



Kigali, 08/05/2020
Ref. N°: VC.0476/2020

To:

Students (All)
University of Rwanda

Dear Students,

Re: Ongoing arrangements for learning at UR

We would like to thank you for continuing to work with your Campuses and Colleges, and with local authorities, to ensure that we all stay safe at this challenging time.

In recent times many people have faced uncertainty about their jobs, health and schooling globally. We are now in a position to reduce some uncertainty for the University. Indeed, with the recent Cabinet's guidance on progressive lifting of the lockdown and MINEDUC's clarifications on its implication on the Education sector, ***it is clear that we will not*** meet again on University campuses for some time. In terms of planning and building hope for the future this is very helpful for all of us, and so we wish to outline some shared ideas about what we have achieved and can continue to achieve by the time we reconvene for face-to-face teaching:

1. Since the stopping of the face-to-face teaching, faculty have continued and to write for publication and adopt different approaches to teaching and assessment, while students have navigated with variable success the challenges of online learning. Faculty continue to upload learning materials, initially for trimester 2, and now we are moving to upload all of the year's materials. In fact, many stakeholders have pulled together and we recognize the invaluable support of MINEDUC and the telecom companies in zero-rating access to our platform.
2. Over the weeks of this lockdown we have been able to register some successes in terms of virtual teaching in postgraduate fields. Some modules have been successfully taught and assessed online and even in *viva voce* exams resulting in the award of a PhD by Jönköping International Business School (JIBS) to Dr Yvonne Umulisa of CBE and on 29th May 2020, Eng. Bernard Munyazikwiye of CST will defend his PhD thesis at Agder University in Norway by videoconference.
3. The University is not closed, and we continue to carry out works on physical and IT infrastructure and work on developing research and teaching. And so, we embark on



readiness for the resumption of face-to-face teaching and this is where we need you to work with us.

4. Learning is a lifelong activity and not something you do in the lead up to an exam. We therefore urge you to make use of every opportunity to keep learning, and to connect with the UR Graduate Attributes. On our part, we will not stop communicating with you and until you report back on campus for face-to-face teaching, you will continue to hear from academic staff in your programs either directly or through a cascade of communications from your student leaders and peers using social media, as we want to remain in touch and connected with you.
5. The University is a universal community and so we encourage you to use peer networks to support one another to continue learning. Academic achievement should never be so competitive that your classmates are excluded from access to information and knowledge that you may have. Some of you may already be tutoring younger siblings at home, and we encourage you to find ways to give tips and advice and to share resources with students in years below you at UR who live in your neighbourhoods. However, aware of the fact that some of you do not have computers, tablets or smartphones or may live in areas where internet may be a problem, we will not undertake summative assessment in undergraduate programs.
6. As we make this vital shift from teaching to learning we want you to be as ready as you can possibly be for when you come back to campus and encourage you to optimize this time on off-campus learning, thus you are *strongly encouraged* where possible, to:
 - Make sure that you are registered for all modules that you should be taking this academic year so that you can access online learning materials.
 - Form squads of peer-learners and peer-teachers whereby some of you who are more knowledgeable in using the platform and in content will support others.
 - Download online materials from the UR e-learning platform and complete learning tasks offline.
 - Keep a constant communication with your lecturers for any clarifications and support.
 - Explore and engage with online instructional materials and complete the learning tasks suggested by your lecturers.



- In particular, follow the lessons that will be aired on Radio Salus for "Citizenship and Transformative Education" and while these have greatest relevance to Year 1 students, they will be of interest to all.
7. **There is no going back.** When we meet again in September, we will never return to full face-to-face (chalk and talk) teaching and we will always have a form of blended learning, i.e. a combination of face-to-face and online teaching and learning. To achieve this, we are working towards a tremendous increase in internet access and bandwidth on our all campuses and eventually transform all of them into internet hotspots!
 8. For undergraduate programs, we plan to have one modified semester combining the second and third trimester, during which there will be accelerated teaching and learning with intense facilitation including evenings and weekends. There will be extended opening hours for study areas such as libraries and computer labs. We shall be working with HEC and MINEDUC on a modified Academic Calendar to ensure that the current academic year ends as quickly as possible without jeopardising of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
 9. For Masters and doctoral students, since you already study in different ways to conventional undergraduate approaches, you will receive direct guidance from your program directors and supervisors. In principle postgraduate teaching, learning and assessment shall continue, harnessing the online capabilities that UR has already developed.

There have been and will continue to be challenges in managing the impact of COVID-19 on our University. However, we are blessed to have a particularly strong, patriotic and committed Student Guild team at UR, and we will work closely to identify and address challenges. We also would like to reiterate that, this period of closure is about population health, and this must start with you. Look after yourself, stay fit and well, and stay positive.

Yours Sincerely,

Prof. Philip Cotton
Vice Chancellor



Cc:

- Deputy Vice Chancellor (All: Electronically)
- Principal (All: Electronically)