



## Emergency Teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 Era

**Introduction:** The information contained in this report was compiled from inputs received directly from public universities from 17 April to 6 May 2020. In addition to this document, USAf has produced a *Research Report* chronicling universities' extensive research contribution to the fight against COVID-19 and the *Engagement and Research Report*, that captures the engagements that universities have had with government and other entities in their support against this unprecedented pandemic.

Institution	Readiness for Emergency Online Teaching and Learning as at 6 May 2020	Challenges
<b>Cape Peninsula University of Technology</b>	CPUT reported impediments to remote teaching and learning similar to those of other previously disadvantaged institutions. It was untenable to resume teaching and learning in the current circumstances.	Students' lack of appropriate devices and issues of connectivity remained a stumbling block for online learning. Most of CPUT students are from rural settlements of the Eastern Cape, some with no electricity and absolutely no internet connectivity.
<b>Central University of Technology</b>	CUT resumed online instruction from 20 April 2020, while exploring additional alternative approaches to ensure inclusion of every student. The University is exploring the most viable options for meeting Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) requirements of, for instance, Teacher Education and a myriad of other programmes.	CUT is providing about 5000 electronic devices to students in need, in a package that includes provision of data options. This will be at a substantial cost. The University also needs to meet the minimum requirements of Work Integrated Learning that pertains to Education and other disciplines.
<b>Durban University of Technology</b>	DUT has not decided on a re-start date as yet, as a few matters remain under consideration. Various task teams are working remotely on plans to present to DUT's Executive Management Committee (EMC) and the Executive Committee of Senate (SENEX). Among other issues, the University plans to establish an acceptable level of service with regard to internet connectivity to students before issuing devices to the needy.	Not all students have devices or satisfactory connectivity. How DUT intends to proceed will become clearer once the EMC and SENEX have approved the University strategy.
<b>Mangosuthu University of Technology</b>	In light of the extended lockdown and the uncertainty around COVID-19, MUT plans to resume the academic programme as of 1 June, online. Executive Management had previously counted on the end of the	Given the challenge of students not having access to devices and network accessibility, MUT had considered remote teaching as a supplementary, not mainstream

	<p>lockdown to reinstate almost full-scale contact teaching. In that scenario, remote teaching was meant to be a supplementary approach.</p> <p>In the meantime, MUT is working on equipping both students and academics for the online delivery of the curriculum. Executive Management is currently evaluating the financial implications of providing devices to students, with hope that the DHET will step in with some emergency assistance. It has also successfully negotiated with some telecoms providers for zero-rated access to the university site. Management is hoping that all the necessary measures will be in place by the 1 June re-start date.</p>	<p>approach to completing the academic year. However, the protracted lockdown renders the online option inevitable.</p> <p>Most of MUT academics required training on the use of the LMS to facilitate remote teaching and learning. The institution has rolled out virtual capacity development interventions for academics. An online “how to” training manual for students was also developed.</p>
<b>Nelson Mandela University</b>	<p>Nelson Mandela university resumed the academic programme from 28 April, through two teaching and learning pathways ranging from digital to face-to-face when classes resume, to a blended approach which combines the two. Until 28 April, the University had been in a preparatory phase. <u>Pathway 1 students</u> (those with suitable devices – laptops and smartphones – and connectivity) have started learning in earnest and will complete most of their learning remotely and digitally. <u>Pathway 2 students</u> (those with no access to devices or connectivity from home) will receive intensive face-to-face teaching when students return to campus. The two pathways enable the University to reduce numbers at its venues for social and physical distancing purposes.</p>	<p>Up to 45% of students do not have suitable devices for online learning. This cohort would be accommodated through Pathway 2.</p> <p>Students from both pathways will have access to tutors, supplemental instruction leaders, academic advisers, student success coaches and counsellors, who will provide support online and, when possible, face-to-face learning and psycho-social support to help students to adapt to new ways of learning and to succeed.</p>
<b>North-West University</b>	<p>NWU commenced teaching and learning online on 20 April, by which date the University had already communicated its plan widely. The University planned to proceed with low tech solutions; monitor the usage of their LMS; learn from observations of online teaching and learning activity and re-strategise along the way. In support of online learning, NWU was also prepared to deliver hard copy study material to students reporting unsatisfactory connectivity access. NWU will also run contact teaching on-campus to meet disadvantaged students halfway, when the lockdown ends.</p>	<p>Just over 7% of NWU students either do not have internet connectivity or lack devices appropriate for online learning. The University has secured zero-rated access to its institutional sites and an additional 10GB of data per student at no extra cost to the institution.</p> <p>NWU is also providing devices to the needy students on a loan basis.</p>
<b>Rhodes University</b>	<p>Academics had been preparing and were geared up to resume teaching – online – from 20 April. However, given that students were ill-equipped to start online learning, RU was waiting out the outcomes of USAf and TENET efforts to obtain devices for needy students, and to secure zero-rated data from telecommunications companies. An online orientation programme aimed at introducing students to remote and online learning</p>	<p>Some RU students do not have access to the appropriate devices and/or connectivity to participate fully through an online teaching and learning approach. While academics were free to upload material onto RU’s learning management system during the lockdown, the VC said there should be no expectation -- when contact classes start at a later stage -- that students would have</p>

