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## **DRAFT DISCUSSION DOCUMENT ON THE IMPACT OF COVID 19 ON THE TRAINING OF UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL STUDENTS**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown regulations that have been promulgated, have led to, inter alia, a significant effect on the training of undergraduate medical students in the country. The extent to which such training (especially clinical training) has been compromised leads to the question as to whether the 2020 academic year can still be salvaged, This is especially relevant for final-year students who need to enter the health workforce in 2021 as Interns.

The Health Professions Council of South Africa recognises the fact that extraordinary measures will be required to ensure adequate continued training of undergraduate medical students. This will include online teaching and learning. The latter can, however, not replace bedside clinical training.

Due to the uncertainty about the duration of the lockdown, including the timing of progression to lower levels, our focus at this time is to recommend mechanisms that will ensure that our final-year medical students will be able to successfully complete the 2020 academic year. We, therefore, recommend that final-year medical students resume their training at the various training institutions with immediate effect. This has also been conveyed publicly by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Nzimande. It will be expected from the training institutions to ensure that students will receive the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). It is also recommended that all students receive preparatory training in the management of COVID-19 patients and that they are immunised against influenza prior to commencing clinical training.

All lost training time should be recovered as far as possible on condition that the maximum time lost will not be more than 20% of the approved teaching plan for the year. For students in pre-final year the % of time lost will decrease to 10%. Extended hours beyond normal rotation and office hours for lost- time recovery must be avoided at all cost. All other years to catch up time over the duration of the time left before qualification.

We trust that each institution will ensure appropriate assessment of final-year students to ensure that the meet programme requirements as well as HPCSA requirements for registration as Interns in 2021.