



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
Office of the Registrar

COVID-19 Policy

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Preamble

Section 8 of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 “OHSA” requires every employer to provide and maintain, as far as reasonably practicable, a working environment that is safe and without risks to the health of its employees. Similarly, the OHSA also imposes a duty on employees to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of their fellow employees.

Information pertaining to COVID-19 is being provided by various authorities on a regular basis and it is important to ensure that updates are obtained and disseminated throughout the organisation. Official communication channels should be used to limit, as far as possible, the sharing of information, the accuracy of which has not been appropriately verified with credible sources such as the World Health Organisation “WHO” and the National Institute for Communicable Diseases “NICD”. The spreading of unverified information may contribute to unnecessary panic, stigma and discrimination and undermine efforts to create social solidarity and cohesion in the face of this global health challenge.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure a safe work and study environment for all employees, students, contractors, visitors, suppliers and members of the public (hereinafter referred as “the UP Community”) and to prevent the spread of “COVID-19”.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to the UP Community and all members of the said Community are accordingly required to follow its prescripts in the effort to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and secure, as far as possible, a healthy and safe work and study environment.
- 2.2 It is important that the UP Community responds in a responsible and transparent manner to these health precautions.

3. Policy statement

- 3.1 The health and safety of the UP Community is the priority of the University, and it will take all necessary steps to mitigate the risks to the Community arising from possible exposure to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19).
- 3.2 The UP Community is required to take reasonable care of their personal health and safety, as well as the health and safety of other members of the UP Community and the public at large.
- 3.3 The University will take reasonable steps to ensure that staff members are not discriminated against on grounds of having tested positive for COVID-19 in terms of section 6 of the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 and its policy in this regard.

4. Interpretation

If any provision in this Policy may be in conflict with any applicable legislation, such legislation shall enjoy precedence.

5. Compliance and consequences of non-compliance

- 5.1 The UP Community has an obligation to familiarise themselves with the provisions of this Policy and with any Protocol(s) and Plans issued by the University from time to time in relation to COVID-19 and ensure that they comply with the letter, as well as the spirit of the Policy, Protocols and Plans.
- 5.2 Every line manager, head of academic Department, Dean of a Faculty and Director of a support service Department or Head of a Unit is responsible to provide guidance to the members of the UP Community in respect of the application of this Policy.
- 5.3 The UP Community is also required to report any alleged transgressions of this Policy.
- 5.4 Any breach of this Policy and/or Protocol(s) issued in relation hereto, will be regarded as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.
- 5.5 Penalties for breach of the Policy and/or Protocol(s), may range from a verbal warning to dismissal in extreme cases. In the case of employees and in respect of students, the provisions of the applicable disciplinary code and procedures will apply.
- 5.6 The provisions contained in paragraph 5.4 above do not preclude the University from instituting appropriate legal action or otherwise against any member of the UP community who transgresses the provisions of this Policy and/or Protocol(s) issued in relation thereto.

6. How does COVID-19 spread?

- 6.1 COVID-19 is most likely to spread when there is close contact (1.5 metres or less) with an infected person. It is probable that the more extended the period of exposure to an infected person, the higher the risk of becoming infected. Contaminated droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes are the main means of transmission. There are two main routes by which people can spread COVID-19:
- 6.2 Infection may be spread to people who are nearby as droplets are inhaled into the lungs.
- 6.3 It is also possible that someone may become infected by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

7. Primary symptoms of COVID-19

- 7.1 The following symptoms may develop in the 14 to 21 days after exposure to someone who has COVID-19 infection (Please note this list is not exhaustive):
- Dry cough
 - Sore throat
 - Shortness of breath/difficulty in breathing
 - Body aches
 - Loss of smell
 - Loss of taste
 - Nausea

- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Fatigue
- Weakness
- Nasal congestion

7.2 Infections may cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems such as those with Tuberculosis or HIV, older people and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung, kidney or liver disease. These chronic conditions are termed co-morbidities and those with co-morbidities are classified, along with women who are over 28 weeks pregnant and persons over the age of 60, as vulnerable persons.

