



FROM THE OFFICE OF THE DVC: ACADEMIC

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COVID-19: GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMMES THAT HAVE WORKPLACE OR EXPERIENTIAL / PRACTICAL COMPONENTS

THE CONTEXT AND THE CHALLENGE

Following the COVID-19 emergency, UJ amended its 2020 Academic Calendar by scheduling the second term from 20 April to 26 June on the basis of fully *online teaching and learning*. Academics have responded to the challenge of migrating to online teaching in innovative ways. However, as a comprehensive university, UJ offers a wide variety of programmes that include credits for what is broadly known as 'practicals'. The term 'practical' covers many different forms of on-campus activity (e.g. in laboratories or studios) as well as off-campus activity (as in experiential learning in the workplace). Work Integrated Learning (WIL) alone takes two forms within the UJ:

- (a) In-Service Learning in programmes across five faculties;
- (b) Experiential Learning in programmes across four faculties.¹

Three faculties – CBE², FEBE and the Humanities – have programmes across both (a) and (b). The need to make provision for this wide variety of 'practical work' means that academics are now doing more than conventional online teaching: they are engaged in what can more accurately be called 'emergency remote learning'.

Overall, programmes that include 'practical work' fall into three broad conceptual categories.

1. Practical work that is a requirement for professional registration (also referred to as Clinical Practice in the Health Sciences);
2. Practical work that is not a professional requirement but is an essential, credit-bearing element of the qualification;
3. Practical work that is as an essential part of theory in the qualification.

The national 'lockdown' will have significant ramifications for the scope of options available to academics in their planning for the implementation of 'practical work' and is the fluid context against which academics will need to plan. Ideally, planning would extend into the re-opening phase associated with lower levels of 'lockdown'. Our plans should have sufficient flexibility – perhaps even contingency alternatives - to account for shifts in national levels both upwards and downwards.

¹ The HEQSF states that WIL may take various forms including simulated learning, work-directed theoretical learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning and workplace-based learning.

² UJ has 8 faculties and 1 College of Business and Economics

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose is to offer some ideas and information to those who have responsibility for developing a plan for implementing 'practical work'. In so doing, this document identifies possible principles and strategies that academics might wish to consider. It is not intended to offer ready-made solutions. The University acknowledges that it is the academic who is most keenly aware of the challenges associated with the practical work needed for his/ her discipline, and who will be best placed to balance disciplinary and rule requirements with students' needs and circumstances.

This document is best viewed in relation to broader institutional developments and other relevant documents. Most notably, the documents listed under Appendix A. It is also important that planning is fully cognisant of UJ's communications with and support for academic and support staff, tutors and students in the current context. Relevant documents in this regard are listed under Appendix B.

PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER FOR 'PRACTICAL WORK' ARRANGEMENTS

Differences across three broad categories of 'practical work' arrangements

The nature and scope of 'practical work' differs across the three categories identified above. These differences imply varying degrees of opportunity for amended arrangements, as follows.

a) Practical work that is a requirement for professional registration

In such cases, in addition to institutional policy, rulings and guidance from relevant professional bodies are paramount. Examples under Appendix C confirm what is to be expected: there can be no relaxation or compromise in the requirement for workplace internships of a specified duration. However, neither the DHET nor the Allied Health Professions Council of South Africa (AHPCSA) and the South African Nursing Council (SANC) *prescribe when the internship should take place* in the academic year. This makes the decision of how to manage its integration into an adjusted curriculum and year plan slightly easier to manage. Implicitly (and appropriately) institutions are left to make such decisions, as long as they meet the minimum specified requirements (e.g. teaching practice, or clinical practice) for the relevant profession.

b) Practical work that is not a professional requirement but is an essential, credit-bearing element of the qualification

In most cases within this category, the purpose of 'practical work' is to help develop and enhance theoretical understandings (as opposed to developing and assuring competence in professional practice).

