

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

28 May 2021

Dear staff and students

DUT COVID-19 RESPONSE TASK TEAM UPDATE

Tragically the predictions about a third wave of infections in South Africa seem to be close to a realisation, as we are now witnessing new infections of more than 4000 a day. Unfortunately, it seems that many people in our country have lowered their guard and have intentionally ignored the established and well promoted public health guidelines to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Therefore, we would like to remind you that you must securely wear your face mask, wash your hands regularly with soap and water, use a minimum 70% alcohol-based hand sanitiser, disinfect frequently touched surface areas, practice social and physical distancing, avoid gathering in groups and stay away from large crowds and where possible, do not frequent poorly ventilated spaces. Please remember that we have a combined responsibility to save lives and to reduce the spread of the disease, as we face a third wave which is almost upon us.

Here are the latest COVID-19 statistics for the DUT community:

Total number of people infected:	246	
Total number of staff (positive):	130	
Total number of students (positive):	116	
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:	2	(1 student and 1 staff)
Number of new infections:	1	(this week)
Number of new infections (staff):	1	(this week)
Number of new infections (students):	0	(this week)
Location of new infections: (DBN)	1	
Location of new infections: (PMB)	0	
Has contact tracing commenced:	Yes	
Has physical disinfection commenced:	Yes	

We wish our student and colleague, who are currently both fighting COVID-19, a safe and successful return to good health. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

Campus disruptions and COVID-19

The COVID-19 Response Task Team is disturbed to learn that recent protest action on campus saw a significant number of students seemingly disregarding the mandatory COVID-19 guidelines of wearing a mask, keeping a distance of 1.5 metres from others and sanitising hands at entrances to campus and venues.

While we respect the right to protest, ignoring the South African government's gazetted regulations in the "National State of Disaster" and DUT's own COVID-19 regulations, could result in outbreaks of a potentially deadly disease and this will not be tolerated. Students are reminded to adhere to the COVID-19 guidelines at all times on campus, to protect themselves and others and to rather follow established grievance procedures and channels where necessary.

Failure by a student or staff member on DUT premises to abide by the mandatory COVID-19 precautions could lead to strict legal and/or disciplinary action, which could, in turn, result in arrest and prosecution, a fine, suspension, expulsion and/or a criminal record.

Vaccination of DUT community begins

This week, the COVID-19 Response Task Team teamed up with the eThekweni and Provincial Departments of Health, in support of South Africa's COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, where qualifying DUT staff members were vaccinated against COVID-19. We thank all of those who volunteered for the vaccination and we urge everyone who is eligible to be vaccinated. All health care workers who have not been vaccinated as yet, and everyone aged 60 and above, are eligible and encouraged to register on the official South African COVID-19 Vaccination Programme registration portal at <https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za/#/>

Even if you don't currently qualify, please try to encourage those who do qualify to register on the portal and assist those who need help to register online. For further information about the vaccines, the national vaccine roll-out, frequently asked questions and more, please visit <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/vaccine-updates/>

Let's talk about vaccine safety

A growing number of people are hesitant about being vaccinated, believing vaccinations to be unsafe, useless or unnecessary. There is also a lot of misinformation spreading about the COVID-19 vaccines, particularly on social media. The fact is that the development of vaccines is one of the world's greatest scientific achievements, and vaccinations save millions of people from dying from infectious diseases such as flu and measles every year.

Countries around the world are vaccinating their populations against COVID-19 in an attempt to achieve what is called 'herd immunity'. This is where a large proportion of the population is vaccinated and protected, thereby breaking the chain of infection. Should large numbers of people choose not to be vaccinated, attempts to bring the pandemic under control will be undermined.


How safe are the COVID-19 vaccines?

When vaccines are developed, they undergo rigorous testing during trials that include thousands of participants. The COVID-19 vaccines, while relatively new, have also undergone this process. They have also been closely examined by various national and international regulatory agencies to assess them for their effectiveness and safety. Because of the need to develop the COVID-19 vaccines quickly, all global regulators have put in place extra mechanisms to constantly monitor them. In addition, the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) has examined the scientific data collected about the COVID-19 vaccines to make sure that they are safe, effective and of high quality. They have deemed them to be so.

There has been talk about people developing blood clots from the vaccines. However, experts say that you have a bigger chance of being struck by lightning TWICE than of developing a blood clot from a COVID-19 vaccine. You are also judged to be eight times more likely to develop a blood clot in the brain from COVID-19 than from a COVID-19 vaccine.

Is the vaccination painful?

The vaccination is virtually painless; no more painful than pinching your arm. After being vaccinated, most people suffer little discomfort, although some people might experience side effects. These could include tenderness or pain at the injection site, a fever, chills, body aches, nausea, diarrhoea, headaches and fatigue.



