



19 March 2020

Dear Staff and Students,

Following Vice Chancellors' consultations with the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation on Tuesday, 17 March on an appropriate response to containing the spread of the novel Corona (COVID-19) virus, and the subsequent announcements by the Minister as well as those by other Ministers of State, I now provide an update on the status of our University's response to this unprecedented global pandemic and national disaster.

1. The University will now be on recess until 14 April 2020. As previously advised, this means that the academic recess is brought forward, and that academic activities will now resume on 15 April 2020.
2. Students will now be required to return to campus only on 15 April 2020. I am most grateful to our students for having heeded our directives to leave for home and to vacate University residences and privately-owned contracted residences. This unprecedented action was not taken lightly and was necessary in order to suppress, contain and prevent the spread of the virus, and to safeguard the health and safety of our students. I am also most grateful to Ms Busi Radebe for the special arrangements that she and her team put in place to ensure that all needy students were able to be provided with transport to reach their respective homes.
3. In light of the extended academic recess, the academic calendar will be revised. One of the consequences of this would be that the June/July vacation break will be forfeited. There will be similar consequences for the shorter September recess. In order for students and staff to revise their respective travel and other commitments, the Registrar will soon communicate the revised academic calendar.
4. Academic staff will be required to complete leave applications for the period 23-27 March 2020. During the period 30 March 2020 until 13 April 2020, academic staff working under the stewardship of their Deans and Heads of Departments, making use of Blackboard, will develop and make available online academic programme offerings. Subject to their specific

circumstances, and the guidance of their Deans and Heads of departments, this work could be undertaken remotely.

5. Since the University has now put in place the prescribed occupational health requirements, professional and support staff will return to our campuses on 20 March 2020. Mindful of our responsibilities to all our members of staff, and in order to ensure the prescribed social distancing in the respective places of work, responsible executive and senior managers will determine and advise whether members of staff will be required to undertake their tasks and activities on campus or at home or on campus but on a rotational basis. In this regard, professional and support staff should follow directives issued.
6. In order for us to maintain the health of ourselves, our families, our communities and our nation, all members of staff and students are urged to follow and practice prescribed hygiene measures and to maintain the prescribed social distance. In this regard, do wash your hands thoroughly at least ten times a day using liquid soap or an alcohol-based (> 60%) hand sanitizer; treat every surface including your mobile phone as possibly infected; do not greet with a handshake, high-five or fist-pump, instead wave or touch with elbows; when coughing or sneezing cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or the crook of your arm, and immediately wash your hands; reduce all non-essential travel; and, reduce all non-essential social interaction.
7. For us, here at VUT, our nation, our continent and our world to overcome this unprecedented challenge, each one of us must demonstrate extreme vigilance and compliance with national and institutional directives. I have no doubt that when we collaborate and step up, we can, and shall overcome this enormous challenge.



**Professor Ihron Rensburg**  
**Administrator**