

PROTOCOL FOR CLUSTER OUTBREAKS OF COVID-19 IN THE WORK, STUDY OR STUDENT ACCOMMODATION SPACES AT UP

1. Background:

With the advent of Level 1 of Lockdown on 21 September 2020, and the concomitant return of significant numbers of staff and students to the work, study and student accommodation spaces of the University of Pretoria (UP), it is to be expected that the institution will be confronted by increased incidences of Covid-19 infection. Consequently, protocols must be in place to deal not only with individual incidents of infection (which protocols are already in place and have been reviewed and revised appropriately) but also where these infections take place in clusters. A specific response is required to minimise the risk of further transmission of the virus in such cases and to contain the outbreak as quickly and efficiently as possible in the interests of the health and safety of the entire UP community.

This protocol regulates cluster outbreaks and is aligned with the Higher Health *Protocol on Managing Clusters of Outbreak of COVID-19 within Post-School Education and Training (PSET)* Institutions of 10 September 2020, (the Higher Health Protocol) which protocol was developed to supplement the *Guidelines for Post-School Education and Training (PSET) Institutions for management of and response to the COVID-19* of 30 April 2020 and to support institutions in resuming their usual pre-Covid-19 activities in accordance with the government's intent in terms of relaxation of the lockdown, first to level 2 and now to level 1.

This protocol should be applied in conjunction with the following protocols already in place at institutional level:

**Protocol for reporting symptoms of Covid-19 at work/ during study on UP campus;
Protocol for Employees/Students who have tested positive for COVID-19; and
Protocol for return to campus after being placed in isolation or quarantine.**

In this protocol, the terms contact, close contact, quarantine, isolation and the like will be ascribed the same meaning as in other protocols and will not be redefined here.

Although the Higher Health protocol deals both with cases where a student or staff member has been exposed to a person with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 or has COVID-19 symptoms and with a cluster outbreak of confirmed positive COVID-19 cases occurring at the same specified time, on campus, this UP protocol will only deal with the latter as the abovementioned protocols deal with the former.

2. Definitions:

2.1. Cluster:

"In general, a cluster is an aggregation of cases grouped in place and time that are suspected to be greater than the number expected, even though the expected number may not be known. For COVID-19, a cluster occurs on campus when > 2 individuals with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 are identified within seven days in the same class or lecture hall, student group, or between individuals working in the same area on a campus" (Higher Health *Protocol on Managing Clusters of Outbreak of COVID-19 within Post-School Education and Training (PSET)* Institutions of 10 September 2020 (From the Higher Health Protocol)).

In other words, where multiple students and or staff become Covid-19 positive at the same time and place, creating a significant risk to the health and safety of the broader UP community.

2.2. Cluster Investigation Team:

The Cluster Investigation team will comprise of the campus COVID-19 task team, at UP this is the Workplace Safety Committee, and the relevant compliance manager, in collaboration with representatives of Higher Health, the Department of Health and the NICD. This team will develop the appropriate response to a cluster outbreak or multiple cluster outbreaks.

2.3. Outbreak:

An outbreak is where 2 or more persons are likely to have contracted the virus from the same person.

The terms outbreak and cluster are used interchangeably, for instances where two or more students in the same class or student group or two or more staff who work together or two or more staff or students who travel together test positive for Covid-19 within seven days of each other in circumstances where they suspect that the source of infection was the same person.

3. Steps to be followed in case of cluster outbreaks:

As in all instances where any staff member or student experiences the sudden onset of symptoms whilst on a UP campus or facility, such staff member or student must immediately report this to the Control Centre on the emergency number that appears on the back of all staff or student cards in accordance with the appropriate protocol.

The Control Centre is staffed 24/7 and the officer on duty will contact the appropriate compliance manager for the campus, department or Faculty who will record the name of the Control Centre officer who took the call and the information collected by the Control Centre. In the case of Residence staff or students in UP residences, UP private accommodation or UP accredited accommodation, Ms B Liebenberg must also be notified.

Where it becomes clear to the compliance manager that more than once case has arisen amongst the same student group, or class, staff who work together or amongst persons who travel together, within a period of seven days, the Compliance Manager will alert the University Compliance Officer and Chair of the Workplace Safety Committee who will then immediately consult with Local and district health officials to discuss the situation and initiate any necessary contact tracing.

The Chair of the Workplace Safety Committee will notify the Workplace safety Committee, the DHET and Higher Health which will then activate the COVID 19 Cluster Investigation Team.

4. Multiple cluster outbreaks:

It is possible that more than one cluster outbreak may occur at the University at the same time. These cluster outbreaks may be on various campuses or in various spaces. In such cases the Chair of the Workplace Safety Committee will discuss the outbreaks with the representatives of the DoH as above.

The WSC will work with the Department of Institutional Advancement and the Office of the Vice Chancellor and Principal, to draft an appropriate communication to alert the UP Community to any risk of exposure.

Communications must maintain the confidentiality of individuals who may have been infected with the virus.

UP and its campuses, facilities and accommodations will remain open as far as possible. Should clusters be of such a nature that any closure of part or all of the University is contemplated, a final decision to close will only be made in consultation with the Department of Health.

In the event of cluster infections, more stringent social distancing and other preventative interventions may be introduced to ensure the health and safety of the UP Community, which remains UP's primary consideration. These interventions may include closure of specific facilities, temporary suspension of contact session, cancellation or postponement of events, etc.

Close contacts will be required to quarantine or self-isolate for 10 days after exposure.

To facilitate contact tracing, all members of the UP Community are strongly encouraged to download the COVID Alert SA App to their smartphones.