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27 September 2017

Vodacom announces free internet access for students and staff

University of Cape Town students and staff who are Vodacom subscribers will now have free internet access following the decision by the mobile network provider to zero rate a number of academic sites.

Having already zero rated the charge to key basic education sites and career portals, Vodacom announced today that it has taken a decision to zero rate services to universities for students and staff who are Vodacom subscribers.

This is a bid to help address cost challenges associated with access to education content and remote learning for institutions of higher learning. Through this approach, Vodacom has already enabled 19 of the 23 South African universities, including UCT, with free internet access.

Dr Max Price, UCT Vice-Chancellor, said students and other eligible users will have access to the free service. Free internet access to students and staff has until now only been accessible through the Eduroam Wi-Fi platform that can only be accessed within the vicinity of the university and its residences.

"The University of Cape Town is grateful to Vodacom for providing such an important resource to our students and staff. The service will be very useful to our students in that it will enable them to do their work off-campus without worrying about data costs or without having the need to travel to campus," said Dr Price.

In the case of UCT, the sites will be accessible through the agreed uniform resource locators (URL), internet protocols (IP) and ports which will provide addresses to particular pages and files on the internet. The identified addresses will include UCT's website <http://www.uct.ac.za>, the online library <http://www.lib.uct.ac.za>, and other important classroom and general interactive university sites.

For requirements over and above the zero rated content, Vodacom has launched an e-rate i.e. billing all data traffic to agreed sites at 50% of the normal data rates for all universities.

Vodacom Managing Executive for Western Cape Region, Alberts Breed says: "This intervention is a demonstration of Vodacom's core belief that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and mobile technology can be utilised to improve and advance learning, address skills development and help in finding employment.

"Many learners in our country often cannot afford and don't have access to learning material such as textbooks, which makes excelling at school more difficult. As an investor in the country and an established partner in addressing social challenges, Vodacom's goal is to contribute to ensuring that learners throughout the country have access to some of the educational tools to help enhance their learning experience."

He emphasised that education is not just a government issue, but the private sector and the general public are to play a pivotal roles in providing access to higher education and further education and training.

The cost to communicate in South Africa has been a hot topic in recent times, given the impact of the economic slowdown on the South African consumer and global trends on the cost of data.

In response to this, Vodacom's pricing transformation strategy, anchored by personalised packages aimed at giving customers greater value, has over the last four years produced a reduction in the price of data and voice by more than 60% and 57% respectively.

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Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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