

#2022 AY

UPDATE ON
PLANS FOR THE

Academic

Year 2022

**Dear Parents, Guardians, and the Mandela University Community**

Prioritising the safety of staff and students while **re-imagining** the delivery of learning and teaching during a coronavirus pandemic has been challenging. We had to shift all teaching and learning activities online during the hard lockdown in 2020 and then gradually phase in mask-to-mask academic activities. **Our lecturers and students**

rose to these challenges and adapted and, as an institution, we are now better placed for managing the academic year ahead.

No doubt you have many questions about 2022,

including the safety of our campuses, the water crisis in Gqeberha, whether students need to attend classes, tutorials or do studio work in person or work online, and how academic activities will be managed during the imminent **4th wave.**

This letter seeks to guide you on what to expect for the 2022 academic year (#2022AY).

Safe Campus Environment

The good health and safety of our staff, students and publics remains a paramount guiding principle. We are committed to ensuring a safe and successful academic year amid the coronavirus pandemic and subscribe to the national alert level regulations at all times.

Additionally, we restrict the number of staff and students on campus and adjust the delivery of academic activities through:



Practising physical distancing in lecture venues and labs. Students must be seated at least 1,5m apart and venues can only be filled to a maximum of 50% of their capacity. To do this we divide classes into groups and have repeat sessions. Students and lecturers will wear **masks** during all teaching and experiential learning sessions and **sanitise** their hands and work spaces regularly



All venues meet ventilation requirements and must be sanitised before and after classes. This also impacts on how often we can use a venue each day.



If two or more students in a class or a student residence test positive for COVID-19, the entire class or residence needs to be quarantined for 10 days. **By adhering to these health protocols,** we have been able to contain the number of cluster outbreaks.



Being agile and adaptable during the peak of the 4th and subsequent waves by immediately shifting all learning online until the national regulations and our own assessment makes it safe to resume M2M academic activities. During this time, we normally provide safe access to our computer labs for students who do not have a laptop so that they can participate in online learning and assessments.

Vaccinations

Vaccinations are the leading prevention strategy for protecting students and staff from COVID-19 and to help end the pandemic.

COVID-19 vaccines were developed using scientific methods. A growing body of evidence indicates that these vaccines are safe, can reduce the risk of getting and spreading the virus, and are highly effective at preventing hospitalisation and death.

Vaccinations are now widely available at no cost. We advocate that students and staff should take up the opportunity soonest to get vaccinated as this will significantly contribute to fostering a safer campus environment

for all. Consequently, we will constantly monitor & verify the vaccination status of students & staff. Students will be asked to upload their vaccination certificate at registration and mobile vaccination opportunities will be available at registration venues.

For the convenience of our staff, students, and the public, we also have our own vaccination sites on our North and George campuses.

GET YOUR



VACCINE



Vaccination Sites

North Campus

George Campus

**Consultative Team**

As we continue to learn to co-exist with the pandemic, the University has established a consultative team to develop and implement a framework to guide our decisions, inclusive of vaccination advisory measures, in fostering a safe environment and successful start to #2022AY.

**COVID protocols commitment**

In turn, students and staff will be asked to commit to adhering to COVID-19 requirements before accessing campus in 2022.

Study Delivery Differs from Programme to Programme

While most learning and teaching remained mainly online during 2021, we increased the number of mask-to-mask contact sessions. Close to 6000 students were able to attend on-campus activities. These were largely linked to experiential learning (such as lab and studio work and clinical training), tests and exams. We prioritised final year students for on-campus activities, as well as various health sciences students who needed to be prepared for clinical sessions in hospitals and clinics, for example.

Going forward, while some programmes will remain fully online, there will be an increase in the number of programmes that will be a blend of online and in-person sessions.

Each student will have received a letter about the learning format used for their programme.

Where a programme is only delivered online, students do not have to come onto campus. This means that these students can learn remotely (e.g. from home or a student residence, with the necessary online support requirements - see below). They will also be provided with learning and psychosocial support.

Online Learning Requirements & Support

Students who learn **online** will need a:

- Laptop or desktop computer
- Smartphone
- Reasonably stable connection
- Place to study to effectively learn online from home (remotely).

Students who do not have access to all of these will need to be in Gqeberha or George to use the University's general and specialised computer labs and Wi-Fi on campus and in on- or accredited off-campus student residences, so that they can engage in online learning.

Water Crisis

With dam levels critical, and as a major consumer of water in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, the University needs to drastically save water. Various interventions are already in place to reduce water consumption, but ultimately we are reliant on each other to change our water usage behaviour and limit our consumption to **less than 50 litres per person a day.**

CHANGE THE WORLD.

ONE DROP AT A TIME.

NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY

In closing

As you will appreciate, in view of the pandemic and the present water crisis, adopting a "classes as normal" approach is not yet possible. Instead, we must continue to follow COVID-19 protocols, abide by national measures to manage and curb the 4th wave of coronavirus infections, advocate for students and staff to be vaccinated and save water to help ensure a safe campus environment.

In the interim, as we seek new safe ways of re-introducing more contact learning, we have learnt that, to date, the performance of students who have been learning largely online is slightly better than when we only had contact sessions.

And so, despite the changes and hardships of the pandemic, there have been benefits. Consequently, post-pandemic, we will continue using a flexible learning approach where we mix contact and online learning to foster student success and develop work-ready graduates who serve the public good.