



**Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement**

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

15 March 2020

UCT suspends classes with immediate effect

The University of Cape Town executive and the Leadership Lekgotla, following the address by the State President, Cyril Ramaphosa and on the advice of a range of agencies and health specialists, took a decision to break immediately for Term 1 vacation and to suspend classes as from and including Monday, 16 March 2020.

The UCT leadership was persuaded of the importance of this step as a precautionary, proactive measure to minimise the risk of spreading the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). The most important public health principle is containment of the disease as far as possible, including avoiding social gatherings as much as possible and minimising groups of people gathering in one space.

UCT will therefore, in the context of the declaration of a national disaster, close the residences. Students must therefore vacate the residences within the next 72 hours from 16 March 2020.

The Term 1 vacation would have started on Saturday, 21 March 2020. It will now commence immediately. Term 2 was set to commence on Monday, 30 March 2020, but UCT will confirm the beginning of Term 2 after an assessment of prevailing and quickly changing circumstances.

UCT has now turned the focus on different ways to continue teaching and learning when Term 2 commences. The university will communicate broader plan with respect to online learning by the end of the week, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Postgraduate students are advised to continue working with their supervisors and to work off campus as far as possible. Any students with questions relating to their specific situations should contact their respective departments.

In terms of staff, UCT has to ensure that work continues. Every member of the Leadership Lekgotla has been charged to give attention to those services and activities in their portfolios where staff can work remotely. Essential services will have to continue on campus,

but gatherings and work meetings will be minimised while ensuring work continues wherever possible.

UCT also confirms that we have a confirmed case of the virus on campus. The university was this afternoon made aware that a staff member tested positive for COVID-19. The staff member is in isolation at home. The Western Cape Department of Health has begun the contact tracing process and is contacting all those who were in close contact with the staff member as per the protocol prescribed by the provincial and national health agencies. Members of the university community who are well and who have been in close contact with the staff member have been instructed to remain in quarantine for 14 days while being monitored for symptoms. Currently the recommended action for a single case in a school or university is not closure. Closure is only recommended if there are several cases. UCT has, however, for a variety of reasons, decided to bring Term 1 vacation forward and suspend contact classes immediately.

UCT understands that these decisions have significant impact and affect people in many ways. The executive believes that in line with national and international information and events, it is important to be proactive and to work to assist the government in trying to prevent the virus from spreading.

The university is also working with the provincial and national agencies to establish appropriate quarantine facilities for asymptomatic people. Any case where a person is symptomatic will be dealt with via the provincial and national guidelines and protocols.

UCT has already made public the decision to review plans for all large events and mass gatherings, whether hosted by UCT or by external service providers. The university has reassessed travel and events, such as conferences and symposiums. The chancellor's installation that was to be held on Monday, 16 March 2020 has been postponed, and the March graduation ceremonies which were scheduled to start on Thursday, 19 March have been suspended. The Registrar's Office will send details to graduands about how they can receive their graduation certificates. UCT is also engaging with external service providers and event organisers about scheduled events for our campus and are considering alternative options.

UCT has agreed to cancel or postpone any UCT-related conferences and events until the end of June 2020. The executive will review this decision if necessary. In line with a number of other organisations, UCT has suspended the approval of any university-related international travel until the end of June 2020. Consistent with these decisions, please note that the 2020 Two Oceans Marathon and the Cape Town International Jazz Festival 2020 have been postponed.

The university urges staff and students to continue to follow the hygiene precautions that have been provided in previous communications.

UCT has set up the [Coronavirus Disease 2019 web page](#), which is updated on a daily basis.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Elijah Moholola

Senior Manager: Media Liaison and Social Media
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: 021 650 5674
Cell: 083 981 7770
Email: elijah.moholola@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za