

Richfield offers students free data and zero rates access to study content

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Richfield offers free access to student study content, and they have been for 7 years. Richfield may be known for its rigor as a contact learning higher education institution with its 33 campuses positioned all over the South Africa, however technology has played a key role in their offering for some time. In 2012, Richfield became the first institution to provide free tablets to all new HET students registered for full qualifications. The tablet PC was equipped with free access to their online learning platform as well as their website, made possible by their partnership with Vodacom.

Following Cyril Ramaphosa's address to the nation detailing the closure of schools and universities which progressed to a full lockdown, Richfield was able to immediately switch all contact students online. They already had the hardware, software, access to free data, and zero rated access to all of Richfield's Online Platforms that resulted in minimal disturbance to their studies. "I'm very proud of the collaborative effort by my academic and technology teams that have facilitated such a fast transition to online. Our campuses are empty, but its business as usual for Richfield" says Richfield CEO Stefan Ferreira.



The introduction of online technology was done to enhance the offering to students. It allowed them to access lecture content, articles, videos and other research material remotely without being hindered by the high data cost of doing so. "We understood the challenges that many of our students faced and the role technology would play in keeping them engaged, enrolled and maximizing their potential to graduate" says Richfield CIO, Zane Ramnundlall. Richfield has continued to innovate. In 2020, all new BSC IT and Diploma in IT students received a free laptop when registering. We want to give our students the resources to demonstrate the theory learnt in the form of a practical on their own PC. This supports the large focus Richfield have placed on work integrated learning for all students to better prepare them for the life after university.

The introduction of an online learning system presented Richfield with the opportunity to establish a reputable, [accredited distance learning](#) offering. The project was spearheaded by Dr Muni Koobal who led a team that successfully established Richfield's distance learning offering in 2014. Richfield currently offers diplomas, undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, Technical and Vocational as well as various SETA qualifications in the distance mode, supported online.

The coronavirus pandemic has accelerated Richfield's digital strategy. They have invested additional hardware for their

teams as well as an improved call center system that can be operated and managed remotely. Richfield have also setup a dedicated student WhatsApp platform (0823 321 321). “WhatsApp is a platform used extensively by almost all new and existing students each day. To be able to provide instant feedback and information to our audience is crucial to remaining competitive and top of mind. Richfield is making learning more student centred, supported by facilitators and technology” says Adam Kelly, Richfield’s Group Sales Director.

Richfield has not changed what they do, simply how they do it. They will continue to innovate to improve the offering to all existing and future students alike.

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