

**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR: ACADEMIC**  
**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR: RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONALISATION**

7 May 2020

Dear Student

**COVID-19: UJ TEACHING AND LEARNING ONLINE**

We are thinking constantly of you and of how best the University can ensure that you continue with your studies through these difficult times. We understand that you are particularly concerned about the impact of the current situation on your well-being and on your studies. We know how difficult this is for everyone and want to assure you that the University will do all that it can to help you through this. We value our students enormously and we will endeavor to ensure that your academic experience is as seamless as possible. Your lecturers and tutors are working tirelessly behind the scenes to bring the learning to you as quickly and effectively as possible. Please do check the Frequently Asked Questions at <https://www.uj.ac.za/coronavirus/Learning-remotely/Pages/FAQ-for-Students.aspx>. These will be updated on an ongoing basis.

The online orientation sessions were designed to help you navigate the online environment, especially for those students who had only just begun to work with it. We understand it is a big shift to make and we are amazed at how many of you have already managed this. If you have assisted other students with this, we thank you. If you still experience technical difficulties with Blackboard, contact the Help Desk via email ([uhelp@uj.ac.za](mailto:uhelp@uj.ac.za)). You can also discuss your learning experiences and get advice on the "Student Coffee Shop" forum available on Blackboard under the organizations tab "Continue to Learn Off-Campus".

The [Shortcuts for Success Guide](#) is a useful set of links to address all queries you may have regarding any aspect of learning support.

**Worried about catching up if you were delayed for any reason?**

It is not too late to catch up. As a UJ student, you are used to attending classes, which take place at a particular time and in a specific venue. The online environment is different – you do not need to be in a specific place at a specific time all the time. Key learning resources provided for you by the lecturers - videos, written resources, learning materials, assignment questions - are in Blackboard waiting for you. If you only received access or data recently, you will still be able to do your work. You may contact your lecturer if you are experiencing difficulties or need to manage any of the deadlines set or passed.

With regards to work-integrated learning (WIL), practical work and internships, your lecturers will be in touch with you about these arrangements as soon as these are available. At a national level, engagements with professional/statutory bodies are taking place, and arrangements being made to find solutions to these situations. The approach also remains favourable for academic programme quality assurance and accreditation. At University level, many lecturers have or are already putting in place replacement activities to ensure that you will be able to complete wherever possible. Stay focused on the work you can do now and await further information.



## Assessment

With the online provision, we are all continuing to learn. During this COVID-19 period, leading universities around the world have moved their approach to an online one. It is likely that the future will be one that augments online, face-to-face learning and assessment. Where possible, some assessment has already been moved to the secure online environment. We, as academics, continue to explore alternative modes for assessment and proctoring. As each academic module differs, we will continue to develop our approach to assessment or examination. Our approach will be guided by academic rigour, appropriateness and integrity.

## What about data allocations?

We hope that you have all received your data allocations now. If you have, please use this responsibly for your studies. If you have not yet received data, you can check your status on the uLink Notification Centre "[Check your 30 GB<sup>1</sup> data allowance status](#)". At the bottom of the form you can log a query if you have any concerns.

To find out which sites are zero-rated please check <http://www.uj.ac.za/studyatUJ/Pages/zero-rated-data-to-students-and-applicants.aspx>.

Bear in mind that international websites, such as links forwarded via the library and Blackboard, are not zero-rated and will deduct from your data bundle. We recognise that part of the data provision is a "[Night Owl](#)" offering. This is the best that the higher education sector could negotiate at the present moment. We encourage you to use tools, such as "[Free Download Manager](#)," which can be used to schedule downloads.

## Devices

If you do not have a device – such as a laptop or tablet – on which to work, and think that you may qualify for a loan from the University for one, [click here](#). It is important to note that the University only has a limited supply of laptops and other devices and must prioritise students in dire need. We will continue to explore the possibility of additional devices.

Take care of your devices using locks, and at your own risk, you may also consider digital tracking tools. One such tool is open source and available here: <http://panel.preyproject.com/devices>. For up to three devices per user, the subscription is complimentary.

## Digital Fitness

Always be aware of heightened cybersecurity risks. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), we all continue to learn. To this end, you may want to setup a [digital fitness app](#). (your complimentary code: LRNALL).

## NSFAS arrangements

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Hon Dr Blade Nzimande, announced last week that NSFAS payments will continue to be made to students. We remind NSFAS funded students residing in Privately-Owned Student Accommodation (POSA) that the University can only pay landlords upon the instruction of the student, as the contracts exist between the students and the landlords. As such, students need to effect rental payments through the SSD Code instruction sent to them. We caution students that the landlord may have legal claims against them if they fail to pay the rental amounts. The remedies of the landlords

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<sup>1</sup> As part of a national agreement, Telkom SA availed an additional 10 GB.

to enforce their claims may include termination of the contracts and attaching the property of the students that can be found in the POSA as security for unpaid rent.

