



29 April 2020

Attention all Editors – For Immediate Release

UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE PROVIDES LAPTOPS AND DATA TO ALL STUDENTS TO ENABLE REMOTE E-LEARNING

The University of Fort Hare has embarked on a large-scale project to make available 12 000 laptops (with modems and data) to enable all students, including those who currently do not own such devices, to participate in online learning remotely. This is a necessary response to the disruption of the academic programme caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This decision has been necessitated by the daily escalation of infection rates, particularly in the Eastern Cape Province where our university is located. Management therefore foresees continued and sustained disruption to normal University functions and traditional methods of learning which involve contact sessions between students and teaching staff. The university will henceforth incorporate online and remote learning modalities as one of the delivery strategies for its programmes - applicable during this period as well as post-lockdown - in order to recover the academic year.

To ensure no student is left behind, the University will be requiring each student to have a laptop and data.

The devices will be made available to students who do not yet own a laptop on a loan-to-buy scheme and the cost of thereof will be debited to students' fee accounts. In addition, the University will provide students and staff with monthly data.

The University of Fort Hare is not in a position to switch over fully to online teaching and learning. However, learning materials continue to be uploaded on Blackboard and a moratorium has been placed on all assessments. When it is safe to bring students back to campus, the university will pursue blended delivery methods which will require our students to have all the tools necessary to recover lost time.

This is a challenging time but also an opportunity for the University and our students to make a significant shift towards technology-supported learning. We are well aware that this will not solve all the difficulties our students are encountering during this unusual time. However, this shift will equip our students with new skills and flexible working and learning practices. It will help to catapult the University into a new dispensation of fully digitised systems and processes.

Ensuring that every student has a laptop and data will significantly bolster teaching, learning, supervision and research activities that are currently underway through our online learning management system.

Ends.

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