|  |
| --- |
| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 1929**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 21/08/2020**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 32 OF 2020**

**Mr B BNodada (DA) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology:**

(a) What are the reasons that the University of Fort Hare could not commence with lectures in 2020, (b) on what date will the lectures begin, (c) is there a catch-up plan with specific timelines to ensure the 2020 academic year is completed for all the courses and (d) what are the details of the plans to deal with delays in the commencement of the lectures in future?

**NW2444E**

**REPLY:**

(a)    The University of Fort Hare (UFH) experienced a number of student protests at the start of 2020 academic year. Student protests, at times violent, centred on financial and academic exclusions and disrupted the teaching and learning programme from the beginning of the year. The impact of the protests were uneven as in some modules no teaching took place before the national lockdown, while in other modules two weeks of lectures or more were completed.

(b)    UFH, as with all universities, is implementing remote multi-modal teaching and learning during the lockdown period. Teaching and learning has continued to various degrees across the University, and UFH data shows that overwhelmingly students (95%) are accessing the online learning management system, i.e. Blackboard. However, there has been a moratorium on assessment to accommodate unevenness in access. In order to accommodate all students, the proposed revised calendar formally indicates semester 1 as running from 01 September 2020 to 08 December 2020.

(c)    The University has a catch-up plan. A revised calendar will serve before the University Senate on 27 August 2020. At the same meeting, Senate will consider for adoption, a set of new continuous assessment models for many of the 2020 first semester modules. This will reduce the examination period. If adopted, semester 1 will run from 01 September 2020 to 08 December 2020 and Semester 2 from 09 December 2020 to 30 March 2021.  This will ensure that the 2020 academic year is completed for all modules. The University has ordered laptops on a loan-to-own scheme for all students who selected this option, and the first batch is currently being delivered. The University has also provided data to all students. The first cohort of students have returned to the campus (28% of the student body by 06 August 2020), and the University will stagger the return of students who form part of the second cohort. The permits for the first group of the second cohort will be issued in the last week of August 2020.

(d)    The University of Fort Hare has been grappling with a culture of instability at both its Alice and East London campuses. The financial and academic exclusions implemented were critical to ensure the financial sustainability and academic integrity of the University. Ongoing engagement and dialogue with the Student Representative Council, clear communication with the University community, and strong action against any student or staff member who are in breach of the University code of conduct are the most appropriate mechanisms in place to shift this repertoire of disruption, which is deeply harmful to students, staff and the University community at large.