Nonetheless, as under a) above, credit-bearing WIL modules are based on non-negotiable notional hours. At the same time, this category of 'practical work' may afford the University more flexibility in making arrangements that will allow students to complete the necessary experience, for example, later in the year. But scope for such flexibility varies across faculties and schools.³

c) Practical work is used in the qualification

This is a 'softer' form of b) above in that the form it takes may be changed so that remote completion is possible with minimal disruption to the curriculum and programme goals. Compared to a) and b), it obviously offers greater flexibility and scope for amended arrangements. In project-based learning, for example, where students work on a project together with industry in solving a particular problem, final assessment is based on projects being evaluated by combinations of industry, alumni, mentors and academics. In certain cases, it might also be possible to substitute personal 'live' experience with 'virtual' experience.

³ In the School of Hospitality and Tourism, for example, there is no such flexibility.

Common principles that could apply to all three categories

Notwithstanding their inherent differences, all three categories seem to share the following principles relevant to amended forms of implementation.

- All are subject to policy frameworks: national, professional, institutional, and faculty.
- Changes made to effect online approaches may differ from module to module – there is no ‘one size fits all’.
- Key placement hosts and partners, such as industry, have an equally vital role in helping guide and approve amended arrangements for students’ practical work.
- Amended arrangements benefit from consultation with students, as far as is feasible.
- Equity is a key principle. Care should be taken to ensure that ‘practical work’ arrangements should not disadvantage, or even be perceived to disadvantage, some students.
- Understandings of the principle of ‘learner centredness’ normally revolve around scaffolding pedagogy in alignment with students’ levels of cognitive development and their own learning styles. In respect of remote online learning, ‘learner centredness’ extends into taking account of students’ personal circumstances, including their access to materials, resources and equipment. In this sense the viability of the amended forms of implementation are linked to equity considerations, as above.
- Amended forms of implementation should allow for a measure of flexibility. Not only might the COVID-19 situation present a new and unexpected context, personal circumstances and resource limitations could lead to some students, through no fault of their own, being unable to meet deadlines, or conduct the practical work required. Concessions not envisaged in routine contact teaching situations may become necessary.
- Opportunities for students to have personal contact with their lecturer becomes more important than ever. In addition to students being given clear explanations of implementation amendments and implications, students should know when and through what means lecturers will be available for consultation.
- Amended forms of implementing ‘practical work’ should be devised in tandem with methods of assessment. Full detail of the new implementation and assessment package should be made clear to students. Student understanding of the evaluation criteria for assessment becomes an even more pressing imperative.

Principles specific to ‘Practical work that is a requirement for professional registration’ (Category a))

- Ideas and possibilities about amended arrangements should be discussed with placement hosts.

Postponement of an internship may be the only feasible way forward for specific programmes / years of study. For example, the DHET raises this possibility in regard to Teaching Practice (TP) in the BEd. In the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year: “It will be possible to shorten the school-based TP programme for this year, and to spread the TP time that could not be undertaken this year to the outer years of the programme.” We recognize that this approach may not be applicable to final year students, however. Alternatively, and as the DHET indicates, practice requirements that may be met in an online or virtual environment and appropriately monitored and recorded could be used to replace face to face interactions. For example, teaching practice may be conducted in an online school environment in place of a physical school placement.

A useful resource is:

What to do about internships in light of the COVID-19 pandemic? A short guide to online internships for colleges, students, and employers. The Center for Research on College-Workforce Transitions, University of Wisconsin-Madison.
(http://ccwt.wceruw.org/documents/CCWT_report_COVID-19%20Internships.pdf)

This resource provides hyperlinks to many invaluable resources, e.g. insights into online, remote, or 'micro' internships; and resources for delivering a virtual internship experience. A list of additional resources is provided in Appendix D.

Principles specific to 'practical work' in Categories b) and c)

Although these two categories of 'practical work' offer differing levels of flexibility in respect of scope for amendment, they are grouped together because both are essentially experiential in nature.

Curriculum: Here there are possibilities for reconceptualising, repackaging and resequencing 'practical work' in relation to coursework or theory.

