

2 December 2011

Dear Parent

New IT service package (funding model) and Student Laptop Initiative (SLI)

As you know, access to a wide range of IT services is essential to students in higher education. To enable our students to share in cutting-edge technology, the Council of the North-West University (NWU) has approved a new IT service package (new funding model) at their meeting on 18 November 2011. In a further attempt to empower our students, the university also became part of a national initiative to make laptops available to students at a discounted price.

New funding model:

Up to now, the IT services to students were provided on a cost recovery basis, i.e. the cost to students was based on the actual individual usage. Examples of these services are internet usage, network disk usage and email volumes (GroupWise disk space). The cost recovery model was regarded as the best management model to regulate and manage usage of scarce resources (like internet and disk space).

Against the background of changing usage patterns, new technological advances and improved affordability and capacity of IT infrastructure, it was possible for the NWU to improve accessibility and affordability of IT services. The imminent availability of SANReN (South African Research and Education Network) and the improved international internet capacity via Seacom have created the opportunity to implement a new funding model to considerably improve accessibility and usability of IT facilities by end users.

From 1 January 2012, the current cost recovery model for students will be replaced by a general IT service package for all contact students (the same service package cannot be offered to non-contact students). The IT service package will no longer be based on actual individual usage, but will consist of a generous range of services for this group of students. The IT service package for 2012 will be a mandatory R950 for all contact students of the NWU.

The service package will give these students access to a wide range of IT services and will replace the current cost recovery system, which has a large administrative overhead. It also replaces the current R100 levy applicable to some students. The package of IT services that students will receive will directly support the IT strategy of creating an atmosphere of abundance regarding ICT facilities. With this package all contact students will have easy access to IT services (in computer labs, through smart phones and cell phones, etc.). The services included in the student package consist of a number of categories:

- Generous national and international internet capacity.
- Unlimited access to the Wi-Fi network on campus (where available).
- A range of academic software, including e-learning facilities, as required by the various academic programmes offered by the NWU.
- A reasonable amount of disk space.
- Basic support services to enable optimal use of IT services by students.

Student Laptop Initiative:

The NWU is part of a national initiative for all universities to empower students with laptops. The computers have been tested and approved by the IT department of the NWU and are therefore being recommended for students. The products are extremely moderately priced with up to 35% discount on the fixed price list of some of the models.

Large areas of the NWU's campuses already have Wi-Fi access, which will enable students to gain access to study material and the internet. Each computer will be supplied with Windows 7 Pro and Office 10 Professional. The value of the software alone already exceeds R1 200. The university's IT Department will also be able to give better support to students, should they experience problems with their computers.

Two computer trademarks have been chosen (Acer and Lenovo) and each has four different models: from entry level to advanced. The specifications of the four models of the two brands correspond. Students can therefore decide which brand and model would suit them best. The offer is already available as of 1 October 2011 and students will handle the transaction directly with one of the two vendors.

This initiative will probably have an impact on the number of students with own computers (currently already a few thousand) in the sense that their interaction with the internet and campus computing environment (eFundi) will increase. The NWU does not prescribe this, but we obviously support the national initiative.

Thank you for your understanding in this regard. Be assured that this was done in the interest of continuous quality improvement at the NWU, and that it contributes to the university's commitment to render an excellent service to students.

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