

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

01 April 2021

UPDATE FROM THE DUT COVID-19 RESPONSE TASK TEAM

Dear Staff and Students

As we mark the beginning of a new academic year, we once again welcome all new and returning students and staff to DUT. This is indeed an exciting time of the year and we are all keen to get on with teaching and learning. While we have cause for celebration, the COVID-19 Response Task Team wishes to make a strong appeal to every member of the DUT community to please exercise the utmost caution over the Easter weekend and beyond. The pandemic continues and South Africa remains in a “National State of Disaster.”

Illness and death from COVID-19 continues to increase across the globe and according to the experts, we have every reason to believe that South Africa could soon experience a third wave of the pandemic. To prevent unnecessary suffering, it is essential that we must take all of the necessary precautions. Even if you do not feel vulnerable, you could unknowingly spread the virus to others, who might be more seriously affected.

Here is the latest on COVID-19 statistics for the DUT community:

TOTAL NUMBER OF POSITIVE CASES:	244
TOTAL NUMBER OF STAFF WHO TESTED POSITIVE:	129
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO TESTED POSITIVE:	115
NUMBER OF NEW CASES TO REPORT:	0
NUMBER OF NEW CASES (Students):	0
NUMBER OF NEW CASES (Staff):	0
LOCATION OF NEW CASES:	Durban 0 & PMB 0
NUMBER OF RECOVERIES:	234 (112 students & 122 staff)
TOTAL NUMBER OF DEATHS:	10 (7 staff & 3 students)
TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTIVE CASES:	0 (0 staff & 0 students)
CONTACT TRACING COMMENCED FOR NEW CASES:	No new cases
DISINFECTION OF AREAS FOR NEW CASES:	No new cases

The Easter weekend and other public holidays traditionally see South Africans assembling together with family and friends. However, gatherings such as these could be lethal - when people are in close contact with others for significant periods of time, especially in crowded conditions, there is a distinct possibility that such gatherings could become 'super-spreader' events, where large numbers of people become infected with COVID-19.

Therefore, it remains of paramount importance that we all continue to practice safe social distancing by remaining at least 1.5 metres away from any other person at all times when in public, on campus or in residence. Social distancing has been shown to be highly effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19, especially when combined with wearing a mask correctly and regularly washing and cleaning our hands.

We kindly request that members of the DUT community avoid gatherings, especially large ones - and that we all rigorously adhere to the public health precautions.

Please follow the 3 Golden Rules of COVID-19 prevention in public, at gatherings and on campus:

1. **Keep a safe distance** – stay 1.5 metres or more away from other people. If someone is infected with the coronavirus, they are breathing out viral particles every time they exhale. If you stand too close to them, you might breathe in these viruses and become infected.
2. **Mask up** – wear a mask that covers your nose, mouth and chin, and avoid touching the outside of your mask without washing your hands afterwards.
3. **Be handy** – wash or sanitise your hands on entering a venue or campus, and regularly throughout the day. Washing your hands not only helps to eliminate the coronavirus but it can help to prevent you from catching colds and flu. This is especially important over the coming flu season and the winter months. Avoid shaking hands, fist bumps or touching other people - as this can easily spread viruses.

Further education and training

The COVID-19 Response Task Team's Education and Training sub-committee will shortly begin to offer webinars on different aspects of COVID-19 and its prevention. We encourage all students, whether new or returning, to attend these sessions.

If you develop symptoms of COVID-19 or test positive, please do the following:

- If you suspect you may be positive for COVID-19, or if you develop symptoms, please contact the DUT Clinics for assessment as you may need to leave campus immediately.
- The DUT Clinics can be contacted on **031 373 2223** (Durban), **033 845 8913/8966** (Indumiso) or **033 845 8811/8812** (Riverside) during office hours. They will advise you on what to do next.
- If you live in residence, please inform your Residence Advisor immediately. They will advise you accordingly. Please also inform your Head of Department or Lecturer.
- Sometimes people with COVID-19 develop severe symptoms such as difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or high fever. In this case, please call the DUT Clinic as detailed above, during office hours, or contact **0600 123 456** (via WhatsApp).
- **National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) Hotline** on **0800 029 999**; or the **COVID-19 National Call Centre** on **012 337 1997** for advice on what steps to take next.
- 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.
- If you test positive, you will be asked to list other DUT members with whom you have been in contact over the previous seven days and what DUT venues you have occupied. This is to ensure that close contacts self-isolate, and that venues are disinfected. No negative test is required for returning to campus after the 10-day quarantine period has elapsed.

If you require further advice and information:

- Please visit the DUT website COVID-19 webpage: www.dut.ac.za/coronavirus.
- For enquiries and advice on COVID-19, please email covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za or telephone the DUT COVID-19 Task Team's hotline during office hours on **031 373 3760/2223**.
- After hours, staff and students may contact **0600 123 456** (via WhatsApp)
- The National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) Hotline on **0800 029 999**.
- The COVID-19 National Call Centre on **012 337 1997**.
- For **free, 24-hour mental health support** and advice, please call the **Higher Health**, toll-free hotline on **0800 36 36 36** or **SMS 43336**.

Please complete the Higher Health tollfree digital screening tool every day

Before coming to campus, all students and staff are required to complete the HealthCheck screening tool to assess one's risk of being infected with COVID-19. Please answer the questions honestly to prevent the spread of the disease.

HealthCheck can be reached in three ways:

- USSD line: **134*832*2#**
- URL for the webform: healthcheck.higherhealth.ac.za
- WhatsApp: **0600 11 0 000** - <https://wa.me/27600110000?text=hi>

Earlier this morning, **Higher Health** confirmed that they have “*started experiencing pockets of young students becoming positive, as well as few cluster outbreaks, across our institutions, which requires us to be extremely vigilant and exercise all the necessary protocols and control measures that we have adopted to prevent COVID infections, across our campuses. We saw how rapidly South Africa was pushed into the second wave of the pandemic in December last year, following the super-spreader school-end events.*” So please, remain alert at all times and follow the COVID-19 protocols.

Yesterday, South Africa reported 1422 new COVID-19 cases. Sadly, 58 people passed on from COVID-19 related complications. We convey our condolences to the family and friends of the deceased. As of last night, there were 20992 active coronavirus cases in the country with 546 of these cases confirmed as being critical.

Finally, please have a safe Easter weekend and remember to wear your mask, wash your hands and to observe social and physical distancing. Avoid large gatherings and please remember to sanitise frequently touched surface areas. The reality is that we all have a responsibility to prevent the further spread of the disease.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team