- Combine the theory aspects of several modules and, where possible, separate out the practical aspects for completion later. (Of course, this depends on the viability of separating theory and practical aspects into different sections / units. In certain cases, such separation would not be feasible and could have detrimental effects.)
- In some cases, it might be possible to replace person-to-person work with case studies, simulations, and practical learning exercises as appropriate to the discipline. 'Strip' the face-to-face requirements to the absolute minimum – without, to state the obvious, undermining the registered module outcomes.
- Can practice be more embedded in theory so that students develop understandings of practice in ways that link theory and practice?
- Devise 'chunks' of work to be conducted in person and determine how to reintegrate theory with practice after practicals have been completed.

In many fields, 'cultural capital' is almost as important as 'intellectual capital'. The former is most easily acquired from socialisation into real practice within communities of practice. However, lecturers could build their own personal cultural capital and experience of workplace norms and protocols into online case studies and scenarios.

Pedagogy: Good teaching in a largely online environment is not a simple replication of contact teaching through a different medium. As the DVCs (Academic, and Research and Internationalisation) point out in their communique of 3 April 2020, a transition to online teaching and learning constitutes "a move which will require a shift in our pedagogy" (p.1). Problem- or case-based learning projects could require students to conduct background research into a real-world problem, interview experts in the field, and prepare a report or paper that summarizes a solution or approach to the problem.

Assessment: Tasks and formative assessment could be based on students' own ongoing reflections on their experiences. Personal journals and portfolios can capture reflection on practice – as presented in scenarios or case studies.⁴ Also:

- Build in contingency plans (for example, by allowing for multiple resubmissions, do-overs, or by offering a range of tasks and deadlines).
- Consider the role of tutors and senior tutors in mentoring students online and assisting with the tasks being undertaken by students.

A RANGE OF PRACTICAL POSSIBLE STRATEGIES

A wide range of strategies is available (where practicable) to undertake WIL remotely. Across the University, academics have been exploring these, including how to enable the proper evaluation of WIL activities making use of the technologies available. Some ideas gathered in the course of these investigations include:

- The combination of practical sessions into condensed blocks for completion once lockdown restrictions are sufficiently lightened (while, yet again, remembering that such an eventuality might not come about within an academically convenient timeframe);

⁴ The *UJ Assessment Guidelines for Learning at a Distance* has much to offer in this regard.

- The use of intense periods of rotations for students in practical learning environments to minimise disruptions and maximise exposure;
- The use of online portals / technologies to allow for staff to conduct demonstrations, and for students to complete observation / reporting sections of the learning;
- The use of practical learning, case studies, and other forms of assessment to determine the application of theory wherever possible;
- The development of clearly delineated portfolios of evidence which require specific measures of time to be spent on defined, reportable activities, and which demonstrate valid work undertaken by the student;
- Video records of tasks / exercises or activities undertaken to be uploaded and assessed;
- Reflective exercises which assess the degree of the integration of theory into either a simulated or applied practice;
- The combination of the theory elements of modules in this semester to allow for the deferral of the practical sessions to the next semester;
- Simulated online situations akin to those required in practice to allow for students to acquire the fundamentals of the skills involved – for example simulated supervised client-practitioner interactions; monitored role play sessions; micro-teaching, etc.
- The development of groups of suitably qualified tutors and senior tutors to guide, supervise and assess practical learning and assessment where possible to permit for maximum coverage in the minimum time;
- The use of a simulation software freely available and / or available for purchase (many of which are currently being assessed for applicability in the context of UJ programmes), examples include:
 - <https://games4sustainability.org/gamepedia/game-of-floods/> for use in environmental management;
 - AnyLogic, a free simulation software package that allows academics to set up simulations in their disciplines;
 - Open Source Physics: <https://www.compadre.org/osp/>;
 - UrbanSim – provides AI simulations for urban development <https://urbansim.com/>
 - A wide variety of options is available in the medical and allied health sciences.
- In some instances, students will not be able to return to placements / take up placements as arranged, as the businesses that had hosted them will be prioritizing their own staff. Stipends and so on may not be available. In these cases, consider whether and how a 'staged' scenario could be used to teach and assess students so that graduations are impacted as little as possible.
- Consider creating a Blackboard module or similar online tool for your WIL programme. You will be able to track your students' activities while using the module as a place where students can complete activities e.g. simulations, or upload of various types of assignments e.g. portfolios. Some academics (e.g. in the Department of Economics and Econometrics) are already using JIRA software⁵ to link with the industry stakeholder to track student progress in certain projects. An example of this is the law clinic which is hosting online sessions. The attorneys provide a set of facts, with instructions based on conduct at each clinic. A reflective journal is required which has provided useful insightful and feedback as to the success of the project. Simulations supplement the client representation clinic–model. Students act as attorneys in hypothetical situations under attorneys' online supervision. The content selected achieves the goals of clinical legal education. There is the possibility that the use of the model may continue beyond the lockdown to extend the Law clinic programme. Practical activities are based on real-life cases and the tasks are those normally followed: e.g., legal drafting, theoretical problems, assignments, legal practice consultations, etc.
- Use MOOCs for the achievement of aspects of the curriculum, from core concepts to 'soft' skills that would have been part of the outcomes of the practical learning / workplace based/