These symptoms are a result of your body developing immunity to COVID-19, not because the vaccination has given you COVID-19. The vaccines do not contain live viruses, so they cannot give you COVID-19. If you develop symptoms such as the above, they should pass within a few of days, and can be treated with rest, paracetamol (for example, Panado) and drinking fluids. For more information on the vaccines, please visit the National Institute for Communicable Diseases: <https://www.nicd.ac.za/frequently-asked-questions-covid-19-vaccine-side-effects/>

Vaccination does not mean dropping your guard

Vaccination drastically reduces your chances of being hospitalised for severe illness, or of dying from COVID-19. However, even if you have been vaccinated against COVID-19, you could still become infected with the virus and could pass it on to others. That is why no-one can drop the scientifically tested, mandatory, non-pharmaceutical precautions: wear a mask, keep a distance of 1.5 metres from others, and clean hands regularly.

Situations to be avoided

With the daily new infection rate rising towards a third wave in South Africa, the COVID-19 Response Task Team strongly urges all members of the DUT community to avoid crowded, closed spaces where you are in contact with many people. These situations lend themselves to the rapid spread of the coronavirus, so meetings and other gatherings are strongly discouraged at this time.

Get vaccinated against the flu

We strongly encourage anyone who has the opportunity to do so, to have a flu vaccination. Apart from reducing confusion between flu and COVID-19, and thereby reducing pressure on our health care system, having a flu vaccination can help protect you from catching the latest flu variants and, potentially, becoming very ill.

Anyone with high-risk conditions such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, asthma, diabetes, cancer and HIV/AIDS can be particularly vulnerable to complications with flu, so getting vaccinated is highly recommended.

How to find mental health support

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought with it a very different way of life for many of us. Due to the contagious nature of the coronavirus that causes the disease, teaching and learning has to be undertaken online as much as possible to

prevent people from becoming infected. This situation might lead to depression, loneliness and isolation, as well as anxiety, relationship and study difficulties, and more.

If you feel you can't cope anymore, we appeal to you, students and staff, to reach out for help. There are a number of services available to you both from DUT and other support organisations 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Counselling services for students

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, counselling is being offered online during office hours. 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 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 (SADAG)** 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 **0861 1 73422**.

If you think you may have COVID-19, this is what to do

- Remain in your place of residence.
- Contact the DUT Clinics for advice (see below).

- Inform your Residence Advisor and/or Lecturer/HOD.
- Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- Treat your symptoms, for example, take paracetamol (such as Panado) for fever and pain.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with your elbow, not your hand.
- Stay away from other people to prevent them from becoming infected.
- If you develop a high fever, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, contact your doctor, the DUT Clinics (see below) or the COVID-19 Hotline or WhatsApp lines (see below) for assistance.
- 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.

Important contact numbers

- **DUT Clinics:** WhatsApp 067 370 4482 or 083 783 7057 (office hours).
- **COVID-19 Hotline:** 0800 029 999.
- **COVID-19 WhatsApp** number: 0600 12 3456.
- **DUT's COVID-19 Response Task Team Hotline:** 031 373 3760 or 031 373 2223 (office hours), or email covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za.

DUT
DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
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Further information and advice on COVID-19 can be found here ...

- ➔ Visit the DUT COVID-19 webpage at <https://www.dut.ac.za/coronavirus/>
- ➔ Visit the South African government's website at <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/>

Daily COVID-19 protocol at DUT

Please note 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.

Mandatory COVID-19 precautions at DUT

Please take the following compulsory steps to help stop the spread of COVID-19 at DUT and beyond:

- **Wear a mask** that securely covers your nose, mouth and chin;
- Maintain a minimum **distance of 1.5 metres** between yourself and any other individual at DUT; and
- Sanitise your hands at entrances to campuses and venues.

Finally, the DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team once again strongly appeals to you to avoid all gatherings, crowded events, group events and in-person meetings at this time. Although the current government regulations do allow for limited meetings and gatherings, a third wave of the pandemic is almost upon us. Daily new infections and sadly, deaths, are once again rising steeply. Please exercise maximum caution as we await a review of the regulations and further guidance and announcements from the President of our country.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team



**WEAR A MASK
SAVE A LIFE**

Together we can help slow the spread of COVID-19

PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS FROM CORONAVIRUS HOW NOT TO WEAR A MASK



Do not wear your
mask under your
mouth.



Do not pull your
mask under your
chin even to drink.



Do not wear your
mask on your elbow.



Do not hang your
mask from one ear.

Remember to always use proper hand hygiene
before putting on and taking off your mask.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK NATIONAL HOTLINE:

0 800 029 999

08H00 - 16H00 (MONDAY - FRIDAY)