University of Cape Town

UCT Teaching and Learning Framework: Transitioning to 2023

In 2020/2021, UCT adopted a teaching and learning framework for each of undergraduate and postgraduate study to accommodate a low-density campus and continued physical distancing in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic[1].

As a contact-based residential university and with increasing physical capacity, we are prioritising face-to-face teaching that promotes participation in 2023 in a context which supports blended learning. Building on lessons learned during 2020-2022 with regards to better supporting students' learning, we continue to focus on teaching approaches promoting student engagement and interaction, promoting synchronous face-to-face, providing and using learning analytics reports to support students and improving course and assessment designs. The experiences of the first semester of 2022 suggest a need to accelerate these strategies in the light of changing circumstances.

As we transition to the second semester in 2022 and into 2023, we note the changes as per the current COVID-19 regulations and trajectory and their impact on the T&L framework. Here we present the modifications of the COVID-19 regulations, followed by the T&L framework modifications for undergraduate and postgraduate study.

1. COVID-19 regulations and their impact on our venues and campus

The National State of Disaster on COVID-19 was repealed on 5 April 2022 and on 22 June 2022 further regulations were repealed which sees South Africans no longer needing to wear masks indoors in public settings and the restrictions on gatherings removed.

The 22 June 2022 regulatory changes formed part of what is formally known as the Regulations Relating to the Surveillance and the Control of Notifiable Medical Conditions. The 22 June 2022 Government Gazette references the following:

- 16A: "Wearing of face masks to contain the spread of Covid-19", which required a mask in any public-use indoor space or when on public transport

- 16B: "Regulation of gatherings to contain the spread of Covid-19", which limited any gathering of more than 100 people to 50% of maximum venue capacity if everyone was vaccinated, or to an absolute maximum of 1,000 people indoors or 2,000 people outdoors if vaccination status was not checked.

---

[1] [1] The shift to PDL was also done in the context of the concession granted by the HEQC to offer programmes that were accredited for the contact mode to be offered through the distance mode. This concession was extended for the 2022 academic year. While the concession was in place, courses and programmes accredited for contact mode delivery, while being offered in blended and distance mode, still attracted contact mode input subsidy. The expectation is that this concession will be lifted for 2023 and thus, in order to maintain accreditation and contact mode input subsidy the requisite proportion of on campus, face to face student engagement must be met.

- 16C: "Regulation of persons entering the country to contain the spread of Covid-19", which demanded either vaccination certificates or recent negative PCR tests, or proof of recovery from Covid-19, from all travellers older than 12 entering South Africa.

UCT will return all venues to 100% capacity

Operationally, UCT will continue with air quality monitoring to ensure that our venues remain environmentally healthy and safe and are well ventilated. CO_2 Level monitoring will be carried out in venues with natural ventilation only to ensure the level of oxygen is not less than 19% thus demonstrating that the required 6 air changes per hour is achieved. UCT will continue to promote voluntary vaccination, and good health and hygiene practices. Where staff and students voluntarily opt to continue to wear a mask, this is accommodated in the revised UCT Framework.
A revised UCT Framework document will in due course be published and provide further detail.

2. Teaching and Learning framework for interaction in Semester 2 of 2022 and in 2023: General principles

The objective of the proposed updates to the 2022 Teaching and Learning Framework for undergraduate and postgraduate students are to

- Clearly communicate to key stakeholders that UCT remains a **contact based residential university** which **maximises face-to-face teaching that promotes participation** within a context of blended learning.

- Establish clear guidelines for teaching and learning in Second Semester 2022 and for the 2023 academic year. CILT will provide guidelines and support for teaching via the [UCT Teaching and Learning Framework](#) webpages, along with an extensive library of [custom developed guides and resources to support teaching](#).

- Capitalise on the opportunity to move towards maximising **face-to face that promotes participation** that takes advantage of the decreasing pandemic restrictions, increased venue options and campus study spaces, and familiarity with digital tools amongst the student and staff body. Participatory face-to face teaching coupled with online learning will optimise the learning to support students to achieve the learning outcomes.

- Use our improved understanding **of the diversity of students' needs to provide a** balance of choice and flexibility along with structure and scaffolding that actively seeks to reduce overload for students.

- Provide equitable access to learning opportunities to improve **student experience** and **student success**.

- **Teaching and learning reflections** on the pandemic as we prepare for in-contact, blended and hybrid modes

  - Design teaching and learning engagements as interactive and socially inclusive spaces.
  - Integrate the affective level (anxiety, motivational and aspirational) with the cognitive aspects when facilitating teaching and learning.
  - Embrace a humanising pedagogy so that students feel included and have a sense of belonging.
  - Engage students as partners in knowledge co-creation and learning.

- Strengthen the ecosystem of collaboration across peers, partners, students and other stakeholders.
- Create the enabling conditions for a socially-just pedagogical engagement.
- Be adaptive and flexible in approach and demeanour without compromising good teaching and learning ethos and ethics.
- Use a variety of formats and strategies to hold students' attention and encourage student participation among themselves and with their teachers.
- Approach curriculum curation and contextualisation with care and considered attention to decoloniality so that critical pedagogy is enabled.
- Teach with compassion and sincerity

3. Teaching and Learning framework: Semester 2 of 2022 and in 2023: Undergraduate programmes

Here we set out to establish clear guidelines for staff as to what the University requirements for teaching and learning are for undergraduate teaching in Second Semester 2022 and for the 2023 academic year.