	was being developed. This would be ready for when RU resumed the academic programme.	accessed that material. Students should also not be expected to submit work for formal assessment during the lockdown
<b>Sefako Makgatho University of Health Sciences</b>	SMU was waiting out sector-wide solutions to the data issue (i.e. a zero-rated access deals). That was allowing them time to ponder the question of securing devices for their needy students. The University was supportive of a phased-in approach to returning students to campuses, alongside processes to restructure residence arrangements in support of social distancing. In the meantime, SMU had developed a mobile application to screen students and identify those needing testing for coronavirus, and also to monitor students and staff with COVID-19 related symptoms. SMU's priority would be to bring back to campus, students whose circumstances did not allow them to participate in remote learning.	60% of students were without devices at SMU. The University also needed to resolve very speedily, the issue of senior clinical medicine students needing practical exposure as a condition for completing their programmes.  The University was developing a criteria to determine which students to prioritise in allowing some back on campus.
<b>Sol Plaatje University</b>	SPU was ready to resume teaching online from 4 May. Fortunately most of their students had laptops and 75% had satisfactory connectivity. SPU had a cloud-based LMS and Telkom and Cell C had agreed to zero-rate access to that platform.	The University was bracing itself for an enormous expenditure over data provision to both staff and the students in this difficult period. Online teaching was also new to most academics.
<b>Stellenbosch University</b>	After a period of rigorous preparation on the part of staff and students, SU was ready to roll-out online teaching and learning as of 20 April; SU would follow a revised time table for classes, tests and examinations responsive to the COVID-19 disruptions. There would be no formal assessments (tests and examinations) till the beginning of May, and the University would continue to monitor the situation; learn and adapt along the way.	SU admitted that even theirs was not going to be a perfect situation where every students had a proper online learning device. However, not resuming teaching and learning online on 20 April was not an option, the VC stated.
<b>Tshwane University of Technology</b>	TUT was planning to resume remote teaching and learning for completion of Semester 1 from 1 June to 28 August (13 weeks), and of Semester 2 teaching from 7 September to 11 December (14 weeks) – subject to timely delivery of learning devices. Online teaching would be supplemented with delivery of printed learning material to students. The first half of the month of May would be spent finalising capacitation of academics in remote teaching and related software programmes; completing negotiations for zero-rated access to University sites while finalising the teaching and learning logistics. The second half of May would be invested in orientating students on remote learning; running system trials and communicating TUT's timetable towards completion of the 2020 academic year.	As is the case at many universities, not all TUT students have access to data, connectivity and devices required to participate fully in remote learning.  A month-long survey seeking to determine student readiness for remote emergency teaching and to assess students' perception regarding remote learning, was completed by 1 May. This would also inform the extent of need for learning devices. Following extensive stakeholder engagement including securing buy-in from student leadership, TUT would embark on extensive communication of the emergency teaching and learning plan to the University community,

