

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

14 May 2021

Dear staff and students

DUT COVID-19 UPDATE

In the past seven days, South Africa has seen a 45 percent increase in new COVID-19 infections. Also this week, the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) has announced that two new variants (mutated new forms) of the Coronavirus have been detected in South Africa.

So, apart from the new variant first detected in South Africa in circulation, our country is now home to two other new variants: one first detected in the United Kingdom, and the other first detected in India. The latter variant is causing hundreds of thousands of infections, and sadly, thousands of deaths every day in India.

The sharp increase in new infections and the addition of two new variants of the virus in South Africa, make for a troubling situation, but there is no need to panic. Instead, we need to ask ourselves how well we are protecting ourselves and others. The scientific, mandatory precautions issued by the South African government and by DUT remain the best ways of preventing COVID-19: wear a mask; keep your distance by 1.5 metres; and clean/sanitise your hands. Avoiding crowds, close contact and crowded, closed spaces are also essential.

Here are the latest COVID-19 statistics for DUT:

Total number of people infected:	244	
Total number of staff (positive):	129	
Total number of students (positive):	115	
Total number of recoveries:	234	(112 students and 122 staff)
Total number of deaths:	10	(3 students and 7 staff)
Total number of active cases:	0	
Number of new infections:	0	(this week)
Number of new infections (staff):	0	(this week)
Number of new infections (students):	0	(this week)
Location of new infections: (DBN)	0	
Location of new infections: (PMB)	0	
Has contact tracing commenced:	Yes	

Has physical disinfection commenced: Yes

We wish our students and staff a safe return to good health.

The mental and emotional effects of COVID-19

While COVID-19 is a physical illness, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major effect on our emotional lives and often, on our mental health. Many of us are faced with challenges that are stressful, and sometimes overwhelming. The new way we need to live – masked and physically distanced – might make us feel isolated and lonely at times, increasing stress levels and anxiety in many of us.

It is natural to feel stressed and worried during the pandemic. You might be experiencing anything from anger to sadness, numbness to fear. You might be having difficulty concentrating or making decisions, or not be sleeping well. Stress can also make mental and chronic physical health conditions worse.

If you feel you are not coping, if you feel your mental health is at risk and you need support, DUT and other support organisations are here to help staff and students. Trained DUT psychologists and social workers are available to assist you to manage anxiety, depression, grief, study or relationship problems, GBV, substance abuse and other life problems. All services are strictly confidential. You can contact the following for assistance:

Counselling services for students

Students are invited to make a booking to speak to a psychologist or social worker by emailing Counsbookingdbn@dut.ac.za (Durban) or Counsellingpmb@dut.ac.za (Midlands). Counselling is being offered online during office hours.

Counselling services for staff

Staff are invited to contact the Employee Wellness Programme for counselling and support by emailing ewp@dut.ac.za. Counselling is being offered online during office hours.

24-hour mental health support services

For 24-hour assistance, seven days a week, you can call one of the following organisations for assistance:

Higher Health National Hotline on 0800 36 36 36 or SMS 43336.

South African Depression & Anxiety Group on 0800 12 13 14.

Lifeline on 0861 322 322.

For assistance with dependence on alcohol and/or other substances

If you are having difficulty with alcohol and/or drug dependence, please contact

The South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA) on 08611 73422.

Strategies for reducing stress, anxiety and depression:

The following activities can contribute to good mental health.

- Limit your time on social media and watching the news. While it is important to stay informed, a constant stream of information can be distressing. Instead, aim to check your screen only a couple of times a day and ensure that the information you obtain about COVID-19 comes from reputable sources (see below for reliable sources).
- Keeping your body healthy can improve your mental health, so get enough sleep and exercise, and eat nutritious, regular, balanced meals.
- Take time to relax and unwind. Listen to music, read a book, work on a hobby: these can all help to take your mind off whatever is worrying you.
- Make a point of connecting with others. Although we need to physically distance ourselves from people from other households, we also need social connections for good mental health. Stay in touch with friends and loved ones by phone or message. Zoom meetings can be a fun way to connect.
- Breathing exercises, meditation and yoga are all effective at helping to relieve tension, stress and anxiety.
- Do something for someone else. There's nothing like giving or helping to lift the spirits.

