

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

25 June 2021

Dear staff and students

COVID-19 RESPONSE TASK TEAM WEEKLY STATEMENT

In the past 24 hours, South Africa has recorded 16078 new cases of COVID-19, with infection rates dramatically escalating this week. In a matter of just two weeks from 10 June, approximately 150 000 people were diagnosed with COVID-19 in our country, taking the seven-day average to 13009 new cases. Tragically, 148 people have passed on over the previous 24 hours and a total 141910 people are currently fighting the disease in South Africa. Last night, there were 10736 COVID-19 patients in hospital and 1866 who are in ICU.

Here are the COVID-19 stats for DUT this week:

TOTAL NUMBER OF POSITIVE CASES:	253
TOTAL NUMBER OF STAFF WHO TESTED POSITIVE:	133
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO TESTED POSITIVE:	120
NUMBER OF NEW CASES TO REPORT:	2
NUMBER OF NEW CASES (Students):	1
NUMBER OF NEW CASES (Staff):	1
LOCATION OF NEW CASES:	Durban 2 & PMB 0
NUMBER OF RECOVERIES:	239
TOTAL NUMBER OF DEATHS:	10 (7 staff & 3 students)
TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTIVE CASES:	4 (2 staff & 2 students)
HAS CONTACT TRACING COMMENCED:	Yes
HAS DISINFECTION OF AREAS COMMENCED:	Yes

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

Earlier this morning, the Acting Health Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane said that it was "inevitable" that the surge in COVID-19 cases in Gauteng will spill over to the other provinces. She admitted that "it is a grave situation we find ourselves in as a country." Therefore, please behave responsibly and help prevent the further spread of the disease. Younger individuals are succumbing to this illness, starkly demonstrating the fact that anybody can get infected. This third wave is already proving to be vicious. Therefore, the DUT community is urged to maintain 100% compliance with the COVID-19 regulations, so that you and your loved ones remain safe.

A request to students

Students who have permission to be on campus for practical assessments and/or laboratory work, are asked to please leave campus immediately after completion of their task. Please do not socialise in groups on or outside campus and please, practice physical distancing, wear a mask at all times and please ensure that you regularly wash your hands with water and soap.

Pandemic fatigue is real, but don't let your guard down

After 16 months of restrictions, COVID-19 is still spreading faster than ever and this is certainly not the time to lower our guard. Please continue to take this pandemic seriously. People are being infected in their thousands and tragically, people are passing on due to COVID-19 related complications.

Many people are seemingly suffering what is known as 'pandemic fatigue' or 'COVID burnout.' People who experience this might feel constantly tired, even after adequate rest, or feel overwhelmingly ineffective in their lives, or painfully isolated from their loved ones, co-workers and people with whom they used to have bonds. This phenomenon is common and normal. If, however, you feel the need for mental health support, please reach out for help from the resources listed later on in this *communiqué*.

Apart from seeking mental health care if you need to, we advise you to find ways of staying connected with family and friends without the need to be physically together. A phone call with a loved one can provide a sense of comfort. Keep hope alive, even if you are feeling exhausted and unmotivated. Things will change once more people are vaccinated. Keeping a diary of things that you are grateful for can help uplift your emotions and keeping to a daily routine can help provide you with a sense of purpose.

Unfortunately, pandemic fatigue can lead to careless behaviour, such as failing to take the necessary precautions. These behaviours have the very real potential to cost lives – your own or the lives of others.

Before the pandemic we were not physical distancing, wearing masks or probably even washing our hands as frequently as we now need to. But these precautions, along with vaccinations, are our only tools to keep ourselves and others safe from COVID-19. Even if no-one around you is sick and you feel as if you're safe to drop the precautions, the fact is that no one is safe without vaccination - and the precautions are the only tools that work against the disease, along with the vaccine.

So, how can we make it easier to take the necessary precautions? **Make a commitment** to follow the precautions and **practice** them at every opportunity. Once you repeat this step regularly, it will become second nature and you will not even need to think about it. **Make it easy to honour your commitment** by keeping a clean mask (and sanitiser) in a convenient place, such as near the front door, so that you always remember to use them.

Finally, try to accept the new reality in which we find ourselves. It looks like COVID-19 is not going to go away anytime soon, so let us commit to the health of ourselves and our communities, and when our turn arrives, let us get vaccinated.



Working to keep DUT virus-free

DUT has a team of people dedicated to cleaning and sanitising lecture rooms, offices and other spaces to help keep our university COVID-free.

After a venue has been occupied by someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, the venue undergoes a special deep cleaning and sanitisation process by the cleaning crew.

Earlier in the pandemic, it was thought that such venues needed to be fogged with a particular kind of spray. Research now shows that fogging practices are ineffective and unnecessary.

In keeping with these findings, Higher Health has issued guidelines stating that venues that were occupied by COVID-19 positive persons no longer need to be fogged. DUT, therefore, no longer conducts fogging. Thorough cleaning and sanitising are sufficient to kill any viruses that may be present.