	In anticipation of a phased return of some students to campus from 22 July, the University planned to embark on preparation of residences and campuses from 1-15 July. A plan in this regard was being developed, with details of which cohorts of students would be prioritised, and the dates of their staggered return. The plan would be shared in due course.	while also confirming student details such as cell phone numbers, geographical location and delivery addresses.
<b>University of Cape Town</b>	<p>UCT was geared to start orientation on online learning on 20 April. To complement online learning, UCT had printed study material and placed some on flash drives that they would distribute to students as an extraordinary measure to make this mode of learning work. Recognising that online learning had made everyone vulnerable, the University had started a referral system to help students cope.</p> <p>The VC said she had noticed that even the most privileged students were not optimally prepared for online learning. For her, a phased-in return to campus remained a solution. It might just be the solution for those students who can never study on their own at home. In the meantime, UCT would monitor how many students were logging in per day. They would use data analytics to learn and make decisions along the way.</p>	<p>For UCT, the issue of vulnerable students went further than students without devices and connectivity. It also included students living in environments un conducive to learning. Even the better resourced students had not signed up for online learning and were therefore anxious. A strong support system was therefore imperative, if students, and staff, were to cope in this environment.</p> <p>UCT was working on a criteria they would use in allowing phased-in return of students to campus. While some students would be allowed back in residence on the basis of unworkable home situations, those would be accommodated with residence and Wifi facilities only. The students would have to continue learning online.</p>
<b>University of Fort Hare</b>	Resuming teaching online remained a distant possibility to UFH, given the profile of their students. Even if Government and telecommunications companies provided devices and zero-rated data, respectively, connectivity would remain a stumbling block. While the University is committed, like other institutions, to complete the 2020 academic year and is resolute on ensuring that no student is left behind, the only viable strategy is to assume a blended learning approach combining remote learning, now, and contact teaching when it is safer to re-open campuses at the end of the lockdown. Meanwhile, learning materials continue to be uploaded on Blackboard for those who can continue learning. A moratorium has been placed on all assessments. UFH foresees the 2020 academic year definitely running into 2021.	<p>Up to 70% of UFH students lack laptops. Most of them reside in rural Eastern Cape, where they either had no electricity or had no access to internet connectivity.</p> <p>Although the University has since reconfigured its budget to accommodate the purchase of 12,000 laptops (with modems), suppliers are currently out of stock. UFH is waiting for these devices to be manufactured. The University is, in the meantime, conducting an assessment to determine who gets the devices, on a loan-to-buy basis. This cost will be debited to the students' fee accounts</p>
<b>University of Johannesburg</b>	UJ was ready to commence teaching from 20 April, but had decided to assume a slow pace for two weeks to ease students into online learning. UJ had also invested time and effort in producing remote teaching, learning and research resources in support of their community and felt adequately prepared. They had long communicated a planned re-start of 20 April and intended to proceed that way.	UJ was providing devices to new NSFAS students, as the Institution's contribution to all new 1st year NSFAS students.

<p><b>University of KwaZulu-Natal</b></p>	<p>The date for fully-fledged resumption of the academic programme at UKZN will be announced once the logistical arrangements below have been satisfactorily completed. As at 27 April, capacitation of academics for remote teaching was nearing completion. Learning material for the remainder of the first semester was due to be loaded online in the week of 4-8 May. The date of the official launch of the online learning solution would be made in the same week, during which time, detailed plans of a dry run to test the technology systems and online academic arrangements for readiness would also be provided.</p> <p>In the week starting 4 May, UKZN was finalising its negotiations with MTN, Vodacom and Telkom for zero-rated access to 11 University sites including Moodle. Arrangements were being made to run the learning content via a proxy server on campus for the telecommunications providers as part of getting the University ready for online learning. Other logistical options were also being explored to ensure that no students were left out due to lack of access to online services. For instance, home addresses of all registered students were being geo-mapped to establish their location and to get a sense of how many students were located in areas with poor coverage. The possibility of providing 'Wi-Fi hot-spots' for these students was being explored.</p> <p>In the meantime, students were being encouraged to engage in self-directed learning to keep ahead in their studies, while academics were being urged to continue preparing for the dry run and launch of the new system by uploading learning materials and curating content.</p> <p>Assessment protocols were expected to be in place by the end of May.</p>	<p>The process of transferring the curriculum of the entire University onto virtual platforms has been daunting. With a total enrolment of 50 000 students (with 23 000 in residences), 9 000-plus staff and five campuses, UKZN, being the largest contact institution in South Africa, faces a unique set of challenges of managing the academic programme within the social distancing prescripts of the COVID-19 era.</p> <p>Data and other costs directly related to COVID-19 are expected to be considerable, with significant adverse implications for UKZN's financial sustainability.</p>
<p><b>University of Limpopo</b></p>	<p>UL was in a dilemma similar to that which other previously disadvantaged institutions faced. The University did not have a budget to provide devices to the majority of their students. In the absence of a solution in this regard, resuming with teaching would without doubt leave some students behind. The University was, nonetheless, engaged in discussions at the sector level for a common approach to the remote teaching alternative, in the event of a protracted national lockdown. UL preferred a sector-coordinated approach.</p>	<p>Students' lack of appropriate devices and issues of connectivity remained a stumbling block for UL. It was impractical to re-start the academic programme online in these circumstances.</p>
<p><b>University of Mpumalanga</b></p>	<p>UMP used the recent 10 day recess to prepare for teaching and learning during the lockdown, and classes resumed on the scheduled date. The University uses Moodle as its Learning Management System (LMS) and</p>	<p>The major challenge is to achieve 100% student access to Moodle. This has been greatly assisted by the zero rating of UMP sites by cell phone providers.</p>

