

# North-West University weathers pandemic storm with great success in first semester of 2020

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Hard work, creativity and perseverance have enabled the North-West University (NWU) to deliver significantly higher pass rates despite the Covid-19 pandemic having wreaked havoc in the higher-education sector since March 2020. The university's commitment to continuously improving the quality of teaching and learning support to ensure high module success rates yielded good results in the first semester after a solid foundation had been laid in 2019.

Teaching-learning support units and faculties have worked collectively towards a culture of academic achievement in which a diverse student body across the NWU campuses could accomplish outstanding academic results.

Thus far in 2020 both the NWU's pass rate and the active registration rate have been significantly higher than in 2019 during the same period, in other words, in the first semester. The NWU's registered pass rate – the number of students who passed modules compared to all students registered for a specific module – is 88.0%, almost 5 percentage points higher than for the same period in 2019.

The pass rate – students who passed module(s) in relation to the number who enrolled – is at 88.5%, which is also higher this year than the 85.9% achieved in 2019. This is a clear indication that fewer students failed or did not participate.

The university has placed further emphasis on the high quality of assessment approaches for its courses, modules and programmes that have been assessed and approved by the South African Qualification Authority.

Another indication of the NWU's continued success is the significant drop in its attrition rate compared to 2019. The attrition rate refers to the difference in numbers between students who registered for a module and those who actively participated in it. The 2020 attrition rate is 0.49%, which is significantly lower than the 3.30% in 2019 and the 3.49% in 2018. There have been significant decreases in the attrition rate across all the faculties. This is a continuous improvement year-on-year.

The university has successfully managed to keep the dropout rate – students who registered but did not graduate – low at 10.78% for its 2019 academic year.

Professor Dan Kgwadi, vice-chancellor and principal, says the NWU's success, although indicative rather than final at this time because academic results are audited only at the end of the academic year, suggests that the time and efforts invested by NWU academics to teach with passion and diligence are paying off. "The staff of the NWU are continuously striving to provide the best possible student learning experience and to prepare students to be ready for challenges in any sector."

He says the university's capacity building and budget allocations towards effective professional teaching-learning student support initiatives are paying off. The support initiatives include supplemental instruction, mentoring, academic literacy, reading and writing programmes, eFundi support programmes, career centre initiatives, ongoing and continuously improving library and information services support, and multilingual support initiatives from the language directorate, among other things. "We are confident that we will be able to complete the academic year in January 2021, enabling us to be ready for the new academic year.

"The NWU's teaching-learning portfolio will continue to work with diligence to support and develop NWU students in their endeavours towards achieving success.

“We look forward to welcoming more students back on our campuses. We are satisfied that the measures that we have put in place to manage the spread of the coronavirus have been recognised as sufficient and have ensured that we are one of the universities deemed to pose a low risk. We will continue to work diligently to ensure the safety of our staff and students on our campuses. We will continue to support our students who opt not to return to campuses through the online offering as long as it is necessary, but we remain a contact institution with a vibrant student life,” he concludes.

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