

# 7 500 Nust students study online

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by Okeri Ngutjinazo



7 500 students at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (Nust) are using online study platforms. Photo: Reuters

## **ABOUT 7 500 Namibia University of Science and Technology (Nust) students are making use of online learning platforms.**

Donovan Zealand, Nust director of students' services, revealed this yesterday during a discussion on the preparedness of higher education institutions in Namibia to continue educating.

Zealand said when the pandemic hit the country, the university had to migrate to online platforms fast.

He said as much as they tried to maintain the university's standards, they also had to be flexible.

“A number of students indicated they had access to data or connectivity, however, there are times that during an assessment they ran out of data. That required us to be more flexible in terms of providing more opportunities for students to be assessed. It also takes quite a long time for them to complete it, because after an assessment they had to moderate, which was not negotiable,” he said.

Zealand said they have managed, but there is room for improvement.

“Come the second semester, I think we will do much better in providing quality and consistent education for our students,” he said.

Zealand said the next step is to get around 3 000 students, who could not access the e-learning platforms, back to campus.

“They will be joining us from 3 August. We will have an eight-week period with them and will then conclude the semester after their assessments,” he said.

This means the first semester would end in September, meaning the second semester would commence in October, with the academic year continuing into 2021, Zealand said.

He said the pandemic opened their eyes to the disparities and inequalities within the education system, and challenges which need to be addressed.

Geoffrey Kiangi, rector of Triumphant College, said an advantage of e-learning is that students are able to record live sessions and rerun them.

He said the college uses multiple-choice questions online for continuous assessments and timed assignments, which could be done within 24 hours, for example.

Kiangi said there are, however, students who are not able to access online learning platforms.

He said they have approached the government for assistance to make sure these students catch up when they return to campus.

Kiangi said closing the campus raised several issues, such as taking care of health protocols when classes resume, the mode of learning when students returned, and the disruption of the academic calendar.

Another issue was the financial implications of closing.

“When students resume class on campus, health measures would have to be put in place, and this calls for additional expenses, which were not planned for. We also had to employ online learning platforms, which requires infrastructure and retraining staff,” he said.

Kiangi said the college managed to handle these issues.

Aquilinus Nashilundo, registrar at the International University of Management, said they relaxed deadlines for assessments to accommodate students who could not access online learning.

He said they made their computer facilities available for some students who had trouble coming to campus.

## **FINANCES**

Daniel Nyaungwa, rector of Monitronic Success College, said private institutions faced challenges because they were not included in government relief packages.

“The implementation of online learning was very expensive, so we had to install a new virtual system within a month and train the staff and students,” he said.