



02 June 2020

Dear Colleagues and Students,

RE: GUIDELINES FOR STAGE 3 UNDER COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY

Following the statement by His Excellency the President Dr Hage G. Geingob, you may have questions about how the University will continue to operate as our country transitions from Stage Two (2) to Stage Three (3) Lockdown, which set to run until 29 June 2020.

After extensive engagement with key stakeholders at the University, including the Student Representative Council (SRC), and in line with guidelines provided at National Level, we are about to conclude the revised Action Plan with the Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation (MHETI). The plan is based on a co-ordinated and phased approach for the safe return of students, employees in vulnerable categories and employees at the NUST Walvis Bay Regional Centre. This Plan is underscored by our commitment to protecting the health and safety of all our staff, students and visitors.

Therefore, I want to start by reiterating the need for absolute caution and vigilance on our part to curb the spread of COVID-19. The move to Stage Three (3) does not signal an automatic return to campus for us all. As we move into Stage Three (3) of the national lockdown, we need to be even more vigilant with heightened responsibility at a personal, community and University levels. This includes, among other things, continuing to follow basic protective and defensive practices to mitigate against the impact of the pandemic on our personal and working lives. It is for this reason that the University has chosen to take a prudent approach by implementing a planned, co-ordinated and phased re-open of our institution to both staff and students. We want our university community to collectively ensure that everyone completes the academic year safely and in good health

Teaching and learning under Stage Three (3)

Under Stage Three (3), the resumption of face-to-face instruction should take place under the **Standard Health and Hygiene Guidelines**. These must include amongst others, working with no more than 50 students per class/lecture group and maintaining the social distancing protocol of staying at least 1.5 meters between persons. The guidelines should be adhered to in all venues, at all times. As per the previous NUST communique, and in line with the health and safety protocols outlined in the National Regulations and directed by the Ministry of Health and Social Services, each person is also required to wear an appropriate facemask and hygiene interventions will be increased across all facilities on the Main Campus and the ten (10) NUST Regional Centres.

It is of utmost necessity that the University adheres to these **Guidelines** to ensure that our facilities are prepared for the return of students and staff for face-to-face lectures.

However, the preparation of facilities and return of all staff might still take some time due to challenges associated with timely procurement of materials during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nonetheless, I can assure you that we are working hard to ensure that all the requisite health screening, cleaning, sanitising and personal protection equipment is in place before we may allow any further returns to campus. Considering the work that still needs to be done and precautions we have to put in place, we *estimate* that the earliest we could begin to see some students returning to campus will be around the 3rd of August 2020. Students will be informed accordingly should we manage to accommodate the return of students earlier than the above-mentioned date. Finalising the Action Plan for a phased return of students to campus and residences on condition that they can be safely accommodated and supported requires attention to detail. In order to provide you with some certainty during a very uncertain time in our lives, the university will communicate further specific details in due course.

Please note that the plan for a gradual and phased return of students does not mean that the current emergency remote teaching and learning and/or partial working from home will stop. Also, the phased return to campus of some students does not mean the full resumption of face-to-face teaching. Rather, NUST will continue with the arrangement of both partially working from home as well as remote teaching and learning. We will provide dates and notify the specific groups of students who will be required to return to campus for specific learning activities.

Measures for hostel accommodation

NUST students will receive an offer to return to residence and allocation of accommodation will be based on the number of students that we can safely accommodate under strict COVID-19 regulations. Students invited to return will be required to practice strict social distancing, wear protective masks and maintain the highest hygiene possible. We will notify the groups of students who will be invited to return, and the dates on which they can be back on campus. Students who do not receive an invitation from the University to return to the hostels should please remain at home and continue to study as before in remote learning.

There are also important orientation activities that we still need to conduct with staff members to enhance adherence to COVID-19 regulations whilst receiving some students back to campus.

Implications for students who missed the first semester

NUST is aware that some students may not have had access to facilities required to learn from home and consequently may have missed some learning activities or even the entire semester. The University will announce remedial arrangements for such students before the semester ends, after a comprehensive analysis of the situation. I therefore plead with such students to make their situations known to their respective departments as soon as possible.

Measures for symptomatic cases of COVID-19

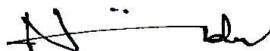
The transition into Stage Three (3) does not mean that the war against the invisible enemy COVID-19 is over. Instead, there is still the possibility of staff and students to contract the coronavirus despite all the measures that we are taking. In case anybody experiences typical symptoms of COVID-19, it is important to self-isolate and inform the NUST clinic on 061 2072115, campus control on 2072112 if on-campus and/or contact a medical practitioner or the COVID-19 emergency number, 0800 100 100.

Conclusion

Lockdown and subsequent unlocking through the various stages has not been easy. Although restrictions have been relaxed during Stage Three (3), the COVID-19 crisis is not over yet. I am mindful that this may lead to staff and students feeling frustrated, uncertain and overwhelmed. Therefore, I would like to thank the staff and students for their patience and continued efforts to save the academic year as we deal with the disruption and impact of COVID-19. This is a time to be patient and strong.

Allow me to also thank you for the compassion that you are showing to each other and yourselves, and am confident that if we continue to work together we can help each other and our nation to overcome the pandemic and its effects.

With my very best wishes,



Dr Andrew Niikondo
Acting Vice-Chancellor

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