⁵ Products and apps built on top of the Jira platform help teams plan, assign, track, report and manage work.

<https://www.atlassian.com/software/jira/guides/getting-started/overview> . The Department of Economics and Econometrics is familiar with tracking devices of this kind.

application section. For example, there are MOOCs on negotiation skills, assertiveness, customer care, sales techniques, and so on.

- Consider refocusing the skills so that practical learning/ internships/ work experience needed can be shortened. This will have to be negotiated with the relevant regulatory body, if applicable.
- Record the virtual contact and establish the recording of relevant evidence (e.g. emails) to be uploaded / provided (e.g. if remote work for an employer / client / service provider is possible, emails/ reports confirming work done may be submitted by the student).
- 'Screen shot' engagements with clients / participants, etc., (for example, supervised therapeutic sessions, one-on-one teaching engagements; group work settings).

CONCLUSION

Ideas and information put forward in this document have drawn on what academics are already doing to make provision for emergency remote 'practical work' learning. One such example – of FEBE's interaction with ECSA (Engineering Council of South Africa) - is reproduced under Appendix E.

Finally, there is the importance of ensuring accountability and the legitimacy of amended arrangements for 'practical work'. It is important to keep detailed records of the consultations and processes that were followed in achieving suitably amended arrangements. This is particularly true of placements that involve external hosts and in the case of revised contracts. Documentation of the process should leave no doubt about compliance with rules and other requirements. Good record keeping could serve a further useful purpose. The present situation is one that invites more explicit, formally codified – and perhaps more educationally sound – articulation of our practices.

For the present however, there is the immediate need for planning to enable students to complete 'practical work' requirements in ways that best embody fitness for purpose - as approved by Department and Faculty. As indicated in this document, academics are under considerable pressure of time to plan provision of emergency remote 'practical' learning experiences in a fluid, changeable context. This is a unique challenge.

APPENDIX A: KEY FRAMING DOCUMENTS

COVID-19: UJ TEACHING AND LEARNING ONLINE

The letter to academic staff from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Academic and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation is a key framing document. Dated Friday, 3 April 2020, it provided staff with an early overview of the situation and the way forward.

UJ ASSESSMENT GUIDELINES FOR LEARNING AT A DISTANCE

This provides comprehensive guidelines aimed at assisting academics in considering how assessments may be amended for online teaching and learning. Academics are advised to use the guidelines flexibly in conjunction with faculty/ college assessment strategy. A rich fund of references to mainly open source resources is provided.

UJ TOOLKIT FOR OFF-CAMPUS TEACHING & LEARNING 2020

The toolkit is an orientation to the online learning environment and provides valuable information on how to use the required tools, and the skills to access and utilise Blackboard module components to develop resources for successful online teaching.

