

## Unisa aces record online exam

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### MEDIA RELEASE

*On 12 June 2020 the University of South Africa (Unisa) reached yet another milestone in meeting the challenge of Covid-19 to the higher education sector when close on 27 000 students in its College of Law, the largest law faculty in Africa, successfully sat for an online examination.*

On Friday evening students logged on to the university's online examination system from their private spaces all over South Africa, many of them on devices issued by the National Student Financial Aid Scheme and with data provided by Unisa, to sit for its College of Law's Introduction to Law paper. On hand to provide real-time support was the lecturer responsible for the paper, assisted by a task-team comprising fellow-lecturers and IT specialists, who exchanged vital information with each other via a Microsoft Teams session.

Professor Veronica McKay, Unisa's Acting Vice-Principal for Teaching, Learning, Community Engagement and Support, who has been spearheading Unisa's online examinations programme, says that the college has perfected the live monitoring of online examinations. 'Friday night's session was completed within time and without major issues, and this is testimony to the hard, dedicated work put in by the both the university and the college to deal with the unusual situation in which the Covid-19 pandemic has placed universities around the world. The session was unique in that we had 27 000 students writing the same examination paper online at the same time – a technical feat of note. Following the to-be-expected teething problems experienced in other examination sessions earlier in the month, we expanded the system, put in much more bandwidth and created a dedicated portal for each examination.'

Students were able to call and e-mail the lecturer responsible for the paper and the support team while writing. Members of the support team listened in on the conversation and read the e-mails in real-time, assisting Unisa to provide the best possible advice when issues were encountered.

Unisa's Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mandla Makhanya, who sat in on the support session during the examination, lauded Unisa staff's on dealing with the demands that have been placed on them to ensure that students' studies suffer the minimal disruption and that the university's operations and academic project continue to function efficiently and effectively. 'As was evident on Friday evening,' he says, 'Unisa has displayed an indomitable spirit, and staff have put their hands up and demonstrated their loyalty to this university and our most valued customers, our students.'



*\* By Philip van der Merwe, Editor, Unisa Department of Institutional Advancement*

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