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NPC Reg. No. 1997/005605/08  
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12 April 2020

Dear Parent

## COVID19: Update and Impact at Inanda Seminary

The President's call for the current lockdown to be extended by two weeks is a measure to accelerate the country's effort "to flatten the curve" - to stop the spread of COVID19. In the absence of a vaccine, international experience has proved that physical social distancing is a surefire way of curbing the spread of the virus. As a school, we are in full support of the President's call.

What does the extended lockdown mean for us as a school committed to offering our students a quality academic programme?

- 1. Term 2 Start-up** - At this stage, we have lost 6,5 days of contact lessons in Term 1. However, these lessons took place remotely. Term 2 will begin on Tuesday 14 April 2020 for teachers and **online lessons will resume on Wednesday 15 April 2020** for our students. The admin and finance staff will be available on email, and any calls needed can be arranged.
- 2. Immediate Challenges** - We are very aware of the challenges of this unusual time and we are concerned about the frustration of uncertainty being expressed by our students. Over the last two weeks, our teachers have worked hard at engaging your children on online platforms such as WhatsApp and Google Classroom which are regularly used by our teachers and students in our classrooms. Having said that, we also understand the limitations in respect of devices, connectivity and data and the impact this has had on students being able to complete tasks assigned to them. Any outstanding assessments carried over from Term 1 will be attended to, though they may be in a different format. A timetable for these assessments will be made available to the students from the teachers concerned.
- 3. Current Teaching and Learning Strategy** - In view of the above, our teaching and learning strategy during the lockdown period will be as follows:
  - 3.1. 5h daily timetable** - In order to assist our members with some structure and routine so that they do not feel overwhelmed with the amount of work they will be doing each day, we have a timetable to assist. It is attached

**Inanda Seminary:**

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**Directors:** AE Wentzel (Chairperson); S Koyana; GCH Khumalo; LH Lambert; J-RDT Mazibuko; NP Mbatha; CS Mkhize; SSN Mthimkhulu; JAT Tate

Member of the Independent Schools Association of Southern Africa; Member of the South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition;  
Member of the Global Teachers Institute

to this newsletter. Our plan is to offer 5 hours of daily contact time where teachers will be available to dialogue with students on the tasks required of them. This time will be inclusive of teachers explaining the tasks to be performed, students performing the tasks on their own and teachers and students communicating with one another around the assigned tasks.

- 3.2. **Online Platforms** - Our primary means of lesson contact with students will be through WhatsApp, Email and Google Classroom. You as a parent, are invited to join Google classroom to enable you to get a sense of what is required of your child so that you will be able to support and motivate her. We are very aware that this may add pressure to you our parents, many of whom are working from home yourselves. This is entirely optional as your child is capable of working alone. You will receive an emailed invitation today. If you do not get one, please email [peterd@inanda.org](mailto:peterd@inanda.org) with your child's name and class so we can update our information. Please use the same email if you have any queries. If you respond to the invitation, you can choose a daily or weekly report, and thereafter you will receive a summary of required tasks, deadlines, and completion status of those tasks. Although we will replicate this information via WhatsApp, the information will be scattered across various classes and not in one consolidated place. We would appeal to you to please prioritise making internet access possible as Google Classroom offers much better functionality for the teachers as they support the members in their classes. **PLEASE NOTE: EdAdmin**, our school administration system, sent out emails about the parent portal. This was an error on the part of this service provider. We have chosen not to use the EdAdmin parent portal app as we would rather use Google Classroom. Our apologies. Please accept the [Google Classroom invitation](#) and ignore the EdAdmin message.

4. **Online teaching and learning -**

The lockdown challenges many of the ideas we have about teaching and learning. We cannot meet this challenge by trying to do what we have always done. As teachers, we would love to be in a classroom with the girls, doing our jobs with the professionalism, passion and energy you would normally expect. But we cannot be in the same physical classroom. Nevertheless, we assure you that we will carry our normal level of commitment into the online space. However, it will be different and we will need to adjust as we go along.

We are mindful of the costs and other challenges of going online. We want to offer the best we can, but we also need to keep our data requirements as low as possible. We will therefore **not** try to offer live videos of lessons as they require huge amounts of reliable data. We will use Google Classroom (preferably) and WhatsApp and email to keep in touch, provide tasks, and take

in completed work. We accept that getting online might not be possible at very specific times, so we will be flexible as to when we connect.

While this is a massive challenge, it is also a wonderful opportunity. The future world of work will not look like a traditional classroom. The skills needed are problem-solving, communication, resilience and self-management. A traditional classroom is not always the best place to learn those skills. This lockdown challenges the students of Inanda Seminary to develop these skills, to be responsible and active in their learning.

You will see that our online classes are not only about WHAT is being learned, but also about HOW. Students will be engaged in tasks that challenge them to think for themselves, to move beyond merely learning chunks of information. Teachers will be supporting them as best as they can - guiding, assisting, facilitating, offering advice.

None of these ideas are new to the teachers of Inanda. We have been innovatively working on our approach to teaching and learning for 151 years! But online teaching is new to all of us. We ask for your support and positive engagement with us and your children as we move boldly into this new world. We assure you that we will continue to offer the professional level of education for which the Seminary is renowned.

#### 5. **Financial Implications of lockdown**

As you are aware our school is a registered NPO - Non-Profit Organisation, so we carry no surplus funding for times such as this. As an independent school, it is our school fees that enable our school to operate, and anything additional we are able to secure above fees enables capital infrastructure to be attended to. We rely completely on our parents to keep paying their fees at this time. Any direct savings regarding food or electricity for days when students have not currently been present will only be able to be measured at the end of the year when they are set against additional classes which may take place during planned holiday time. We urge you to keep paying your fees and any parents directly affected by COVID19 changes should please contact the bursar ([bursar@inanda.org](mailto:bursar@inanda.org)) to negotiate amended payment arrangements. We assure you that the Finance Committee has applied their minds to minimise and reduce costs wherever possible.

#### 6. **Going forward**

Our mantra will be to “**adjust as we go**”. When dates are announced permitting us to officially reopen the school we will do so. We will notify you regarding registration days and times for the hostels to open and the usual procedure for fees being up to date for Term 1 (and part of term 2 if you are a monthly payer), will apply.

Up to that time, while our brick and mortar structures may be empty, teaching and learning will definitely be continuing and the curriculum remains the same until we are issued with changes of a contracted curriculum being offered.

I want to reassure you that during this lockdown the management of the Inanda Seminary has been meeting constantly (via Zoom) and planning and organising and working on a new way for teaching and learning to emerge. The lessons have been invaluable and the teaching staff continue to work even harder than before.

We welcome your communication with us and are happy to answer what questions we are able to, with the information we currently have. Be assured of our best commitment to your daughters in our school. Together we will emerge stronger than before, changed because we must, and working collaboratively and creatively to equip our students to face the changing 21st Century lying before us.

It is fitting that this letter is being written on this Easter Sunday - the day we Christians celebrate the resurrection of Christ - our Lord and Saviour. It is to Him that we commit all we endeavour to do knowing that He works all things for the good for those who love Him and are called according to His purposes. (Romans 8 vs 28)

Yours in education

Thembi Ndlovu  
Principal  
Inanda Seminary

Judy Tate  
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12 April 2020