

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

04 June 2021

COVID-19 RESPONSE TASK TEAM WEEKLY STATEMENT

Dear staff and students

DUT COVID-19 UPDATE

As a result of sharply rising COVID-19 infection and death rates around South Africa, earlier this week President Cyril Ramaphosa announced a return to Adjusted Alert Level 2 Lockdown regulations in terms of South Africa's Disaster Management Act.

The new regulations include a particularly important restriction on the number of people permitted at indoor gatherings, including funerals: The maximum number of people allowed indoors has been reduced to 100, up to maximum of 50 percent of venue capacity. A curfew from 23:00 to 04:00 has also been imposed. The reasons for these restrictions are well-founded. Large, crowded gatherings often turn into 'super-spreader' events, during which a large number of people become infected with COVID-19. Those who become infected can then go on to infect their families, friends and colleagues, resulting in a surge in infections and potentially devastating consequences.

Here are the latest COVID-19 statistics for DUT:

TOTAL NUMBER OF POSITIVE CASES:	246
TOTAL NUMBER OF STAFF WHO TESTED POSITIVE:	130
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO TESTED POSITIVE:	116
NUMBER OF NEW CASES TO REPORT:	0
NUMBER OF NEW CASES (Students):	0
NUMBER OF NEW CASES (Staff):	0
LOCATION OF NEW CASES, DURBAN /PIETERMARITZBURG:	Durban 0 & PMB 0
NUMBER OF RECOVERIES:	235
TOTAL NUMBER OF DEATHS:	10 (7 staff & 3 students)
TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTIVE CASES:	1 (1 staff & 0 students)
HAS CONTACT TRACING COMMENCED:	No new cases
HAS DISINFECTION OF AREAS COMMENCED:	No new cases



Has physical disinfection commenced: Yes

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

President Ramaphosa paid special attention to the importance of wearing a mask that covers both nose and mouth when in public - and warned all South Africans that failure to do so is a criminal offence. At DUT, wearing a mask is compulsory, and DUT has a #NoMaskNoEntry policy. In order to protect the DUT community, failure to wear a mask, social distance by 1.5 metres and sanitise your hands at entrances to campus and venues could result in strict disciplinary and/or criminal measures.

The DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team urges all members of the DUT community to avoid gatherings and face-to-face meetings at this time - and we remind you of the necessity to take the above life-saving precautions. Remember, we have a shared responsibility to prevent the further spread of the virus.

Earlier this week, the Institute for Water and Wastewater Technology (IWWT) at DUT announced that according to their research findings and analysis, KZN has already commenced with a third wave of infections. The IWWT at DUT is at the forefront of SARS-CoV-2 wastewater surveillance. The institute, with an array of advanced molecular biology equipment plays a critical role in monitoring and tracking Covid-19 infection spread in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The research team is led by the Director Prof Faizal Bux and assisted by Prof Sheena Kumari. Scientists playing a key role in the endeavour include Dr Leanne Pillay, Dr Isaac Dennis Amoah, Dr Oluyemi Awolusi and Mr Kriveshin Pillay. Professor Bux is a member of the DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team and we are grateful to him and our scientists and researchers at the IWWT for the valuable work that they are doing.

According to the IWWT, *“the peak of the second wave in South Africa occurred in January 2021 with an average of 40 000 active cases in KZN. As a metro, the eThekweni Municipality is a good reflection of the pandemic trend in KZN. The viral loads at the Central Wastewater Treatment Plant during this peak period averaged at 4.72 log copies per 100 ml. However, viral loads over the last four weeks (11 – 27 May 2021) averaged at 5.57 log copies per 100 ml of wastewater. This was far higher than what was observed during the peak of the second wave, indicating that the eThekweni Municipality may already be experiencing the 3rd wave of COVID-19 infections and that there is a greater number of infected individuals within the community, than what is currently being reported. This also indicates that there may be more asymptomatic carriers in the community that could potentially spread the virus. The team at the IWWT have shared these key findings with the relevant authorities, including the provincial Department of Health (KZN DOH) and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD).”*

DUT vaccination programme in full swing

Hundreds of staff and students from the Faculty of Health Sciences, the DUT clinic staff and staff over the age of 60, received their first COVID-19 vaccinations at King Edward VIII Hospital this week. The COVID-19 Response Task Team conveys its sincere appreciation to all those who collaborated to make the first full week of vaccinations the success that it was. Vaccination of DUT staff and students who qualify will continue next week, by appointment only.

Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is the best way to keep safe from this potentially deadly disease. The more people who get vaccinated, the better South Africa's chances are of avoiding future waves of infection. On the other hand, if large numbers of adults in South Africa remain unvaccinated, the opposite will happen. Unvaccinated people will remain vulnerable to becoming infected and sadly, pass the infection on to other people who may be more vulnerable to serious consequences.

If you are a patient-facing, Faculty of Health Sciences student or staff member, or a staff member over the age of 60, you qualify for vaccination. Patient-facing staff and staff over the age of 60 are strongly encouraged to contact their HODs, Executive Deans or the Employee Wellness Programme on ewp@dut.ac.za for referral for vaccination and for further information on the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Should you qualify but are hesitant or want to know more, please visit the following resources:

<https://sacoronavirus.co.za/vaccine-updates/>  DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
INYUVESI YASETHEKWINI YEZOBUCHWEPHESHE

<https://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/what-you-need-to-know-about-vaccines-in-general/>

Students who have questions regarding vaccinations are invited to contact the COVID-19 Response Task Team on covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za for assistance.

Do COVID-19 vaccines have side-effects?

Many people are hesitant to get vaccinated because they are worried about experiencing side-effects. Firstly, it is important to emphasise that the COVID-19 vaccines have been found to be safe and will protect you from severe disease and potential death from COVID-19. After vaccination against COVID-19, some people have no side effects at all, while others experience minimal side-effects that are mild and temporary.

Not all 'information' is equal

As members of an institution of higher learning, we know the importance of consulting reliable, trustworthy sources of information backed by science. Sadly, many people are turning to dubious social media posts as their main sources of news and information. Misinformation and erroneous fake news have been shown to play a

significant role in vaccine hesitancy. The DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team therefore urges you to consult only trusted, science-based information sources such as the following:

- 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/>

Vaccines seminars for staff and students

The COVID-19 Response Task Team invites all DUT staff and students to attend one of two (identical) virtual seminars on the COVID-19 vaccines:

A Simple Understanding of the Different COVID-19 Vaccine Technologies: Demystifying the Myths via the Eye of Basic Sciences

Wednesday 09 June 2021: 14h00 -- 15h00

https://teams.microsoft.com/join/193ameeting_ODRkMTA3M2UtZjQyZC00N2JmLTg0NWQtNjU0ZDQ4YTYxYTEEx%40thead.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%224b1930d1-12f4-40b5-b48c-bd86117429d8%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2277288147-74b7-451d-b610-21a94c9e6d49%22%7d

OR

Friday 11 June 2021: 14h00 -- 15h00

https://teams.microsoft.com/join/193ameeting_Yjg5N2Y2NWItOTg0OC00NDc0LWFmOTgtYmY2NDQyMWNiMjUw%40thead.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%224b1930d1-12f4-40b5-b48c-bd86117429d8%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2277288147-74b7-451d-b610-21a94c9e6d49%22%7d

Guest speaker: Dr. Moses Olusegun (PhD. in Chemistry -Physical/Medicinal Bioinorganic Chemistry)
Dr. Olusegun is a seasoned academic and passionate researcher in the field of physical and biological chemistry. His current research focuses on Chemical Biology, a research field that is at the heart of understanding and finding pharmaceutical solutions to the current COVID-19 pandemic. He is currently teaching Basic Sciences and Research modules in the Undergraduate Nursing Programme at DUT's Indumiso Campus.

Platform: MS Teams

To attend one of the seminars, please click on the relevant link (above).

We strongly urge all staff and students to attend this important seminar to find out the truth about the COVID-19 vaccines and have the opportunity to ask questions.

Mental health support for students and staff is available 24 hours a day

If you are feeling depressed, anxious, overwhelmed or unable to cope anymore, we appeal to you, students and staff, to reach out for help. There are a number of services available to you from both 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). 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.

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, eg 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 .

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 securely 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.

The COVID-19 Response Task Team wishes to make three strong appeals to our staff and students:

1. Please **avoid all gatherings**, crowded events, group events and in-person meetings at this time.
2. Please observe the mandatory precautions at DUT: **wear a mask** covering your nose and mouth securely, **stay 1.5 metres** from all other persons, and **clean your hands** frequently with soap and water or a with 70% alcohol solution; and
3. Please come forward for **vaccination if you are over 60** or a **patient-facing staff member** or **student in the Faculty of Health Sciences**.

Please stay safe and do not lower your guard, especially now that we are dealing with a third wave of infections.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team