If you have any queries about your NSFAS payments, please contact [studentaccounts@uj.ac.za](mailto:studentaccounts@uj.ac.za)

### **Students who are Differently Abled (Students with Disabilities)**

We are aware that some of our students have been receiving support from the Centre for Psychological Services and Career Development (PsyCaD) – disability services unit:

<http://www.uj.ac.za/corporateservices/ads/psycad/Pages/University-of-Johannesburg-Disability-Services.aspx>

Support for students with disabilities during COVID-19 include:

- A handbook on free software that students with disabilities can use
- A Blackboard module created for students with disabilities
- Blackboard notices sent on support for students with disabilities

If you need further assistance, please do email the [disabilityunit@uj.ac.za](mailto:disabilityunit@uj.ac.za) or alternatively  
[ericmh@uj.ac.za](mailto:ericmh@uj.ac.za) – Assistive technologist  
[tmashilwane@uj.ac.za](mailto:tmashilwane@uj.ac.za) – DU administrator  
[leilaag@uj.ac.za](mailto:leilaag@uj.ac.za) – DU Team Leader

Remember that the online environment offers new opportunities for those who are differently abled. For example, students who have a hearing disability can [enable automated captions](#).

### **Postgraduate Students**

The Postgraduate School (PGS) and faculties<sup>2</sup> are committed to support the postgraduate students' completion of their postgraduate journey successfully. The UJ support to postgraduate students is extensive. Postgraduate supervision is generally done through online platforms. Where coursework is involved this has also been moved online. All master's and doctoral students are registered on a Blackboard based online community where a range of support opportunities are available. The PGS is providing online training and online consultation is available for statistical analysis as well as language support. The Library also provides online support and training opportunities. Postgraduate funding support and funding opportunities are available online.

All of these opportunities are advertised on the PGS and Library websites. Deadline sensitive calls for 2021 funding such as through the National Research Foundation (NRF) is currently available.


For all information, visit <http://www.uj.ac.za/postgraduate-school>

### **International Students**

For our international students, we know how overwhelming it can be being far away from loved ones and how important it is to feel part of a community. We have set up a monthly Townhall meeting where you can get together with the International Office and discuss any questions and concerns that you might have. We also

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<sup>2</sup> Reference to "faculties" includes the College of Business and Economics (CBE)



encourage you to keep up to date with announcements via email, our website and Facebook page. Provisions for accessing data have been made for all international students in South Africa and abroad to the value of R99<sup>3</sup> and international students in South Africa can apply for a loan device following the same criteria as national students. Visit <http://www.uj.ac.za/about/Internationalisation>

## **The Library is in your Pocket**

The easiest way to access the Library is right on your phone using our Library App. The Library App can be accessed from any app store just look for [UJ Library App](#) and download it onto your phone. All the library functions from downloading past exam papers to finding eBooks can be done via the app.

Library App guide: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWb1dwRJ3Ww>

### ***'How to' videos***

There are a number of short two minute 'How to' videos that quickly show you how to search for journal articles, explain what plagiarism is and give you tips of how to find the most relevant information for your assignments. These can be found at: <http://www.uj.ac.za/library/library-services/Pages/online-training.aspx>

### ***Print books***

During certain phases<sup>4</sup> of the lockdown the Library is not able to issue any print books. All print books that have exceeded their due date will automatically be extended and once lockdown is lifted completely these books can be returned without any fines being charged.

### ***Textbooks from the Reserve Section***

The librarians are currently hard at work trying to make electronic copies of all prescribed textbooks available online. There are over 200 prescribed textbooks that are not available in e-format and these are being copied by the librarians and will be ready for students to access Library database by the middle of May.

### ***Online Events***

The Library is continuing to offer exciting and interesting events on a range of issues. Follow us on social media to hear about all the upcoming events and to watch past events on YouTube Link: [http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrbE9JOVsxqHPm25INWglw/videos?view\\_as=subscriber](http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCrbE9JOVsxqHPm25INWglw/videos?view_as=subscriber).

## **Where to from here?**

There is no question that much is being asked of all of us during this difficult time. We know that there is a lot of anxiety about the future and urge you to stay focused on the present as much as possible, manage your time, keep in touch with us, and take each day at a time. Know that all of the staff at the University are doing their best to support you, and to ensure that the disruptions are minimised wherever possible. No activities are allowed on campus under Lockdown Level 4 implemented as of 1 May 2020.

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<sup>3</sup> Given budget limitations, the provision is the same as the negotiated rate for data provision for students who are based in South Africa.

<sup>4</sup> The university environment has a number of interdependencies. The decision was taken in alignment with the regulations for [Phase 4 of the Lockdown](#).

We can see on Blackboard that a great majority of students have managed to log in and are actively engaged in the learning and teaching taking place. We are heartened by this and are doing our very best to make contact with those who have not yet managed to connect. We will continue to stay in touch and support our students through this process. Please do check for updates on <http://www.uj.ac.za/coronavirus/Learning-remotely/Pages/default.aspx>

As difficult as this time has been, the pandemic has enabled the world to re-think, to think more closely about one another, and reflect deeply about equality. Given the university's strategic contextualisation for The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), we continue to play a significant role in shaping this future. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Prof Marwala, has also launched a new webinar initiative: "[The Post Corona World](#)." We hope that you will register and be part of this innovative journey.

If you feel fatigued by this long message, here is a story that may be amusing, reflective, and perhaps how we can think of "2020" as hindsight: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=925284527912453>

We appreciate the inputs and contribution of the Interim SRC (ISRC) through the UJ COVID-19 Coordination Committee (CCC). Thanks ISRC President, [Xolani Sifundza](#), for your leadership.

We thank you all for your collective commitment to taking your studies forward and pledge our support to walking on this journey with you. We are in this together. Take care of yourselves and of each other.

Kind regards

**Professor Angina Parekh**  
**DVC: Academic**

**Professor Saurabh Sinha**  
**DVC: Research and Internationalisation**