Further information and advice on COVID-19 can be found here ...

- ➔ Visit the DUT COVID-19 webpage at <https://www.dut.ac.za/coronavirus/> for further information.
- ➔ For enquiries and advice on COVID-19, please email covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za or telephone the DUT COVID-19 Task Team's hotline during office hours on 031 373 3760 or 031 373 2223.
- ➔ After hours, staff and students may contact 0600 123 456 (via WhatsApp); or the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) Hotline on 0800 029 999; or telephone the COVID-19 National Call Centre on 012 337 1997.

What to do if you suspect you may have COVID-19

COVID-19 affects different people in different ways. While some people develop no symptoms at all, most infected people develop mild to moderate illness, without requiring hospitalisation. Sadly, others become dangerously ill.

- If you suspect you may be positive for COVID-19, or if you develop symptoms, please contact the DUT Clinics via WhatsApp on 067 370 4482 or 083 783 7057 during office hours for medical advice from a professional nurse. If you live in residence, please inform your Residence Advisor immediately for advice. Please also inform your Head of Department or lecturer as soon as possible.
- Sometimes people with COVID-19 develop severe symptoms such as difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or high fever. In this case, please call the DUT Clinic as detailed above, during office hours, or contact 0600 123 456 (via WhatsApp).
- You can also contact the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) Hotline on 0800 029 999, or the COVID-19 National Call Centre on 012 337 1997 for advice on what steps to take next.

If you do get tested, please send your COVID-19 test results to your Head of Department or lecturer for forwarding to the COVID-19 hotline on covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za

- If you test positive, you will be asked to list other DUT members with whom you have been in contact over the previous seven days and what DUT venues you have occupied. This is to ensure that close contacts self-isolate, and that venues are disinfected.

No negative test is required for returning to campus after the 10-day quarantine period has elapsed.

Daily COVID-19 protocol at DUT

Please be aware that only those students and staff members who have been invited to come onto campus, and who have a valid entry permit, will be granted access to campus.

I. Before arriving on campus:

Please complete the **HealthCheck COVID-19 online form** every day, before leaving your place of residence. This online form is to screen for symptoms of COVID-19 and this process helps to prevent the disease from spreading. Please be completely honest in your responses to the questions before attempting to gain access to campus.

You can access the HealthCheck form in three ways:

- Dial HealthCheck on *134*832*2# (This is a free call).
- Go to: <https://healthcheck.higherhealth.ac.za>
- Add 0600 110 000 - <https://wa.me/27600110000?text=hi> to your WhatsApp to contacts.

If you get an orange light or a red light, please do not proceed to campus. Instead, please call the COVID-19 Hotline on 031 373 3760 or 031 373 2223 or email covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za for advice on what to do. Please also keep your Head of Department, lecturer or Residence Advisor informed. If you get a green light on HealthCheck, wash your **hands** thoroughly with soap and water, put on a mask covering your nose, mouth and chin and then leave your place of residence.

2. When you reach the campus entrance, please:

- Allow the Security Officer to take your temperature. A higher than usual body temperature can be an indicator of fever, and fever can be a symptom of COVID-19.
- Show your student/staff card, your entry permit, and your HealthCheck result to the Security Officer.
- Sanitise your hands at the entrance.
- Keep a minimum distance of 1.5 metres away from other people.
- Please avoid shaking hands, fist bumps, hugging, kissing or any close contact with other people.
- DUT has a #NoMaskNoEntry policy: No entry will be granted to any person not wearing a mask which is securely covering the nose, mouth and chin.

Failure by a student or staff member on DUT premises to:

- Wear a mask that is securely covering the nose, mouth and chin;
 - Maintain a minimum distance of 1.5 metres between themselves and any other individual; or
 - Sanitise their hands at entrances to campuses and venues,
- may result in disciplinary and/or criminal action, which could result in a fine, suspension, expulsion and/or a criminal record.

As we enter a third wave of COVID-19, it is time for each of us to commit to observing the guidelines. We also strongly advise the DUT community to avoid all gatherings, crowds and close contact, and remind everyone to please wear a mask, remain 1.5 metres away from other persons, wash/sanitise your hands regularly, and stay safe. If we all work together as a team, we can keep DUT and our wider community safer from COVID-19.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team