

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

11 December 2020

Dear staff and students

RISE IN COVID-19 INFECTIONS

On Wednesday this week, the Minister of Health Dr Zweli Mkhize confirmed that the second wave of the pandemic was now upon us. The Minister said that he expected faster-rising numbers, with a higher peak than we experienced in the first wave. He announced that the second wave was being driven by an increase of infections in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and in Gauteng. Sadly, a number of people have lowered their guard. Some have even refused to wear a face mask and practice poor hand hygiene. Equally concerning, we have received reports that some people have ignored physical and social distancing and even more worrying, many are meeting in large groups and attending events. The DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team pleads with you to consistently follow the published, public health guidelines: **wear your mask, wash your hands, save a life...**

Globally, more than 70.7 million people have now been infected with SARS-CoV-2. Yesterday, South Africa confirmed 8166 new infections. Last night, we were 15th in the world for new daily infections. We were 27th a week ago. So it's a rapid increase. Sadly, 173 people in South Africa passed on from COVID-19 related medical conditions yesterday.

Here are the latest COVID-19 statistics for DUT:

Total number of people infected:	150
Total number of staff (positive):	68
Total number of students (positive):	82
Total number of recoveries:	121 (63 students and 58 staff)
Total number of deaths:	2 (1 student and 1 staff)
Total number of active cases:	27
Number of new infections:	15 (this week)
Number of new infections (staff):	5 (this week)
Number of new infections (students):	10 (this week)
Location of new infections: (DBN)	13
Location of new infections: (PMB)	2
Has contact tracing commenced:	Yes
Has physical disinfection commenced:	Yes

As you will note in the stats that we have listed on the previous page, DUT has recorded its highest weekly increase in COVID-19 cases since we started collating data. We have had 15 new confirmed cases in the DUT community this week. On the positive side, we also had eight recoveries over the last seven days. We hope and pray for the safe return to good health for our staff and students who are currently fighting COVID-19.

Yesterday, **HIGHER HEALTH** wrote to all South African universities about the second wave of the COVID-19. *“Learning from previous pandemics including the Spanish Flu in 1918, we recognise subsequent waves of an epidemic are met by exhausted health systems, depleted economies and fatigued people. Let us take this learning to heart as we observe rising infection rates in many parts of South Africa. The holidays will not help in stemming the tide – but observance of proven infection control measures (physical distancing, consistent wearing of masks, hand hygiene) goes a long way to reducing the risk of spread of the virus to everyone.”*

We continue to urge all DUT students and staff to please be responsible and to wear your mask, wash your hands and to stop the spread.

The current pandemic has had physical and mental repercussions on a number of people. If you are experiencing depression, anxiety or any other emotional difficulties, please reach out for assistance. Free, compassionate, counselling and support is available to DUT staff and students as follows:

1. If you are a student and need mental health support, please contact Candice on candicel@dut.ac.za or Thokozani on thokozanis1@dut.ac.za for online counselling. You can also call 031 373 2266 in Durban or 033 845 8900/8828 in the Midlands.
2. Students should also visit this webpage on the DUT website for more information on Student Counselling and Health: https://www.dut.ac.za/support_services/student_services_and_development/student_counselling_and_health/
3. If you are a staff member, please feel free to email Samantha on rajcooms@dut.ac.za for counselling on various platforms. You can also call 031 373 2025 or email NobantuB@dut.ac.za for assistance.
4. Mental health support is available 24 hours a day to both students and staff. Please call the tollfree Higher Health national hotline on 0800 36 36 36 or SMS 43336.

To avoid congestion and delays at our campus entrances, please ensure that you always complete the **HealthCheck** online screening form before arriving on campus. There are three ways for you to access the online form:

- a. <https://healthcheck.higherhealth.ac.za>
- b. WhatsApp to contacts: 0600 110 000 / <https://wa.me/27600110000?text=hi>
- c. Dial in to HealthCheck tollfree on *134*832*2#

You can only proceed to enter campus when you have received the **green light** after completing the online form. Please show your device, permit and student/staff card to the campus security team at the entrance gate and you will then be granted access to our campus. Kindly remember that the **HealthCheck online form** must be **completed** for **each daily visit/attendance** on campus.

Please view the DUT COVID-19 webpage by clicking on this link:

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

Kindly review the DUT COVID-19 Information Booklet by clicking on this link:

<https://www.dut.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/COVID-19-Information-Booklet-07-09-2020.pdf>

COVID-19 protocols are still in place at DUT.

Whilst South Africa is currently on Alert Level 1 in the national “State of Disaster” - the DUT community must continue to take the COVID-19 pandemic very seriously.

Therefore, we want to remind you that the following rules still apply:

- Always wear a mask on campus and in communal areas in residence.
- Please keep a minimum of 1.5 metres away from other people and avoid large groups.
- Thoroughly wash your hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with water and soap.
- Sanitise frequently touched surface areas.
- Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Please sneeze, cough or yawn into your bent elbow, even if you are using a mask.
- Thoroughly wash your cloth face mask after each use.
- Disposable masks should only be used once.

So please remain alert at all times and do everything within your ability to stay safe, to wear your mask, to wash your hands, to avoid large groups and to stop the spread.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team