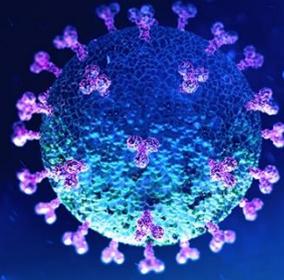




UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA - UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

**Find out more about UCT's approach
to COVID-19 on the UCT website**



29 May 2020

UCT developing framework for the safe return of staff and students

The University of Cape Town is developing a framework for the safe return of staff and students in a co-ordinated and phased manner.

After President Cyril Ramaphosa's announcement that the country will be moving to Level 3 of the lockdown from 1 June 2020, the framework being developed will be in line with the guidelines provided by national government.

This framework is based on UCT's foremost commitment to protect the health and safety of all staff and students, said Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng.

"The move to Alert Level 3 does not signal an automatic return to campus for us. We have been warned that tragically the COVID-19 outbreak could still get worse as we proceed into winter. The number of reported positive cases in the Western Cape is still high. As we move into Level 3 of the national lockdown framework, we need to be even more vigilant and continue following basic protective and defensive practices to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic on our personal and working lives," she said.

This is the reason for UCT's approach to a planned, co-ordinated and phased manner to reopen UCT to staff and students. "We want our students and staff to be an integral part of ensuring that we complete the academic year, while protecting everyone's health and safety," added Professor Phakeng.

Under national Alert Level 3, depending on a tertiary institution's capacity, no more than a maximum of 33% of students will be allowed to return to campus and residences. This is on condition that they can be safely accommodated and supported in line with the health and safety protocols as directed by the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology.

A maximum of one-third of students set by the higher education department is not a prescription. It is a guide to be considered in combination with governmental directives and institutional health and safety obligations. Therefore the number of returning students may have to be set at a level below the guideline of a maximum of one-third of the student body.

“The plan for a gradual and phased return of students, as health and safety conditions allow, does not at this point in any way mean that the current emergency remote teaching programme will stop. UCT will continue with remote teaching until the end of Term 3. The phased return to campus of some staff and students does not mean the resumption of contact teaching.”

UCT will notify the groups of students who will be invited to return, and what date they can be back on campus.

Students will receive an offer to return to residence. Accommodation in residence will be based on the number of students the university can safely accommodate under strict COVID-19 regulations. Students will be required to quarantine on arrival and to practice strict social distancing.

Senior executives and managers in all the faculties and departments are also preparing plans for the potential return of staff members who are able to work in various sites across campus. Further communication on researchers returning to university activities will also follow.

Staff in the Properties and Services Department are ensuring that facilities are prepared for the return of students and staff and this will take some considerable time still.

“We are working hard to ensure that all the requisite health screening, cleaning, sanitising and personal protection equipment that is needed is in place before we allow any further returns to campus,” said Professor Phakeng.

With the work still needed and precautions to be put in place, the earliest estimated date for staff or students who have been asked by UCT to return to campus will be 1 July 2020.

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