



UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

Office of the Vice Chancellor



MEMO

Amulhe
16/11/2020

16th November 2020

FROM: Vice Chancellor
TO: All Students and Staff, UCU
SUBJECT: UPDATE ON ONLINE LEARNING

I greet you all in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and I thank you all for the great work you are doing to keep our university operational during these challenging COVID times. Many parents and other stakeholders do appreciate UCU's efforts to keep learners engaged in academics virtually during this time when they are unable to attend classes physically. Studies show that when learners keep out of school for a long time, they suffer many psychosocial challenges as well as all forms of abuse in communities. Since this is the first time UCU has rolled out online learning on a large scale, some technical glitches are to be expected. I thank UCU students for cooperating in this e-learning journey, and Management regrets any inconveniences that have been encountered. Let us cooperate to ensure that virtual learning succeeds since we do not know when physical classes will be fully re-opened.

I wish to update you on the following issues:

1. EXTENSION OF SEMESTER DATES

Due to the initial challenges that students (especially First Year students) and lecturers experienced in registering and using our online platforms, Management has agreed to grant a request by the Guild leadership for a semester extension to allow for more time of teaching. The semester will now end on 5th February 2021. The DVCs will communicate the new Semester calendar and deadlines in due course.

2. OPTION TO WITHDRAWAL FROM ONLINE STUDIES

- (a) Before we embarked on online learning at UCU, we carried out a survey and about 95% of our students indicated that they were able to embark on virtual learning since they had access to either a laptop or smart phone/tablet. Furthermore, in my communication to the UCU Community of 4th September 2020, I stated as follows: "Students who are NOT able to enroll for the virtual semester will be free to apply for a dead semester or dead year through the University Management Information System." Therefore, enrolling for online learning IS NOT MANDATORY. If any student is currently facing challenges with e-learning, he or she is free to opt out.
- (b) Since we rolled out the online semester on 15th October 2020, many students have reported various difficulties adapting to this "new normal." Therefore, Management would like to remind any student who, for whatever reason, feels he/she is unable to cope with e-learning, to apply for withdrawal from their semester studies, without any penalty. Such a student will be allowed to continue with his/her studies when face-to-face classes are permitted. For those who have paid tuition, their fees balances will be carried forward.
- (c) The procedure for withdrawal from studies is as follows:
 - i) Students can pick a form from their Faculty or request for it by sending an email to registration@ucu.ac.ug. They will then fill the form and submit it to their Faculty

physically or send it via email to registration@ucu.ac.ug and it will be processed. They should keep a copy of the email for future records when they wish to resume their studies.

- ii) Alternatively, students can apply for a dead year or dead semester on their portal by visiting <https://alpha.ucu.ac.ug>.

3. MEASURES TAKEN TO SUPPORT ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING

For students who prefer to continue with online classes, management has rolled out several measures to ensure that classes run as smoothly as possible. We have noted some of the students' concerns and the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs has responded to them in detail. Actions taken include the following:

- (a) We have allowed all students free access to the UCU online learning platforms (Moodle, Alpha and Webinar) in order to register and study. These e-learning platforms are fully zero-rated, so students are able to access them at no cost.
- (b) Lecturers are required to record their lectures and assignments so that students can access them at any time. Faculties and Departments (e.g. in Medicine, Engineering, Agriculture, etc) should offer practical course units when face-to-face classes begin. For now, they should teach theory courses.
- (c) The University ICT Services (UIS) Directorate has, in the interim, migrated Alpha MIS to another server and this was completed today. UIS is in the process of installing new servers this week, which we hope will help to improve the users' experience on the online learning platforms.
- (d) UIS has also set up a HELP DESK to offer IT support. You can contact the Helpdesk on helpdesk@ucu.ac.ug or call 0312-350-816 and 0794-770-816. For Alpha MIS related issues please contact misadmin@ucu.ac.ug or call 0795-771-753, and for e-learning issues email elarning@ucu.ac.ug. UIS is also installing a CALL CENTRE which will offer further support to students and staff, and they will inform you when it is ready.
- (e) Management has set up a task-force (chaired by the DVC AA) constituted by all the key offices handling online learning matters, so that they can respond in a coordinated manner.

4. PENDING EXAMINATION RESULTS

Faculties should process and submit all pending students' results. Senate will meet soon to approve them in time for the graduation ceremony due on **18th December 2020**.

5. GUILD ELECTIONS

- (a) The Director of Students' Affairs (DOSA) and the Electoral Commission have already issued a road map for Guild Elections and candidates for Guild President and other positions have been duly nominated. Elections will take place on **25th November 2020** via our e-voting platform (e-chagua). Civic education on online voting will continue and a mock voting exercise will be carried out to test the system before polling day. The handover ceremony will take place on **4th December 2020**.
- (b) We thank the outgoing Guild leadership for a job well done during their term of office, in spite of the challenging COVID times. The offices of DOSA and DVC FA are now working with them to conclude their pending guild activities successfully before they hand over office.

I thank you all for the great work you are doing to ensure that we have a fruitful semester. May UCU continue to pioneer new innovations in teaching and learning as a true Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa. I wish you all God's blessings.

 16/11/2020