	<p>has, for a number of years, been encouraging academic staff and students to use this platform to enrich and facilitate teaching and learning. For this reason, the shift to on-line teaching and learning was not as challenging as it might have been. A working group assigned to manage the transition to on-line teaching has worked hard to support staff and students as they make the transition from contact to on-line teaching. Numerous academic staff are also highly experienced Moodle users. They have been assisting less able to staff to improve their use of the LMS. A wide range of technology-enhanced teaching and learning is taking place using not only Moodle but also on-line discussion forums, YouTube videos, narrated PowerPoint videos and other technologies.</p> <p>By the end of April, all supporting materials had been uploaded to Moodle and in many cases, additional materials had been added. Initial reports submitted on on-line teaching and learning were highly encouraging. An analysis undertaken during a week long period starting on 30 April showed that as many as 90% of students were active online over a four day period for one module, and an average of 2700 students were accessing Moodle each day during that period. The level of participation by UMP students was therefore very encouraging. In order to encourage reading, the University Library was making a list of African language books available once a week.</p> <p>From all of the experiences shared above, UMP has learned the value of the ability to adapt – especially at a time of unpredictability and uncertainty. While planning is crucial, UMP believes it is equally important to be able to adapt those plans to a changing context. As such, teaching and learning is a standing agenda item at weekly meetings of the University Management Committee.</p>	<p>Secondly, a number of academic programmes include practicals and field work and while it is possible to substitute some with on-line work, this is not ideal. Essential practical work will be rescheduled once the lockdown is over.</p> <p>Thirdly, a number of academic programmes include a period of work integrated learning and three groups of students have had to leave their WIL. The issue of WIL is being addressed by a dedicated USAf task team and is not discussed further here.</p> <p>Fourthly, in response to the challenge of students lacking appropriate learning devices, and those facing connectivity challenges in their home localities, the University has approached its funders and partners with requests to provide laptop to the students that they are funding, OR to provide a number of devices that the University can distribute.</p> <p>Even though UMP encourages adherence to hard deadlines for submission of assignments, where a student is unable to meet a deadline, additional time is provided.</p> <p>Catch up classes will be arranged as necessary, once contact sessions resume.</p>
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<b>University of Pretoria</b>	Teaching and Learning started in earnest online on 4 May to accommodate delivery of laptops to disadvantaged students, thus allowing everyone a common re-start date. UP academics had used the period until 4 May to navigate the terrain and to iron out any rough ends. The University was considering opening up libraries and other centres of learning under controlled safe-distancing conditions at a later stage.	Black students were by far the most disadvantaged when it came to appropriate study devices. Although the VC had set aside a budget to secure enough devices, he remained braced for any eventualities due to the complexity of the logistics related to completely remote teaching and learning.
<b>University of South Africa</b>	Unisa, being a distant teaching institution, had continued with the academic programme despite the lockdown.	The only setback suffered from the lockdown were students complaining of the change to online submission of assignments.
<b>University of the Free State</b>	Online teaching and learning started in earnest on 4 May. Prior to that, UFS had started with orientation to the online delivery of teaching from 20 April, while waiting for all students to get devices, to become familiar with remote learning and for the University to assess who still did not have a device and connectivity. Only from 4 May would academics begin to assign work. The University would not penalise later starters.	UFS has their fair share of students without appropriate study devices.
<b>University of Zululand</b>	Unizulu has continued teaching and learning online during the lockdown. The University will apply some flexibility to teaching and learning, combining technology-based and face-face where possible. Students who can be reached remotely and who can participate meaningfully online will continue to do so. Unizulu is also considering bringing back small groups of students to campus for short periods of time, like a week, for intensive physical teaching and learning for them to catch up in a phased approach. Appropriate precautionary safety measures (e.g. the use of sanitisers, masks, shields, aprons, isolation rooms, etc. as prescribed) will be adopted. Unizulu secured zero-rated data and adopted less expensive technologies to facilitate remote learning. The University also embarked on training of academics to adapt the curriculum to online delivery without compromising quality, adopted new assessment approaches and secured external funding to procure laptops to be loaned out to needy students. Online teaching will be ramped up as participation levels improve, while keeping an eye on providing greater support to the vulnerable cohort of students.	<p>Participation levels were very low in some departments due to lack of laptops by students. Also many students struggled to access internet from home, because their places did not have readily accessible connectivity. Buying data to access online teaching and learning also became a challenge to those with satisfactory connectivity.</p> <p>Arrangements are being made to deliver via courier or other means, teaching and learning materials in hard copy and / or on USB to students without connectivity.</p> <p>The University is collecting data to establish the extent of benefit derived from learning online so that catch up plans could be arranged for the vulnerable lot, so that no one remains unfairly disadvantaged.</p>
<b>University of the Western Cape</b>	UWC was ready to commence Term 2 with blended and flexible teaching and learning methodologies from 20 April. These would include online delivery of the subject matter, use of print media, PowerPoint presentations and flash drives that would be couriered to the student. The study programme would also include a catch-up phase (i.e. phased return to campus for the students without equipment and data) and a	Students without devices; internet connectivity and data

