



16 July 2020

Dear Staff and Students,

RE: REVISED 2020 ACADEMIC CALENDAR DUE TO COVID-19

The revised 2020 Academic Calendar as approved by the University Senate on 3rd July 2020 was published last week to the campus community. Subsequent to this release and despite consultation with the Faculties and the Student Representative Council, my Office still receives concerns and questions raised by faculty and students. I therefore thought it appropriate to again engage with you on this matter to further clarify and explain as follows:

As you know, the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the national lockdown and the resultant closure of campus with the University resorting to Remote Teaching, Learning and Assessment (RTLTA) using eLearning methodologies in an effort to save the 2020 academic year. Unfortunately, not all students could switch to the RTLTA mode of study due to a lack of internet-enabled devices and internet connectivity.

The University student community further comprises a varied profile that includes different needs amongst them, which was escalated during this challenging time of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, the University was adamant in its efforts to ensure equity in the access to education for all its students and therefore classified the students in different categories to accommodate their various needs, i.e.

- senior students who are expected to graduate in November 2020;
- students who have compulsory practical lab sessions to attend as part of their course content and which could not all be offered online, yet it is also a set requirement from the respective Professional Bodies, e.g. the Engineering Council of Namibia, Health Professional Council and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in Namibia;
- students who could not cope with RTLTA due to lack of devices and internet connectivity; and
- Masters and PhD students.

These different student categories and the National Health and Safety Guidelines prescribed during each stage of the lockdown resulted in a phased approach for the return of students to campus. As such, students returned to campus in small numbers and within the above categories to ensure that the University comply with the National Health and Safety Guidelines. This further resulted in a new timetable to facilitate face-to-face teaching in smaller groups in several venues spread throughout the day to ensure social distancing is practiced. This meant that not all categories of students could return to campus at the same time, hence the phased approach.

A further impact on the timelines and Academic Calendar is the University's commitment to ensure a quality service is delivered to students, because lecturers cannot teach the different categories of students concurrently while the RTLTA also still continues in addition to the phased return of students to campus. The group of students in the category of no access to data and devices will return to campus on 3rd August to start with their face-to-face classes for 8 weeks after the lecturers concluded RTLTA. This category of students will continue from where the teaching and learning stopped before stage one of the lockdown. They will conclude their 1st semester on 2nd October 2020 and start together with the rest of the student cohort on 12th October 2020 with 2nd semester registration.

Once all these categories are catered for and the corresponding assessments are concluded, the Faculty Officers can then finalise the students' academic records and do their necessary promotion to determine which students qualify to graduate. All these processes require time to be efficiently completed. The October Graduation Ceremony is now re-scheduled to take place on 26th and 27th November 2020. Students who completed their studies at the end of the 2020 1st semester and meet all their curriculum requirements for their respective study programmes will therefore still have the opportunity to graduate in November 2020.

Thus, in order to adhere to the health and safety regulations of the country to protect our staff and students' safety, whilst at the same time save the academic year as much as possible, requires a complex and rigorous process which explains the adjustment to the Academic Calendar. Being cognisant of all students' needs, the University Senate approved to conclude the 1st semester in October 2020 and conclude the 2nd semester and 2020 academic year in March 2021.

The University further liaised with the Ministry who confirmed that the NSCCO and NSSCH results are projected to be released towards the end of January or early February 2021. This will afford the University enough time to process the results and make final offers to new students. The registration for the new intake of students is therefore scheduled for March 2021.

The plan is therefore to again catch up during the course of 2021 and revert back to normal to conclude the 2021 academic year as usual during December 2021.

Sincerely yours,



Dr Andrew Niikondo
Acting Vice-Chancellor

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