

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

6 August 2021

COVID-19 RESPONSE TASK TEAM WEEKLY STATEMENT

Dear staff and students

Earlier this week the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) announced that the coastal provinces of South Africa, which includes KwaZulu-Natal, have not yet reached the peak of the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Infections are currently on the rise in KZN, with over 405 077 people having been infected to date. Yesterday, KZN had 2667 new infections and on Wednesday, 2408 new cases. By Wednesday evening, 11 738 people in KZN had tragically passed on from COVID-19 related complications.

Therefore, you must remain alert and follow the public health guidelines. Please take the following steps to protect yourself, your family and friends against COVID-19: **wear a mask** when you are in public (including at DUT); keep a minimum **1.5 metres** between you and the next person; **wash/sanitise your hands** often; and **avoid crowds and closed spaces**. And importantly, **get the vaccine** when your turn arrives.

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

Total number of positive cases:	276
Total number of staff who tested positive:	147
Total number of students who tested positive:	129
Number of new cases to report:	3
Number of new cases (students):	2
Number of new cases (staff):	1
Location of new cases:	2 in Durban & 1 in PMB
Number of recoveries: (students & staff)	262 (Students 123 & Staff 139)
Total number of deaths: (staff & students)	10 (Students 3 & Staff 7)
Total number of active cases: (staff & students)	4 (Students 2 & Staff 2)
Has contact tracing commenced for new cases?	YES
Has disinfection taken place for new cases?	YES

We pray for the safe return to good health for all those who are fighting the infection.

COVID-19 Response Task Team urges caution regarding gatherings and meetings

As mentioned in last week's statement, although the current adjusted Lockdown Level 3 'State of Disaster' regulations permit indoor gatherings of up to 50 people, the COVID-19 Response Task Team continues to urge great caution. Indoor events should only take place in well-ventilated rooms where everyone present can safely social distance by 1.5 metres in all directions. Everyone should wear a mask, and sanitise their hands at the entrance to the venue, and each person present should provide their contact details at the entrance in case contact tracing is required in the event of COVID-19 infection. Wherever possible, we recommend holding events online rather than in person as the best way to avoid COVID-19 infection.

Don't hesitate. Vaccinate!

This week, the COVID-19 Response Task Team, in partnership with the Department of Health, Higher Health and King Edward VIII Hospital, continued vaccinating staff and contract workers over the age of 35.

Exciting news from government is that vaccination against COVID-19 will open up to everyone aged 18 and over from September. Students over 18 will, therefore, be entitled to vaccination. Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is one of the most powerful ways of preventing yourself from catching COVID-19 and spreading it to other people. Even if you don't get severely ill, you could pass it on to someone who might be more vulnerable to serious illness and even death. Vaccines save lives!

Currently, anyone aged 35 or older is entitled to be vaccinated against COVID-19. To secure a vaccination appointment, please click on the following link:

<https://forms.office.com/r/gPwsb0rWDN>

Please also register on the Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS) by going to:

<https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za/#/>

You can also register using USSD, simply dial ***134*832*IDnumber#** (Please note that if you do not have a South African ID number, please dial ***134*832#**)

You can also register using WhatsApp, send the word **REGISTER** to **0600 012 3456**.

Kindly note that if you have tested positive for COVID-19, you will need to wait 30 days before vaccination, from the date of your positive test results. You should also ensure that you have informed the DUT COVID-19 Office of your positive test result. You can send your email to: covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za.

Please wait 30 days between different vaccinations, such as between a COVID-19 vaccination and a flu or hepatitis vaccination. This is to ensure the efficacy of each vaccine. If in doubt, please seek medical advice.

Some misinformation about COVID-19 and the facts

Social media and the internet are wonderful tools for finding out things and staying in touch, but they certainly have a downside. Disinformation spreads like wildfire on these platforms, resulting in confusion and misunderstandings. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this disinformation trend has been painfully apparent. The COVID-19 Response Task Team advises consulting only trusted sources for the correct information about COVID-19 and the vaccines (see Resources hereunder for links). Here is some of the misinformation currently doing the rounds:

Misinformation: COVID is a huge hoax. More people die from flu.

Truth: Flu does not kill more people than COVID. In the approximately 18 months since the beginning of the global pandemic, COVID-19 has infected more than 201 million worldwide and sadly killed 4.28 million people on our planet.

Misinformation: The COVID-19 vaccines haven't been tested properly and kill people.

Truth: The vaccines have been rigorously tested and are based on substantial work that had already been done into similar viruses and vaccines before the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Death linked to the COVID-19 vaccines is 0.0018%. A scientific study showed that in the United States and Japan, 99% of people who had died from COVID-19 had not been vaccinated. For this reason, COVID-19 is becoming known as 'the disease of the unvaccinated' in some countries.

