

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

02 July 2021

Dear staff and students

DUT COVID-19 UPDATE

Yesterday, South Africa recorded 21 584 new cases of COVID-19. This comes during a week in which we surpassed the grim figure of 60 000 people who have lost their lives to COVID-19 since the pandemic began. This is a very serious situation, and requires action on the part of everyone.

As a result of the severity of infection, death, hospitalisation and positivity rates, this week President Cyril Ramaphosa returned South Africa to Adjusted Lockdown Level 4 of the COVID-19 National State of Disaster. Of particular concern, he announced, is a new variant of the coronavirus responsible for COVID-19: The Delta variant. This variant is currently spreading so rapidly and easily that it is now the dominant variant in KwaZulu-Natal and other provinces.

Here are the latest COVID-19 statistics for DUT:

Total number of people infected:	257	
Total number of staff (positive):	135	
Total number of students (positive):	122	
Total number of recoveries:	240	(116 students and 126 staff)
Total number of deaths:	10	(3 students and 7 staff)
Total number of active cases:	4	
Number of new infections:	4	(this week)
Number of new infections (staff):	2	(this week)
Number of new infections (students):	2	(this week)
Location of new infections: (DBN)	3	
Location of new infections: (PMB)	1	
Has contact tracing commenced:	Yes	
Has physical disinfection commenced:	Yes	

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

The Delta variant of SARS-Co-V-2

Viruses naturally mutate (change their structure in small ways) as a way of surviving and reproducing, and the SARS-Co-V-2 virus that is responsible for COVID-19 is no different. The result of mutation is viruses that are slightly different, and usually able to spread more easily. These are known as variants of the virus.

South Africa's second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, which peaked in January this year, was driven largely by a variant that arose in the country and is known as the Beta variant. Now, however, the situation has changed: a variant known as the Delta variant has spread to over 100 countries, and is now spreading rapidly throughout South Africa. It is now the dominant variant responsible for most infections in the country, with KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng being particularly hard hit. Gauteng hospitals are overwhelmed with severely ill people, and oxygen supplies are threatened.

The Delta variant is reported to be the most transmissible (contagious) form of the SARS-Co-V-2 virus, because it spreads very easily and rapidly from one person to another. Health officials report that much younger people are becoming infected compared with during the first and second waves, as well as entire households becoming infected.

The advent of the Delta variant necessitates 100% compliance with the COVID-19 prevention measures, and DUT staff and students are implored to:

- Wear a mask.
- Social distance by 1.5 metres.
- Sanitise hands at entrances and clean hands throughout the day.
- Avoid crowds and close contact with others outside your household for even short periods of time.

Tougher restrictions

The rapid spread of the Delta variant requires us all to strictly adhere to the new government regulations as follows: curfew is now from 21h00 to 04h00; all gatherings are banned, apart from funerals or cremations, where no more than 50 persons may attend. Organising or participating in a gathering, or failing to wear a mask in public, are now both criminal offences that could lead to jail time for offenders.

Vaccination programme opens up to over 50s

The DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team's vaccination partnership with King Edward VIII Hospital continued this week, with Faculty of Health Sciences (FOHS) staff and students, as well as staff over the age of 60, being vaccinated against COVID-19.

Yesterday, on 1 July 2021, the South African government's vaccine programme was rolled out to people in the 50 to 59 age group. If you fall into this age group and would like to be vaccinated, please follow these steps to arrange vaccination through DUT, beginning 15 July:

- Please contact the Employee Wellness Programme on ewp@dut.ac.za for inclusion in DUT's vaccination programme. Please provide your name, staff number, ID number and cellphone number.
- Please register on the Electronic Vaccination Data System (EVDS) by going to <https://vaccine.enroll.health.gov.za/#/>
- You will receive a date, time and venue for vaccination.
- Note: If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please wait 30 days before vaccination from positive test date. Please ensure that you have informed DUT of your positive test result.

If you are over 60 or a patient-facing FOHS staff member or student, you already qualify for vaccination. Simply follow the above steps now to arrange vaccination.

After both vaccinations, your risks of serious illness, hospitalisation and dying from COVID-19 will be drastically reduced. And when you are vaccinated, you are protecting not only yourself and your loved ones, but the broader community, from this life-threatening disease.

DUT staff and students who received their vaccinations 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.

Your vaccine vs natural immunity questions answered

Staff and students are invited to attend what promises to be an informative webinar on the difference between natural immunity to COVID-19 as a result of infection, and immunity acquired through vaccination.

Presenters Dr Vasanthrie Naidoo and Dr Moses Olusegun will explain these differences as well as vaccine myths and misconceptions, the new Delta variant, viral mutation and transmissibility, and much more in a

way that is easy for all of us to understand. This session is particularly important for anyone who has questions or concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines, as well as anyone interested in some of the latest COVID-19 information available. Questions will be welcome.

The webinar will take place on Monday 5 July 2021 from 14h00 to 15h00. Follow the link to join this informative session:

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_YWZiN2JIN2MtNjdmYi00ZTkxLWI5MmUtOGQ4NDczNmU0OWE4%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%224b1930d1-12f4-40b5-b48c-bd86117429d8%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%2277288147-74b7-451d-b610-21a94c9e6d49%22%7d

Important: please let DUT know if you test positive for COVID-19, 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, surveillance and management purposes. Your test results will remain confidential.

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 division COVID-19 Response Task Team representative. Test results should be emailed to covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za.

The consequences of failing to disclose COVID-19 positive test result

Any staff member or student who fails to report to DUT that they are positive for COVID-19, shall be liable for disciplinary action.

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. If you are in residence, immediately inform your Residence Advisor.

If you are sick, please stay at home

If you are not well, 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. Students should please contact the DUT Clinic (office hours) or one of the 24-hour lines for advice (see Protocols and Resources list of numbers below).

How to help stop the spread of COVID-19

With the Delta variant and the third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic upon us, we must exercise maximum vigilance and care to ensure that we do not contract or spread the virus. This is how you can help stop COVID-19:

- Wear a mask that securely covers 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. This is social or physical distancing, and it is one of the most important measures you can take to protect yourself and others.
- Keep your hands clean. Please sanitise your hands at DUT entrances and clean your hands throughout the day with either soap and water, or with a sanitiser containing 70% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands in case you spread COVID-19 to others or yourself.
- Please avoid all gatherings, face-to-face meetings and situations in which you will be in close contact with others.
- Please keep contact with people outside your household to a minimum, and stay at home whenever possible.
- 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. During the colder weather, 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.

In conclusion, daily infection rates in both South Africa and KwaZulu-Natal are alarmingly high. A return to Lockdown Level 4 restrictions is an effort to prevent infections and deaths, ie to 'flatten the curve' of the wave. Let us all practice the safety measures every single time we leave our place of residence. If we all adhere to the guidelines, we can ensure that our health care system does not become overwhelmed with very ill people. It is our responsibility to avoid gatherings of all kinds, as well as in-person meetings; to 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.

Please take care and be safe.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team



DURBAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
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PROTOCOLS & RESOURCES

1. What to 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, 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 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

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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 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.