	varied and phased approach to assessments. The University had gone on a fundraising drive in an attempt to secure the means to purchase devices for their needy students.	
<b>University of the Witwatersrand</b>	WITS was ready to roll, online, from 20 April, but with a plan to accommodate their disadvantaged students through an alternative cohort of contact teaching at some point. Wits also purchased and distributed data to students.	About 10% of Wits students lack devices, internet connectivity or data

<b>University of Venda</b>	<p>Univen resumed teaching and learning online, from the first week of April 2020. The University had been distributing tablets to all registered students, in accordance with a project that started in 2015. Since then, the University had been allocating tablets to all first time entering students. This has, over time, become a tradition, thus enabling students to participate in online learning, through use of Blackboard. Tablets for the first time entering students for 2020 had not yet been distributed when the country went on lockdown. Arrangements are underway to deliver tablets to all first entering students' places of residence. The University has successfully negotiated with Telkom, Vodacom, Cell C and MTN for zero rated access to university sites.</p> <p>Univen's Centre for Higher Education, Teaching and Learning (CHETL) developed a protocol that guides both academic staff and students through accelerating quality teaching and learning for the purpose of completing the 2020 academic year and succeeding beyond COVID-19. No assessment will be undertaken online.</p>	<p>Like many other institutions, Univen has had to contend with unavailability of data for students (including international students) and staff to participate in blended teaching and learning. Poor network connection is also a real concern, as is the integrity of online assessment and student readiness to participate in blended learning.</p> <p>As at 28 April, Univen was about to undertake a survey to understand what percentage of students could not access online content, and the underlying reasons. To ensure that no student was left behind, the University was planning on supplementing e-learning with other teaching and learning approaches, including the delivery of hard copy learning materials to students.</p>
<b>Vaal University of Technology</b>	<p>VUT has prepared and experimented extensively with online learning, with intent to resume the academic programme, remotely, from 1 June. Alongside the online teaching solution, VUT is working on a plan to return final year undergraduate students to campus, in a staggered fashion. First priority will be given to the 3,085 students expected to complete their studies and to graduate at the end of the 2020 academic year. Executive Management is working out which group of students will be next in line, between students requiring access to laboratories, other senior students or first-year undergraduates. In consultation with the Department of Health, VUT is observing an appropriate facilities management programme including regular deep-cleaning of venues and work surfaces; provision of sanitisers, soap, paper towels, masks and gloves (where required).</p>	<p>From a recent online readiness survey conducted among students, VUT learned that 70% of the student body lacks appropriate devices, and 80% face a challenge of data. VUT is negotiating with the State, organisations providing bursaries to their students as well as existing and potential donors to mobilise the resources necessary to make up the shortfall of 15,000 tablets and laptops. Executive Management is confident that it will be able to achieve this goal, and that these devices would be in place by no later than 1 June.</p>
<b>Walter Sisulu University</b>	<p>For WSU, the large number of students without devices makes online learning untenable at this point in time.</p>	<p>A large majority (90%) of students are without devices; internet connectivity and data</p>