Misinformation: Masks are dangerous and they don't work.

Truth: Mask-wearing is nothing new. Doctors and nurses have been wearing them for years without negative effects. Wu Lien Teh, in his work to control the 1910 Manchurian Plague in China, discovered that cloth masks were effective in stopping the transmission of the airborne disease. But face coverings have an even longer history. They were recommended to protect oneself from respiratory pandemics as long ago as the 14th century. Recent studies show similar results, in regions where mask usage is required and mandated, the transmission of COVID-19 is substantially reduced.

Misinformation: Herbs and vitamin/mineral supplements can cure COVID-19.

Truth: While micro-nutrients such as zinc, vitamin C and vitamin D are extremely important for a healthy immune system and optimal health, there is no evidence that they can treat or cure COVID-19. As the organism responsible for COVID-19 is a virus, and not a bacterium, it also cannot be treated with antibiotics, which only work on bacteria.

So please empower yourself with credible COVID-19 information:

<https://sacoronavirus.co.za>

<https://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/disease-index-covid-19/>

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019>

<https://www.dut.ac.za/coronavirus/>

In conclusion, we remind you to please take this pandemic seriously and to continue to behave responsibly. It is vital for us to remain extremely cautious as COVID-19 is still infecting thousands of people in our country, causing great suffering and death daily.

To this end, please opt for **ventilated spaces** instead of closed areas or crowded spaces. **Avoid gatherings, wear a mask** covering your nose and mouth securely, **stay a minimum of 1.5 metres away from all other persons, clean your hands** frequently with soap and water or with a 70% alcohol-based hand sanitiser, **disinfect** frequently touched surface areas - and **get vaccinated** against COVID-19 when your opportunity arises. We must work together to stop the spread.

Please take care and stay safe.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team

DUT COVID-19 REGULATIONS, PROTOCOLS & RESOURCES

DUT's compulsory COVID-19 guidelines

All persons on DUT property are requested to:

- Wear a mask at all times.
- Social distance by 1.5 metres from others.
- Sanitise one's hands at entrances to campus and venues

Failure to follow these guidelines could lead to disciplinary and/or criminal action.

To protect yourself and others, please also:

- Avoid crowded areas and unventilated spaces. You must avoid all gatherings, no matter how small.
- Stay at your place of residence as much as possible. Please keep contact with people outside your household to an absolute minimum.
- Avoid physical contact when interacting with others.

If you test positive for COVID-19, please inform DUT, even if you haven't been on campus

For statistical, surveillance and management purposes, all staff and students are asked to inform DUT if you test positive for COVID-19, even if you have not been on campus or been in contact with anyone from DUT. Your test results will remain confidential.

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Students in residence are asked to immediately inform your Residence Advisor. Staff members and students not in residence are requested to notify their HOD or Line Manager, who should then inform the relevant Faculty, Division or Departmental COVID-19 Response Task Team representative.

Please ensure that COVID-19 test results are emailed to Dr Stanley Onwubu at covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za.

If you think you may have COVID-19, please ...

1. Stay at home or in residence.
2. Contact the DUT Clinics for advice (see WhatsApp numbers below).
3. Inform your Residence Advisor and/or Lecturer/HOD.
4. Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
5. Treat your symptoms, e.g. take paracetamol (such as Panado) for fever and pain.
6. Wash your hands often with soap and water.
7. Cover your coughs, yawns and sneezes with your elbow, not your hand.

8. Stay away from other people to prevent them from becoming infected.
9. 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.
10. 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.

Mental health support for students and staff

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

DUT counselling services Counsbookingdbn@dut.ac.za
(for students): (Durban)

Counsellingpmb@dut.ac.za
(Midlands)

DUT counselling services ewp@dut.ac.za
(for staff):



24-hour mental health support services

Higher Health National Hotline - **0800 36 36 36 or SMS 43336**

South African Depression & Anxiety Group (SADAG) - **0800 12 13 14**

Lifeline - **0861 322 322**

South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA) for alcohol or drug dependence - **0861 17 34 22**

Important contact numbers for information and advice on COVID-19

DUT Clinics 067 370 4482 / **During office hours**

WhatsApp lines 083 783 7057

COVID-19 Hotline 0800 029 999 **24 hours**

COVID-19 WhatsApp line 0600 12 3456 **24 hours**

DUT COVID-19 Hotline 031 373 3760 / 031 373 2223 **During office hours**

Please email:

covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za



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STOP THE SPREAD