20 April 2020

UCT provides data to students

The University of Cape Town (UCT) is providing pre-paid data to all students who have valid South African cell numbers as part of extensive support measures put in place for online learning.

Each student will receive 30-40GB depending on their network provider, valid for 30 days, during the course of this week. The first batch of students started getting their data on Monday.

UCT is also pleased to confirm that MTN and Vodacom have also agreed to zero rate access to certain UCT sites. The Vodacom agreement has been implemented with effect from 20 April while MTN will implement by no later than 21 April. This follows an announcement last week that Cell C and Telkom had made accessible to students at no charge six UCT websites that are key for online learning.

UCT expresses gratitude to the four cellphone network providers for coming onboard in this crucial period to support the university’s online learning plans.

This important development will enable UCT students to learn online at no cost via these UCT sites: the UCT primary website (reachable at http://www.uct.ac.za or https://www.uct.ac.za); the library website (reachable at http://www.lib.uct.ac.za or https://www.lib.uct.ac.za); Open UCT (reachable at http://open.uct.ac.za or https://open.uct.ac.za); the Vula student platform (reachable at http://vula.uct.ac.za or https://vula.uct.ac.za); Opencast lecture streaming (reachable at http://media.uct.ac.za or https://media.uct.ac.za; and web authentication ADFS (any URL that contains adfs.uct.ac.za).

It is important to note that authentication itself, via adfs.uct.ac.za, is zero-rated. Should staff or students be authenticating to a site other than the ones listed as zero-rated, that site will incur data charges (e.g. LinkedIn Learning).
UCT has provided unusual levels of support to students during this crisis. This includes:

- transportation for students who needed to return home when residents had to be vacated and closed ahead of lockdown;
- conducting a survey on students’ ability to study from home. Of the 90.4% students who had completed the survey by 15 April, 89.5% have access to a laptop/desktop, while 1.3% had no device. A further 91.4% of the students have internet access;
- providing laptops on loan to students;
- setting up a Call Centre and Referral System to handle student queries about connectivity as well as health and pyscho-social issues;
- developing an online orientation programme for emergency remote learning; and
- increasing support for student counselling over the phone and online.

UCT is setting up an additional system to distribute printed learning materials and USB drives for students who cannot access the internet in any form.

- READ: A full message by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng.

ENDS

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