

UNIVERSITY STATEMENT

26 November 2021

Dear staff and students

COVID-19 RESPONSE TASK TEAM WEEKLY UPDATE

It seems that the fourth wave of the COVID-19 pandemic has commenced in Gauteng, with South Africa's other eight provinces on high alert, as the infection rate has increased substantially. This impending surge of infections will once again, require us to behave responsibly, to follow the public health guidelines and to get fully vaccinated. Yesterday, during a media briefing, the Minister of Health Dr Joe Phaahla confirmed that a new variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus has been detected in three countries, including South Africa. The other two were Botswana and Hong Kong. The identified variant has 30 new mutations and some countries, like the UK, have now banned travel from South Africa.

Professor Tulio De Oliveira, Director of the KwaZulu-Natal Research Innovation and Sequencing Platform (KRISP), said that this new variant was a "reason for concern." Researchers are referring to this variant as B.1.1.529 and the World Health Organisation (WHO) will soon give it a name. Therefore, whilst the scientists and researchers try their best to better understand the new variant, now more than ever, vaccines remain a critical tool to protect us against the severe effects of Covid and to protect our healthcare system in South Africa, from another surge in cases.

If you have not yet been vaccinated against COVID-19, we strongly urge you to please take advantage of DUT's **#VaccinationThursdays** campaign, to protect yourself and others against this potentially deadly but preventable, disease.

Please take urgent action to secure your safety and the protection of those you love by getting fully vaccinated against COVID-19. **#VaccinationThursdays** takes place every Thursday from 08h30 to 15h00, administered at the Food Court, opposite the Library, near Gate 3, on the Steve Biko campus in Durban. No appointment is necessary. Just bring your ID and your DUT student or staff card. If you would prefer the *Pfizer* vaccine over the *Johnson & Johnson* vaccine being administered, please contact covid-enquiries@dut.ac.za in advance, to make an appointment.

Students and staff from the Midlands campuses, who are due their second vaccine doses, will be informed of arrangements that are currently being finalised for vaccination in Pietermaritzburg.

Please host all end-of-year events online

The DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team formally requests and strongly recommends that all Departments, Directorates, Divisions and Faculties, must avoid in-person, contact or hybrid events until further notice. Events such as in-person, mask to mask teambuilding, retreats, strategic planning sessions, meetings, workshops and so forth should be held online. The emergence of the new variant confirms the need for a very cautious approach regarding all year end events. The DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team urges all Departments to postpone all such events, so that we further mitigate the risks associated with the imminent arrival of the fourth wave of the pandemic in KZN and the threat of the new variant.



VACCINES SAVE LIVES STOP THE SPREAD

Don't hesitate. Vaccinate!

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Wearing a mask reduces COVID-19 the infection rate

A new peer-reviewed study that was recently published in the highly credible **British Medical Journal** (<https://www.bmj.com/content/375/bmj-2021-068302>) has found that, apart from getting fully vaccinated, wearing a mask is the most effective tool that we have against COVID-19. After analysing evidence from 72 global studies, the new study found that the basic non-pharmaceutical public health measures of wearing a mask, social distancing and good hand hygiene, were all very effective at lowering infection rates. Importantly, wearing a mask reduces the number of new COVID-19 infections by a massive 53%.

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If we constantly follow these tried and tested non-pharmaceutical measures and if we are fully vaccinated against COVID-19, DUT will be able to consider hosting in-person lectures and tutorials and even graduation ceremonies. So let's act responsibly and limit the spread of the expected fourth wave of the pandemic.

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

TOTAL NUMBER OF POSITIVE CASES:	313
TOTAL NUMBER OF STAFF WHO TESTED POSITIVE:	168
TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO TESTED POSITIVE:	145
NUMBER OF NEW CASES TO REPORT:	0
NUMBER OF NEW CASES (Students):	0
NUMBER OF NEW CASES (Staff):	0
LOCATION OF NEW CASES:	0 Durban & 0 PMB
NUMBER OF RECOVERIES:	302 (141 students & 161 staff)
Total Number of Deaths:	11 (3 students & 8 staff)
Total Number of Active cases:	0 (0 students & 0 staff)
HAS CONTACT TRACING COMMENCED FOR NEW CASES:	No new reported cases this week.
HAS DISINFECTION OF AREAS COMMENCED FOR NEW CASES:	No new reported cases this week.

We are extremely grateful that there were no new cases reported in the DUT community this week.

In conclusion, please continue to mask up, observe social and physical distancing guidelines and wash or sanitise your hands regularly. If you are still unvaccinated, please get vaccinated as soon as possible. If we all take this action, we can limit the further spread of COVID-19 and ultimately, save more lives in our country.

Sincerely

DUT COVID-19 Response Task Team

#DUTGetYourJob

#DUTGettingBackToNormal