

Major data and connectivity boost for NWU students

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In line with a previous commitment by the North-West University (NWU) to support its students with data and devices during the Covid-19 pandemic, the institution says it is making steady progress.





Elated NWU students receive laptops that were delivered as part of the NWU's drive to assist them to successfully complete the academic year.

According to the institution, it has so far spent R19,662,689 on purchasing 3,534 laptops, and an additional R2,303,433 on monthly data packages for qualifying students. This latter figure is expected to decrease, since students returning to campuses will no longer receive data, but will use Wi-Fi connectivity on NWU campuses.

This initiative was the result of a survey conducted among NWU students. A large number indicated a dire need for device and access to data.

As at 23 June 2020, close to 1,700 laptops have already been successfully hand-delivered to students. At least 23 267 students have already benefited from data provided to them, with some having received data more than once.

The NWU says although the distribution of laptops began early in May, the process was hampered by challenges in confirming the correct addresses of eligible recipients and actually tracing the students in remote areas. The personal circumstances of some students had also changed and they therefore did not require laptops anymore.

The NWU was one the first institutions of higher learning to conceptualise and subsequently implement online-based teaching and learning following President Cyril Ramaphosa's lockdown announcement towards the end of March this year

Initial projections indicated that at least R30m would be needed to operationalise online teaching and learning at the NWU, although related costs – as expected – skyrocketed. This prompted the NWU to launch a Covid-19 Response Fund from 1 May to collect additional funds and pre-used laptop and tablet devices.

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The NWU says it also relies on students' integrity to ensure that laptops and data reach the most vulnerable among its student community.

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