The updated 2022/3 Undergraduate Teaching and Learning Framework promotes:

1. **Increasing face-to-face that promotes participation (physical not virtual) for core course content led by lecturers.** This teaching is not to be limited to lectures, and can include other forms of more active learning opportunities including small group tutorials, practicals, lab sessions, interactive classroom sessions, whiteboard sessions etc . These choices should be informed by sound pedagogy.

2. The use of blended learning by design includes but is not limited to flipped classroom models. While in reality most courses have some forms of blend, the type of blend needs to be carefully considered as part of course design with due regard to the affordances of digital components of blended learning. It is advisable to maintain an appropriate balance between asynchronous and synchronous teaching that supports students to meet the learning outcomes. Refer to CILT's Blended Learning guidelines.

3. Intentional use of digital tools and artefacts for enhancing the student experience and promoting accessible learning. This approach includes lecture recordings, notes and digital content including captions and transcripts, and using digital tools for engagement.

4. The notion of **choice for academics in how they teach their courses and how they support students** must be explicit at a course and programme level taking into account the available and emerging digital learning ecosystem, the needs of their discipline and the constraints of their context (class sizes, venues, tutors etc.). The choices made must be a planned approach at a degree or programme level to maximise student learning. Academic choice is exercised in the context of agreed responsibilities in terms of conditions of service and in the context of the principles and values endorsed by the Senate in the UCT Teaching and Learning Charter. HODs and faculty leadership are responsible to support and ensure the quality of educational experience offered to UCT students.

Requirements for undergraduate teaching and learning delivery

- For Semester 2, 2022 all courses should offer as much face-to face teaching as possible in preparation for transitioning to participatory face-to- face teaching in 2023.
- All students in a course are to be given equal opportunity to be taught the same material in a manner that addresses the diversity of student needs. These opportunities include lectures, tutorials, labs, practicals and additional support that involve students and their teaching teams coming together in

physical spaces. *Exceptions to this include courses that have been approved by the faculties teaching and learning committees and designed for a specific blended or online course delivery and/or have a particular place in the programme, timetable or curriculum that makes particular levels of in-person engagement unfeasible.*

- All students must have **sufficient opportunities to connect with their lecturers or convenors for help and support** through appropriate channels e.g. in-person or virtual "office hours", WhatsApp groups among others.

- It is advisable to structure the timetable in a manner that makes it feasible and practical for students to transition to face-to-face teaching.

Caveats and limitations

- The face-to face contact time refers to the agreed or advertised contact time (as in the Handbook) and not to all the notional hours of learning. This is because in any course, there are notional hours allocated to students' independent asynchronous study (reading, writing, taking notes, working on assessments). This contact time will therefore vary depending on a course and its inherent pedagogical approach.

- Venue restrictions including size and layout may reduce opportunities for active in-person engagement, and in some cases online synchronous engagement may be a better pedagogical option.

- Loadshedding and lack of backup power and lighting and regulatory restrictions in many venues will continue to challenge planned course delivery into 2023; in anticipation of load shedding some in-person lectures and sessions may need to revert to asynchronous pre-recorded sessions or virtual sessions. An agile course design and implementation approach is advocated.

4. Teaching and Learning framework in Semester 2 of 2022 and in 2023: Postgraduate programmes

The postgraduate programmes at UCT are varied in nature and mode of delivery; hence stipulation of standardised delivery is not desirable. However, the following core principles are put forward:

- Owing to the capacity on ventilated venues having returned to full capacity, it is expected that postgraduate programmes will return to standard ways of functioning.
- Where improved approaches have been built through the COVID-19 experiences, these will be integrated into long-term operation.
- Laboratories will run under standard protocols, with the expected attention to good practices in health and safety.
- Field work involving human subjects will be planned taking into account the infection levels prevalent at the time of the fieldwork.

It is recommended that course conveners, lecturers and supervisors actively encourage student interaction and face-to-face engagement, in addition to other approaches, in order to re-build peer learning, engagement and skills in critique actively. Each postgraduate programme will design these in a manner best suited to the programme.

Please note that data provision will no longer be in place.

Further, the following are highlighted for good operation:

- Owing to the *flexibility* in the postgraduate space, *effective communication* on a programme by programme basis is essential. It is requested that clear communication on the nature of programme

delivery is received by all students in each programme timeously and regularly. This communication is the responsibility of the programme coordinator, supported by the HoD.

- *Agility* to accommodate waves of high infection numbers, and other disruptions, should be planned.
- Increased access to defined *study spaces on campus* conducive for study and research will be provided for postgraduate students.
- The faculty-based *on-boarding* of new postgraduate students will be supported through a series of on-line resources provided centrally. These have been designed in on-line format owing to the varied start time of postgraduate students. Contact sessions will be included where beneficial.

Glossary of definitions

Asynchronous teaching	Asynchronous teaching refers to a learning environment where students and lecturers/tutors do not have to be online or studying together at the same time.
Notional hours	Notional hours of learning means the agreed estimate of the learning time that it would take an average learner to meet the defined outcomes. This includes consideration of contact hours, self-study and assessment.
Synchronous teaching	Synchronous teaching refers to a learning environment that allows live interactions either virtually through voice, video or chat or in-person where students and lecturers/tutors are studying together physically in a classroom space.