Please inform DUT if you test positive, even if you haven't been on campus

Even if you have not been on campus or been in contact with anyone from DUT, if you test positive for COVID-19, please inform DUT for statistical purposes.

If you are a student in residence, please immediately inform your Residence Advisor. If you are a staff member or a student not in residence, please inform your HOD, who should then inform your Faculty or Departmental COVID-19 Response Task Team representative. Test results should be emailed to our dedicated COVID-19 office on covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za. Your test results will remain confidential.

Please quarantine for 10 days if a family member or room-mate tests positive for COVID-19

If someone you live with tests positive for COVID-19, you need to stay away from campus and inform your HOD or lecturer. If you are well after 10 days, you may return to campus if you have received an invitation to come to campus in 2021. We remind you that only students who have permission to be on campus will be allowed access to campus.

If you are unwell, please stay at home

If you are unwell, please do not proceed to campus, but stay at home and seek medical attention. Staff members should please phone (not visit) their doctor for advice on what to do. Students not on medical aid should please contact the DUT Clinic or other 24-hour lines for advice (see the list of numbers below).

Vaccination is a powerful tool against COVID-19

Vaccination is one of the most powerful tools we have against COVID-19. The COVID vaccines have undergone stringent testing and clinical trials - and they are considered safe. Importantly, they have also been shown to be effective against serious illness, and the chances of hospitalisation and dying from COVID-19.

Patient-facing staff and students from the Faculty of Health Sciences who would like to be vaccinated may register on the Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS) at www.v4hcw.co.za to receive notification of an appointment time and venue for vaccination.

Staff who are over 60 and would like to be vaccinated, are asked to contact the Employee Wellness Programme on ewp@dut.ac.za to facilitate vaccination.

DUT staff and students who received were vaccinated at St Aidan's Hospital or at King Edward VIII Hospital, will receive their second dose at the same site. Those who received vaccines at other sites will be accommodated at King Edward VIII Hospital.

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please wait 30 days before taking the vaccine.

How we can all help stop the spread of COVID-19

Now that South Africa is firmly into a third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the virus is spreading rapidly. Infection rates are increasing daily. We must strengthen our efforts to prevent the further spread of this disease and prevent unnecessary suffering and fatalities. The following guidelines are tried-and-tested methods to stop the spread of COVID-19:

- **Wear a mask** covering your nose, mouth and chin in public and at DUT.
- Very importantly, please **keep at least 1.5 metres** between you and any other person not from your household. Please do not socialise in groups. This precaution is vital to stop the virus from spreading.
- Keep your hands clean. Please **sanitise your hands** at DUT entrances and clean your hands throughout the day.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Please **avoid all gatherings**, face-to-face meetings and situations in which you will be in close contact with others.
- When greeting others, please **avoid shaking hands**, fist bumps, hugging and other physical contact.

- **Ensure good ventilation** when inside with others. Doors and windows should be left open. Now that it is winter, staff and students are kindly requested to **bring warm clothing and/or a blanket** to campus with them so that maximum ventilation can be allowed. This is in line with Higher Health guidelines.
- If you test positive for COVID-19, please inform DUT immediately: inform your Residence Advisor, Head of Department and/or lecturer.

Consequences of not following DUT's mandatory COVID-19 guidelines:

- If any student or staff member fails to observe DUT's mandatory COVID-19 guidelines of wearing a mask, social distancing by 1.5 metres and sanitising their hands at entrances, they will be liable to disciplinary and/or criminal action.
- Any staff member or student who fails to disclose to DUT that they have COVID-type symptoms or that they are positive for COVID-19, shall be liable for disciplinary action.

In conclusion, with infections and deaths rising sharply around the country, we must do everything in our power to stop the spread of COVID-19. It is the responsibility of each one of us to avoid gatherings, crowded events, group events and in-person meetings; please observe the mandatory precautions at DUT: **wear a mask** covering your nose and mouth securely; **stay 1.5 metres from all other persons**; **clean your hands** frequently with soap and water or with a 70% alcohol solution; and get vaccinated against COVID-19 when your turn comes. Our lives are in each other's hands. Please take care and be safe.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team

PROTOCOLS & RESOURCES

I. What you must do if you think you may have COVID-19

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

2. Mental health support for students and staff is just a phone call away 24 hours a day

Any student or staff member who is having emotional, mental health, relationship, study or other such difficulties is asked to reach out for help from the services available from DUT and other support organisations, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Counselling services for students

Students are invited to make a booking to speak to a psychologist or social worker online by emailing Counsbookingdbn@dut.ac.za (Durban) or Counsellingpmb@dut.ac.za (Midlands). Should you have an emergency during office hours, please email one of these addresses, or contact the 24-hour mental health support services after hours (see below for numbers).

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

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

3. 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.

4. Resources on COVID-19 and vaccination

- ➔ Visit the South African government's website at <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/>
- ➔ Visit the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) at <https://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/>
- ➔ Visit the DUT COVID-19 webpage at <https://www.dut.ac.za/coronavirus/>

5. 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.

A. 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.

B. 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.

PLEASE

STAY SAFE

WEAR A MASK