



## COMMUNIQUE 5: STAFF AND STUDENTS

24 March 2020

Dear Students and Colleagues

This communique serves to bring you up to date on how the academic programme will proceed for the rest of Semester 1. This message applies to our Contact Learning (CL) and Distance Learning (DL) students and includes the PGCE students.

Communiques 1-4 informed the staff and students about the need to suspend face-to-face lecturing, the postponement of graduations, the extended recess and the rescheduling of assessment dates.

Yesterday, 23 March 2020, in response to the highly contagious COVID-19, President Cyril Ramaphosa made the far-reaching announcement to place South Africa under a national lockdown from midnight Thursday 26 March 2020 until Thursday 16 April 2020. We repeat the call for all our students and staff to heed the directive and comply with these extraordinary, but necessary actions. It is important to stay at home during this time and limit contact with persons other than those in your household.

Our three campuses and regional learning centres will therefore be **closed** during the lockdown period. However, our academics, student support staff, student advisors, buddies and coaches will be working online and will be available during this time, and our Learning Management System (ECI) will be available 24/7. If you have any concerns or queries, please use the relevant dedicated email address which appears at the end of this message and we will assist you within 24-48 hours.

We, STADIO staff, students, parents, sponsors and the country at large are all jointly responsible for ensuring that our students receive the envisaged education and preparation for their future careers via our different teacher education programmes. STADIO; School of Education, again, commit to all our students that we will do everything possible to ensure that the academic programmes for both Semester 1 and Semester 2 are concluded during 2020.

Whilst we will be ready to resume contact learning when this is possible, the information currently available suggests that we could be working online for between three and four months (till the end of June or July). Our academic and professional/administrative support staff are therefore busy preparing for all Semester 1 Teaching, Learning and Assessment to take place online. The revised Teaching and Learning Programme and the new Assessment Schedule for Semester 1 will be released on 14 April. **In the meantime, students are encouraged to catch-up and/or work ahead in their different modules on ECI.**

The big advantage we have at STADIO; School of Education is that our digitalisation project commenced in 2017 with a principle decision that, to study with us, every CL and DL student is expected to have a laptop and internet access that meet certain minimum requirements - the so-called "Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)" policy. Further, our lecturers and academic leadership developed, since 2018, a deep understanding of online and distance learning – and our learning continues with on-going staff development initiatives. Since 2018 we have been developing and implementing our online ECI Learning Management System for contact and distance learning students, and we are particularly proud of our design and implementation of the Flexible Hybrid Learning Environment approach followed for our PGCE programme.

Our Senior CL and DL students are therefore relatively comfortable to study online as they have been using Moodle (ECI) since the start of their studies (2017, 2018 and 2019). We acknowledge that our First Year CL and DL students will need more training and support to study online. For this reason, the first Year BUDDY SYSTEM (used for DL students during Semester 2 of 2019) will be activated from 30 March for first year DL students and from 15 April for first year CL students. The system has a Buddy Project Coordinator and links one Senior student with groups of 40-50 1<sup>st</sup> year students. The PGCE students will be linked to MENTORS who will play a similar role.

The Buddy and Mentor Systems work in collaboration with a variety of other Student Success mechanisms:

- i) the CL, DL and PGCE Helpdesks;
- ii) the CL and DL Centres for Student Success;
- iii) the ICT Helpdesk, and
- iv) the individual ECI pages per module with direct access to the lecturer of the module.

More information on the Buddy and Mentor Systems, as well as the ICT WhatsApp Helpdesk will be communicated to staff and students via the Deputy Dean and other Academic Leaders.

During this time the STADIO; School of Education will continue to be available to support all its learners in ensuring their continued academic success. Students are encouraged to check their emails and visit their ECI sites to engage with all the information provided. We have further provided all communiques and updates on our website and encourage students to share the relevant information with sponsors and extended family. The STADIO; School of Education will continue to honour our commitment to student support and open communication with students via the following email addresses. We are empowering our Student Support Teams to respond to student issues whilst adhering to the lock down protocols.

**Contact Learning:** Please send an email to your campus support team:

- Durban Musgrave Campus: [support4mus@embury.ac.za](mailto:support4mus@embury.ac.za)
- Pretoria Montana Campus: [support4mon@embury.ac.za](mailto:support4mon@embury.ac.za)
- Midrand Waterfall Campus: [support4wat@embury.ac.za](mailto:support4wat@embury.ac.za)

**Distance Learning:** Please send an email to your distance learning support team

- [dlsupport@embury.ac.za](mailto:dlsupport@embury.ac.za)

**PGCE Students:** We have recognised the need for greater support for post-graduate students and therefore a dedicated support email has been created. Please send an email to your programme support team.

- [support4pgce@embury.ac.za](mailto:support4pgce@embury.ac.za)

**ICT Support:** should you experience any Computer related and Login Related issues – you can log a call at the following email. One of our IT technician will be in contact as soon as possible to assist you.

- [ithelpdesk@embury.ac.za](mailto:ithelpdesk@embury.ac.za)

The STADIO School of Education urges all its students to stay safe and be sensible during these extraordinary times. We encourage our future teachers to continue to dedicate themselves to their teaching and learning. Please continue to practice good hygiene and keep you and your loved ones healthy!

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patrick Bean', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Prof Patrick Bean

Executive Dean