open for walk-ins. Students can also call 011 559 2394 for telephonic requests where a psychologist will call back for a session. In the case of an emergency, students can call 082 054 1137. Students can also download the [PsyCaD@UJ app](#) on the **Google play store**, available for android phones. The app gives information on services offered and self-help information.

Join over 600,000 individuals and like our Social Media pages and even engage with our chat-bots (or, in your spare time, create [your own bot!](#)):



We are committed to supporting you through your learning journey. UJ will work with you to make your studies with us a positive experience. We look forward to walking this road with you to academic success and supporting you as you take every opportunity to participate in all activities to create a unique and fulfilling UJ experience.

We hope you will enjoy your studies and welcome you to the UJ community!

Yours sincerely

Professor Angina Parekh
DVC Academic
On behalf of the University Management Team



COVID-19 UJ Resource Portal: <https://www.uj.ac.za/coronavirus>

COVID-19 South African Resource Portal: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/>