

MESSAGE FROM THE SENIOR EXECUTIVE TEAM

Dear Colleagues and Students

We would like to inform the University community about the developments around the evacuation of students from our residences. As you know, this decision was made based on the advice of scientists and experts, who have indicated that Wits should evacuate residences while the risks are still low. This is in line with decisions made by other universities around the country.

As at 16:00 today, Friday, 20 March 2020, 85% of all Wits' residents had left the University. Most of the remaining residents are due to leave this weekend, aside from those who have requested special assistance from the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs.

The University has put several measures in place in order to assist students as they make their way home.

- In agreement with the Students' Representative Council, Wits processed an extra stipend payment at the end of March for both NSFAS- and donor-funded students, so that students receive it in March instead of April.
- April stipends will be paid as usual at the end of the month.
- The University has also assisted some students by paying for their transportation costs.
- The challenges of students who are unable to travel, like international students, or those who may face particular difficulties, are being assessed on a case-by-case basis. The University has endeavoured to provide the appropriate support to these students based on the need of each individual.

Feeling anxious, worried or need help?

Students are reminded that the Wits Student Crisis Line is fully operational from anywhere in South Africa and in all official South African languages on 0800 111 331.

Staff counselling services are available via 0861 635 766 or dial *134*928# or send a 'please call me' to 072 620 5699 email asknelson@kaelo.co.za

The Department of Health's WhatsApp number is 0600123456 and provides additional information about COVID19.

The NICD website (www.nicd.ac.za) is a credible source of information on COVID-19.

Conclusion

As advised by scientists and experts, we urge all students to leave the residences as soon as possible, aside from those who have made special arrangements with the Dean of Students. This is in the best interests of all students and is part of an official response to tackling the the COVID-19 global pandemic. At this moment in time, we have to think beyond our own interests and act in concert for the wellbeing of our community and broader society. We underscore the important statement made by President Cyril Ramaphosa last Sunday: "This epidemic will pass. But it is up to us to determine how long it will last, how damaging it will be, and how long it will take for our economy and our country to recover. It is true that we are facing a grave emergency. But if we act together, if we act now, and if we act decisively, we will overcome it."

We wish all those who are travelling home a safe journey.

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