

08 May 2020

Dear Students

LEARNING AND TEACHING GOES ONLINE



The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the national lockdown has disrupted the start of the 2020 academic year and the continuation of the academic programme. We trust that you have been keeping up to date with your studies at home and have joined the thousands of other students who are learning online with our support! Further details of how to get online with our continued support is outlined in this communication for you.

Introduction

These are unprecedented times in the history of our society and whilst the nationwide lockdown remains in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our primary focus is the safety of our staff and students and to ensure the successful completion of the 2020 academic year. We are not alone as all education institutions throughout South Africa, the region and globally have been obliged to take the same action. Our duty of care for the health and wellbeing for all our students and staff and our local communities is part of our responsibilities as citizens. We must work together to stop the progress of this virus and flatten the curve if we are to successfully defeat this global pandemic. The most important public health message is the containment of the disease, including avoiding social gatherings and minimising groups of people gathering in one space.

The recent announcement from the Minister of Higher Education and Training has reaffirmed that physical campus spaces of education institutions remain closed at this time. At this stage, it is not clear when lectures will resume on campus. We will be guided by national pronouncements in this regard. We wish to assure every student that we have spent much time reworking the academic calendars for the 2020 academic year for a range of different scenarios and we are ready to implement rescheduled calendars for contact classes on campus once we are permitted to do so. In the meantime, you should be committed to time each day in self-directed study and online learning through the student portal where we continue to support all students with an enriched learning experience online.

Student Information Survey

The Student Portal is the place to receive all communication and notifications which are sent to you via your institutional email. Where we have identified a student who has not yet logged in or who requires additional support to their queries, we have tried to call via their mobile number or contact them via their email address. Students are reminded to ensure that we have their latest contact details. We are also keen to get your feedback on online learning resources and ask that you complete this information survey by next Monday 11 May 2020. Here is the URL link: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DWT2CJF>. You can also update your contact details on that survey too. Alternatively, you can contact your campus Academic Manager.

Students accessing online learning materials

Since the beginning of April, increasing numbers of students have been logging onto their institutional student portal to access the virtual classroom and learning platform, called **myClass**, where every student has access to a range of additional content and learning activities for each of the modules they are studying. These online module spaces offer a variety of learning resources for students and the opportunity to engage with each other and the module lecturer.

A select team of module lecturers and support staff are fully operational and working from home developing additional content and will be further supporting you the students online in your journey

It is easy for students to access their portal and if you have not yet done so you are urged to get online without delay!

Step 1: Click on the Student Portal link below for the institution/brand:

Damelin: <http://my.damelin.co.za>

City Varsity: <http://my.cityvarsity.co.za>

CTC: <http://my.ctc.edu.co.za>

ICESA: <http://my.icesa.co.za>

Step 2: You will be directed to a Microsoft Login Page.

The Username is student number followed by the brand/institution address as per the example (20200000@damelin.co.za). The initial student password is: Educate2020 (on the first login and thereafter you can change your password). Any problems with logging in can be directed to your campus Academic Manager.

The Student Portal offers you a wide range of digital resources and learning engagement opportunities:

1. myLibrary

- A wide range of open education digital resources and e-books,
- Writing and Research support material such as referencing guides,
- One-click access to the online plagiarism checker software,
- Journal Database Repositories – i.e EBSCO-Host,
- Online periodicals and subscription free webzines,
- Digital directories for larger online educational resources,
- Links to relative governmental repositories for gazettes, legislature and acts,
- Archives for Creative Commons licenced audio-visual material,

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- Access to Open Education Resources for supplementary learning materials,
 - Academic Utilities for supporting student assessment completion,
2. **myClass** the core online learning platform that contains the academic resources related to:
- **Coursework** – study guides, lecture notes, presentations and prescribed and reading material,
 - **Supplementary Learning Materials** – supporting articles, videos and weblinks,
 - **Learning activities** – chats, discussion forums, quizzes, surveys, assignments,
 - **Student engagement** – peer-to-peer discussion boards, class-based chats and private messaging,
 - **Administration support** – timetabling, assignment scheduling, deadline prompts, venues booking,
 - **Virtual Classrooms** - online learning environment that allows for live interaction between the lecturer and students as they are participating in learning activities.
3. **myNews**
A community page that provides the latest notifications and communication to students.
4. **Office 365**
Each student has access to the full Microsoft Office Suite including applications like MS Office Word, PowerPoint and Excel, Teams and many more.
5. **A Calendar**
An institutional specific student academic calendar for time management and planning purposes.
6. **Work Readiness Programme**
Getting students ready for their next career with a specific training programme.
7. **Zapper for easy payment of fees**

The portal supports you in a variety of ways that allow you easy, and uninterrupted access to the applications you access regularly.

Conclusion

Despite the unprecedented challenges now facing us, there is no justification for despondency: staff throughout the institution have responded with the calm professionalism and with much enthusiasm to the digital literacies that both they and you their students are now developing and which will stand you in good stead ahead. We understand that access to data is a further challenge and we are working with the Department of Higher Education and data providers to try to address this. Conditions have altered, but our shared purposes remain, and our underlying strengths will see us through this difficult period.

In this time of great uncertainty, decisions will be officially communicated via the institutional website. We will also send SMS but mainly email communications.

In the meantime, please keep at your studies and actively work towards maintaining good health and flattening the curve.

Sincerely



Ms Anne Whaits

Chief Academic Officer