

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

13 August 2021

COVID-19 RESPONSE TASK TEAM WEEKLY STATEMENT

Dear staff and students

South Africa reached a concerning milestone this week, one which should make us pause to review our role in preventing the further spread of COVID-19. Since March last year, 76247 people in the country have sadly passed on due to medical complications after being infected. Although South Africa is on adjusted Lockdown Level 3 in the national “State of Disaster” it must be remembered that this was primarily in place to keep the economy running and not because we were out of danger. Over 2.56 million people in the country have now been infected with COVID-19 and the seven-day average for daily infections is over 10000.

Clearly, we cannot relax our behaviour as COVID-19 is still a very real, life-threatening presence in our lives. The standard non-pharmaceutical interventions are essential: **wear a mask** in public, **physically distance** from others by 1.5 metres, **wash** and **sanitise your hands** regularly throughout the day and **avoid crowds** and poor ventilation.

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

Total number of positive cases:	283
Total number of staff who tested positive:	152
Total number of students who tested positive:	131
Number of new cases to report:	7
Number of new cases (students):	2
Number of new cases (staff):	5
Location of new cases:	5 in Durban & 2 in Pietermaritzburg
Number of recoveries:	264 (123 Students & 141 Staff)
Total number of deaths:	10 (3 Students & 7 Staff)
Total number of active cases:	9 (4 Students & 5 Staff)
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.

DUT's vaccination programme saves you time

If you are 35 or older, you are eligible for vaccination against COVID-19. You have a choice of vaccination site but if you book via DUT, you are likely to spend less time in the queue as King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban kindly gives DUT staff and health care students priority. Anyone with stable, well managed medical co-morbidities can have the COVID-19 vaccine. If you have any concerns or if your condition is not well-managed, please consult your doctor for advice and a decision.

To secure a vaccination appointment via DUT's vaccination programme, please click on the following link:
<https://forms.office.com/r/gPwsb0rWDN>

- You will be contacted with an appointment.

Before going for your vaccination, please 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#**
- If you do not have an ID number, dial ***134*832#**
- You can also register using **WhatsApp**, send the word **REGISTER** to **0600 012 3456**

If you have tested positive for COVID-19, you will need to wait 30 days before vaccination from the date of positive test. Please ensure that you have informed DUT of your positive test result.

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.

Please do not come to DUT if ...

Please do not come to campus if you have been exposed to someone who has COVID-19. Contact the Clinics, your lecturer, line manager or HOD for advice on what to do next. (See Resources list after this statement for information on what to do if you test positive or become ill).

More of the misinformation about COVID-19 in circulation

Rumours and false information about COVID-19 and the vaccines continue to do the rounds, particularly on social media. Fake information is extremely dangerous and spreading it is a criminal offence because of the risk that it poses to people.

Last week, with the help of <https://sacoronavirus.co.za>, we dispelled a few of the myths currently in circulation. Here are a few more.

Misinformation Masks don't protect you from COVID-19.

Truth Masks have been repeatedly shown in scientific studies to effectively mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Misinformation The COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous.

Truth The vaccines work with minimal risk. In South Africa, for example, nobody has died as a result of being vaccinated, even though as at 12 August 2021, over 10 million vaccines had been administered.

Misinformation The virus that causes COVID-19 hasn't even been isolated yet, so how can we have vaccines.

Truth The virus has, indeed, been isolated and is under scrutiny across the world.

Misinformation Hydrogen peroxide can cure COVID-19.

Truth Drinking any amount of hydrogen peroxide could kill you.

Misinformation The mRNA vaccines are suspect; they alter your DNA.

Truth The mRNA vaccines, such as the Pfizer vaccine, are effective against serious COVID illness, hospitalisation and death. They do not interact with or affect our DNA in any way. The mRNA (messenger RNA) in the vaccines never enters the nucleus of our cells, where our DNA is kept, and is soon eliminated from the body after it teaches the immune system to fight off COVID-19.

Misinformation The mRNA vaccines are new and we don't know enough about them.

Truth Researchers have been studying and working with mRNA vaccines for decades. Beyond vaccines, researchers have been using mRNA to trigger the immune system to target specific cancer cells in people who have cancer.