APPENDIX B: INSTITUTIONAL COMMUNICATION WITH ACADEMIC AND SUPPORT, TUTORS AND STUDENTS

- [DVC Academic Circular for Students 03 04 2020.pdf](#)
- [CAT Learning off-campus final.pdf](#)
- [WhatsApp for teaching and learning at a distance.pdf](#)
- [UJ toolkit for off-campus teaching and learning 2020 final.pdf](#)
- [Letter to Support Staff 13.4.2020 .pdf](#)
- [DVCs Academic and Research Circular to Academic Staff 03 04 2020.pdf](#)
- [Checklist & Quick Links Orientation Week.pdf](#)
- [16 April 2020 Circular for Tutors.pdf](#)
- [UJ Assessment Guidelines for learning at a distance.pdf](#)

APPENDIX C

1. **The Health Professions Council of South Africa's Psychology Board** issued a communication titled "Psychology: Relinking of Internship Training with Higher Educational Institutions" on 14 April 2020. In this communique, the Board advises the following: "1. Relinking of an internship means that institutions should only award its degrees if all three components of the programme have been completed, namely (i) formal coursework, (ii) research component, and (iii) a 12-month full-time internship." The implications of this will be explored in more detail in due course.
2. **DHET: Communiqué on the implementation of Teaching Practice / Work integrated Learning in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and national lockdown. 30 March 2020**
TP/WIL cannot be compromised.
3. **Letter from Executive Dean to Staff and Students participating in clinical practice, 17 March 2020**
This communication highlighted the unique position of the Health Sciences Faculty (see [Students in Clinical Practice V3.pdf](#)). Since then, further decisions related to students in clinical practice have been implemented.

APPENDIX D: USEFUL LINKS

WEBSITE	NATURE OF RESOURCE OR SERVICE
https://opentextbc.ca/oerdiscipline/	A reference list of OER by subject area and discipline
https://www.mentoring.org/coronavirus-resources/	This Virtual Mentoring Portal is a safe and monitored mentoring platform for mentors and mentees to continue their relationships while they may be separated due to COVID-19.
https://nesca-newton.com/transition-planning-remote-work-based-learning-experiences/	<i>Neuro Psychology Education & Services for Children & Adolescents</i> . Transition Planning: “Remote” Work-based Learning Experiences (How to continue work-based learning remotely)
https://transitionta.org/events-details	Webinars and downloads on topics such as “Employment Preparation and Work Based Learning Experiences in a Virtual World”
https://games4sustainability.org/gamepedia/game-of-floods/	Resources for Teaching, Learning and Practicing Sustainability through Serious Games
https://wcer.wisc.edu/docs/news/CCWT_report_COVID-19_Internships.pdf	What to do about internships in light of the COVID-19 pandemic? A short guide to online internships for colleges, students, and employers
https://innovacioneducativa.tec.mx/continuidad-academica/en/	Resources: Transform your course into a flexible and digital model for academic continuity.
https://observatory.tec.mx/covid19-free-educational-resources	A series of educational resources, practices, and articles for teachers, non-academic staff, and students to address the global crisis unleashed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
https://svp.umd.edu/keep-teaching/assessment-strategies#practice	Use this site for guidance and strategies to adjust your course for remote delivery. It offers: Start with Basics; Assessment Strategies; Instructor Resources
https://www.labster.com/	Labster gives students access to a realistic lab experience that will let them perform experiments and practice their skills in a fun and risk-free learning environment. There is a license fee for this.
https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Quickly-and-Safely/248261	This resource from <i>The Chronicle of Higher Education</i> addresses the topic: “How to Quickly (and Safely) Move a Lab Course Online”.

APPENDIX E

Some ideas going around in ECSA circles to mitigate the Covid-19 pandemic include the following⁶.

Experiential training

Not relevant for BScEng, BEng and BEngTech programmes, except where there is a requirement for vacation work and/or industry exposure. For Diploma students requiring Experiential Learning, the following are proposed to finish P1 & P2 during 2020.

- The total hours required should be shortened by 100* (lockdown weeks/total working weeks in the year) percent
- Allow students whose employers have a longer work week (6 or 7 days) to get credit for working more than the normal five day working week.
- Students should be given additional projects to compensate for lost time and achieve outcomes. Each affected programme should archive the submitted and graded projects prepared and keep a document on file detailing the additional projects and their rationale.
- Special arrangements should be made for students who are required to do vacation or workshop training based on programme specific requirements.

⁶ Communication from Dr Didier Nyembwe (29 April 2020)