



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

25 May 2020

Dear Unisa student

Exam time is upon us and no doubt there are many of you who are feeling anxious, apprehensive and hopefully, just a little bit excited about this important phase in your studies.

The Covid -19 pandemic has caused major disruption in the higher education sector, forcing all universities to think and operate differently to ensure that our students suffer the minimum possible disruption to their study and career trajectories. Contact universities have had to implement remote teaching to ensure the academic year continues as best possible and likewise, the University of South Africa has had to change gears and accelerate its move to a fully online university within a very short time frame. This had to be done with many of our staff still working from their own homes and dealing with the same challenges faced by all South Africans right now.

Adding to this imperative is the fact that Unisa enrolls over a third of all South Africa's students, plus a large number of students on the Continent and further afield, and failure of Unisa to meet the challenges posed by Covid-19 would not only impact detrimentally on our own students, but also on the South African higher education sector. We could not allow that to happen, and it was with this in mind that we used every resource at our disposal to move fully online, and to do so with excellence.

We are so proud of what has been achieved in such a short period of time. Our staff have proven their dedication and commitment to Unisa and put in place cutting edge, but practical and user-friendly systems to ensure the best possible examination experience for our students. We are determined that no Unisa student will be prejudiced in this process, which is why we have given our South African students 30 Gigs of free airtime over this period, as well as the option to write at a later stage should their circumstances not permit a fully online examination right now.

To say I am gratified would be an understatement. Our students have risen to the occasion in numbers, and this first fully online examination period will place you at the vanguard of (South) Africa's online examination process. You are pathfinders and your success will no doubt influence the shape and course of future online examinations for generations of students to come.

I would encourage each and every one of you who has opted to do the online examinations to face them with a spirit of calm and determination. Unisa is not in the business of prejudicing students and if you experience difficulties, we will address them together. This is a new process for all of us. As a university we have had to change in mid-stride to ensure your wellbeing. In return we ask that you are diligent in your examination preparations, and brave in your examination taking. Together we will triumph.

Unisa students are renowned globally for their independence, proactiveness and independence. These are in fact qualities which have made them so highly sought after over the years. Now is the time for you to dig down and reawaken that spirit of independence and determination. I know you can do it.

To the class of 2020: you are quite literally changing the course of higher education history, at Unisa and in South Africa. There is no doubt that the pandemic will pass, and we will soon see the light at the end of the tunnel in this regard. In the meantime, and in the absence of any certainty we move forward, with confidence. Our entire university community is behind you!

We wish you well with your examinations and we trust that you will emerge from this experience with a renewed confidence in yourself and your abilities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. S. Makhanya', written in a cursive style.

Prof MS Makhanya
Principal and Vice Chancellor