After vaccination

After you have been vaccinated against COVID-19, you will still need to follow all the standard non-pharmaceutical interventions: wear a mask, social distance by 1.5 metres, wash/sanitise your hands regularly, and avoid crowds and gatherings.

If you are vaccinated, you can still catch COVID-19, but your chances of developing severe illness, hospitalisation and dying are drastically minimised. You would probably develop mild to no symptoms, but it is possible for you to pass COVID-19 on to others. We all need to exercise 100% compliance with the regulations for the foreseeable future.

A guide to treating mild COVID-19 disease at home

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) has published an online booklet to help people experiencing mild COVID-19 disease at home. It tells you when to seek assistance; and provides breathing exercises to help strengthen the lungs. It also tells you how to strengthen your immune system, and how to relieve COVID-19 symptoms. Click on the following link for this booklet, but don't forget to inform DUT if you test positive:

<https://mailchi.mp/2b07e2bf66f8/a-step-by-step-guide-to-treating-mild-covid-19-disease-at-home?e=b914836ca0>

The current situation in KZN remains a serious concern. We had 1979 new cases confirmed yesterday and the statistics reveal that we currently have 31707 active cases in the province. The data scientists who are closely monitoring the infection rates and trends are convinced that KZN will be the next epicentre of the pandemic in South Africa. This means that if you value your health and wellbeing and want to protect your family and friends, you must act responsibly and follow the published, public health guidelines. The world class Institute for Water and Wastewater Technology (IWWT) at DUT has been providing an invaluable service in the data collection, monitoring and analysis of COVID-19 infection levels in the region. DUT published a story about the latest results announced by the IWWT:

<https://www.dut.ac.za/wastewater-analysis-by-the-institute-of-water-and-wastewater-technology-at-dut-suggests-recent-civil-unrests-in-kwazulu-natal-were-a-covid-19-super-spreader-event/>

So, here is the reality. COVID-19 remains a serious danger! To keep yourself and others safe, please opt for using and/or visiting **ventilated spaces** instead of closed and/or crowded venues. **Avoid gatherings** at all cost, **wear a mask** covering your nose and mouth securely, **stay a minimum of 1.5 metres away** from all other persons, **wash your hands** frequently with soap and water and/or use a minimum 70% alcohol-based hand sanitiser – and please, **get vaccinated** against COVID-19 when your opportunity arises.

Please take care and stay safe.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team

PS: Please read the DUT COVID-19 Regulations, Protocols and Resources information that follows on the pages below.

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 shall lead to disciplinary and/or criminal action.

To protect yourself and others, please also

- Avoid crowded, unventilated spaces, and avoid all gatherings, no matter how small.
- Stay at your place or 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 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 for Counsbookingdbn@dut.ac.za
students - during office hours (Durban)

Counsellingpmb@dut.ac.za
(Midlands)

DUT counselling services for ewp@dut.ac.za
staff - during office hours



24-hour mental health support services

Higher Health National Hotline:	0800 36 36 36 or SMS 43336
South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG):	0800 12 13 14
Lifeline:	0861 322 322

South African National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence (SANCA) for alcohol or drug dependence: 0861173422

Important contact numbers for information and advice on COVID-19

DUT Clinics WhatsApp lines 067 370 4482 or 083 783 7057 During office hours

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

Email: covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za



Resources on COVID-19 and vaccination

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Official SA government COVID-19 website <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/>

National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) <https://www.nicd.ac.za/diseases-a-z-index/covid-19/>

DUT COVID-19 webpage <https://www.dut.ac.za/coronavirus/>

**PROTECT YOURSELF
AND OTHERS
FROM CORONAVIRUS
HOW NOT TO WEAR A MASK**



Do not wear your mask under your mouth.



Do not pull your mask under your chin even to drink.



Do not wear your mask on your elbow.



Do not hang your mask from one ear.

Remember to always use proper hand hygiene before putting on and taking off your mask.

CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK NATIONAL HOTLINE:

0 800 029 999

08H00 - 16H00 (MONDAY - FRIDAY)