



08 April 2020

**Dear NUST Students and staff**

**Re: COVID-19 MESSAGE TO STUDENTS AND STAFF MEASURE 8**

The spread of COVID-19 across the world and here in Namibia is causing understandable concern across the University community.

To begin with, I want to assure you that NUST Management is monitoring this situation closely and are doing everything we can to protect our students, faculty and staff. Your health, safety and well-being is our top priority.

Consequently, and in compliance with His Excellency the President of the Republic of Namibia Hon. Hage Geingob's instruction, the university effected a lockdown. I am happy to say we managed to arrange transport for all our hostel students to their homes and all international students to their respective countries so that they could be with their loved ones during this crisis.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend my hearty congratulations to those of you who have completed their studies and are graduating this year. I would also like to reiterate to you that graduation has not been cancelled, but postponed to the next available date, most likely in October. This gives us all adequate time to prepare for this important occasion.

Also take note that your certificates will be available at NUST in late April as originally planned. You are free to come and collect your degree parchment during this time (once lockdown has been lifted). Those of you who prefer to receive their parchment through the post, please advise us as soon as possible via this email: [registrar@nust.na](mailto:registrar@nust.na). If the lockdown measures are extended to cover the rest of April, we will mail your degree parchment to the postal address on record. But, if you have moved places, please advise the University of your new postal address immediately by using the email above.

I know you may be anxious about these rapid developments, but I encourage you to remain calm yet vigilant. There have also been many discussions about moving teaching, learning and assessment activities online. The University Management acknowledges that there are many challenges associated with such a move. Some of these challenges have also been reiterated by our own Student Representative Council (SRC) and some of the other student representative bodies in Namibia. We need to be sensitive to these challenges before embarking fully on such an endeavour. These challenges include (but are not limited to):

- Student and staff access to a reliable and affordable internet connection;
- Student and staff access to appropriate devices to access online learning such as laptops and other devices;
- Student computer literacy, especially our first-years, and also training to students to utilise the resources appropriately;
- Appropriate training for staff to be able to properly deliver online teaching, learning and assessment to our quality standards;
- Sufficient University IT infrastructure to cope with the increased demands such as bandwidth and hardware capacity;
- The challenge of practical and laboratory-based subjects;

- The availability of conducive and appropriate learning conditions for our students at home and;
- Reliable data to support our decision making.

Teams across the University are working diligently to find answers and solutions to these challenges. We are in contact with the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE), the Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Innovation (MHETI), our SRC and many other stakeholders in this regard to find potential solutions and to provide support for resolving these challenges. In this respect it is great to see a recent pronouncement from NSFAP that support for acquiring laptops may be forthcoming. **We are adamant to ensure that no student is left behind.**

The academic community is also working on getting materials and lectures available online as far as is possible so that they are ready once these significant challenges can be addressed satisfactorily. In addition, and despite the uncertainty of an exact date when the lockdown will be finally lifted, the academic community is working on multiple scenarios to get teaching and learning activities for the two semesters, back on track, depending on the length of the delay. These have been developed to meet the special needs of each programme, as one size does not fit all. For example, some courses need a lot of practical laboratory time, others do not.

Furthermore, I want to recognise our exceptional employees at NUST—who are working tirelessly to ensure that critical operations continue as smoothly as possible. These are unusual circumstances for many of us, and I greatly appreciate everyone’s flexibility, cooperation, understanding and patience as we work through the many issues associated with this uncertain situation.

This is a difficult time but remember that NUST is a resilient and caring community. We take on big challenges every day, and we use facts and science to guide our actions. Stay calm and informed. Take care of yourself, your families and your communities. Together, we will weather this crisis and I look forward to seeing each and every one of you back on campus or on our virtual platforms in the near future.

Remember to limit your movement, wash your hands regularly and immediately report any symptoms associated with the virus to **0800 100 100**. Otherwise stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely



Morné du Toit

Acting Vice-Chancellor

Mdt/cj