



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](http://www.uct.ac.za)

**19 March 2020**

## **UCT shares plans for online teaching and learning**

The University of Cape Town has shared plans to move undergraduate courses online in all faculties – except in Health Sciences, for which a specific plan is being developed.

Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, Associate Professor Lis Lange, indicated in an update to the university community that UCT will have to teach remotely during the second term.

Read the full communication by Associate Professor Lange below.



**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN**  
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD



## From the DVC's Desk

### Update on how teaching & learning is responding to COVID-19

19 March 2020

Dear colleagues

As you would have seen in the VC Desks sent this week, the University of Cape Town (UCT) has had to make some serious decisions in response to the [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) crisis](#). The epidemiologists and public health experts in the Faculty of Health Sciences advise that the epidemic has to run its course and that all our efforts need to focus on flattening the rate of transmission. The course of the epidemic could be anything between three and five months. This is a moving figure as the situation changes daily.

Flattening the rate of transmission has involved suspending classes, and sending students home. We need a different approach to teaching and learning so that students do not lose the academic year.

In this first message to you I am concentrating on the plans to move undergraduate courses online in all faculties -- except in Health Sciences, for which we are developing a specific plan.

We will have to teach remotely during the second term of the first semester. The only way of doing so is by taking our courses online. To do this, we have created a Teaching Online Task Team (TOTT) made up of the faculty deans as well as colleagues in the Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching (CILT) and other units in the Centre for Higher Education Development, Student Wellness, the Disability Service, the Libraries and the Information and Communication Technology Services Department.

The TOTT has two working groups:

- The Communications Working Group focuses on creating a supportive environment for all students to learn remotely, including psychological support.
- The Vulnerable Students Working Group focuses on strategies to help every student succeed in these challenging circumstances.

We are aware that students will have different levels of access to the Internet and technology. Some students may be in environments where it is difficult to study.

Taking this into account, we have decided that:

- All online teaching will have low-tech options so that students with low-bandwidth connections can participate fully.
- Arrangements are being made by UCT, Universities South Africa and service providers for zero-rated mobile data to specific UCT online resources, so that students do not have to carry the costs of remote learning.

- A working group dealing specifically with the needs of vulnerable students has been constituted as part of the TOTT, to reduce obstacles to learning for vulnerable students. A full plan of support will be produced within the next week.
- This group will also focus on the needs of students with disabilities.
- Provision will be made for students to have contact catch-up time if necessary, when we resume teaching and learning on campus.

There are only exceptional cases in which UCT students do not have access to computers. UCT has provided laptop computers to all students on financial aid. We are, however, making sure that all needs have been met and that lack of access to an appropriate device is not an obstacle to learning.

The following weeks will be critical in providing academics with the support they need to move their courses online. Although many courses need little adjustment, many others need considerable work. The approach we are taking is that this is a response to a crisis.

CILT has a wealth of resources available on its website to help staff get started. Already we are seeing high levels of use by academics of some of the tools available. We are increasing CILT's capacity to respond to academics' request for help.

- Please visit CILT's [resource page on remote teaching](#).

To plan the work ahead, we need to know what you need. So each course convenor has been asked to complete a survey developed in consultation with the faculties. We hope to have this information processed and assessed by early next week. We ask those of you who have not yet completed the survey to do so by Friday, 20 March 2020..

- Please complete the [“Course requirements for UCT remote teaching” survey](#).

All these changes will need to be supplemented by changes in the academic calendar and the exam timetables. In subsequent communications I will refer to these two issues. For now the plan is as follows:

- Until 5 April, we will move courses online and adapt materials.
- During this period we will communicate with students to prepare them to start work online. Student Wellness is already making arrangements to do counselling via phone and online to help students adapt.
- From 6 to 9 April we will run a Remote Teaching Orientation week to test that all our students are online and provide support to those who have not joined.
- Online teaching will formally start on 16 April, to run for the normal number of weeks of the second term.

We are aware that certain types of teaching cannot be done online and we are working with the relevant faculties to accommodate their needs. As I indicated above we will communicate about the management of the academic calendar soon.

This work will involve a massive effort by academics, tutors and teaching support staff in response to this national crisis. Your commitment to your students and to UCT in the months ahead means a great deal to us, but more importantly, you will make a lasting difference in the lives and careers of our students. Thank you in advance for your hard work and dedication to their future.

Sincerely

Associate Professor Lis Lange  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Teaching and Learning

---

Updates will be posted on UCT's [Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) feature page on the UCT News website

**Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department**

**ENDS**

**Nombuso Shabalala**

Head: Media Liaison  
Communication and Marketing Department  
University of Cape Town  
Rondebosch  
Tel: (021) 650 4190  
Cell: (076) 473 5882  
Email: [nombuso.shabalala@uct.ac.za](mailto:nombuso.shabalala@uct.ac.za)  
Website: [www.uct.ac.za](http://www.uct.ac.za)