7.3 Staff members and students who have co-morbidities are encouraged to disclose these to the University. The information will be important in minimising their risk of exposure. All disclosures will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

8. What to do if symptoms are developed

8.1 People who contract COVID-19 may take anywhere from one to twenty-one days to develop symptoms.

8.2 Thus, members of the UP Community should consult their healthcare provider if they present with a fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing, even if they do not have a history of travel to a COVID-19 affected region or contact with an individual who has tested positive for the illness.

8.3 Note that some people become infected but do not develop any symptoms and do not feel unwell.

9. Hotline for the COVID-19 as per the Department of Health website

9.1 Save for Staff members who experience COVID-19 symptoms between 1 to 3 days after COVID-19 vaccination, Staff members should immediately notify their line manager(s) / supervisor(s) and stay at home if they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, are sick and / or have been booked off.

9.2 All persons who experience any COVID-19 symptoms, especially in circumstances where they have been in contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19, are encouraged to test for COVID-19.

9.3 All staff members should follow the University's sick leave policy in such situations.

9.4 If the University has reason to suspect that a Staff member has been infected with COVID-19 or if a Staff member becomes ill at work and displays COVID-19 symptoms (save in respect of staff members who are symptomatic between 1 and 3 days after having been vaccinated for COVID-19), the University may request the Staff member to leave the workplace and seek medical treatment and/or testing immediately, before permitting the Staff member to re-enter the workplace to report to work.

9.5 Students and / or Staff members who develop symptoms of COVID-19 whilst on a University campus should immediately contact the Control Room on the emergency number that appears on the back of the student or staff card. The number operates on a 24/7 basis and the person on duty will advise the student or staff member of next steps.

9.6 Students in residences or University accommodation should notify their respective Heads of Residence.

10. Vaccination of employees

10.1 The University encourages all staff to vaccinate.

10.2 To this end, the University:

10.2.1 will counsel Staff members on the issues relating to vaccines, including but not limited to the nature of vaccines used in the Country, the benefits and contraindications of vaccines and the nature and risk of serious side-effects; 10.2.2. will permit Staff members, upon request, to consult a health and safety representative, a trade union official or worker representative;

10.2.2 will, as far as reasonably possible, provide administrative support to staff members to register and to access their COVID-19 vaccination certificates on the EVDS Portal for SARS-CoV-215;

10.2.3 will, give the relevant Staff member paid time off to be vaccinated and provide transport to and from the nearest vaccination site to the extent that this may be reasonably possible;

10.2.4 may require of Staff members to disclose their vaccination status and to produce a vaccination certificate.

10.3 If a Staff member suffers a vaccine adverse event that renders him / her unable to work, the University will:

10.3.1 On receipt of a medical certificate, give the Staff member paid time off to a maximum of 7 (seven) calendar days to recover if such Staff member has no more sick leave to his/her credit, where after the Staff member would be required to take unpaid leave;

10.3.2 Subject to any regulations in respect of a COVID-19 Vaccine Injury No-Fault Compensation scheme, lodge a claim for compensation in terms of COIDA.

10.4 If a Staff member is required to be vaccinated as per the requirements of the Risk Assessment Plan, but refuses to be vaccinated the University will:

10.4.1 Counsel the Staff member and such allow such Staff member (upon request) to seek guidance from health and safety representative, worker representative or trade union official;

- 10.4.2 Take steps to reasonably accommodate the Staff member in a position that does not require the Staff member to be vaccinated;
- 10.4.3 If a Staff member produces a medical certificate attesting that the staff member has contra-indications for vaccination, consider referring the Staff member for a medical evaluation for confirmation at the University's expense;
- 10.4.4 If the University accepts the medical certificate / the independent evaluation confirms that the Staff member has contra-indications for vaccinations, attempt to reasonably accommodate the Staff member in a position that does not require him/her to be vaccinated.

11 Isolation and working from home

- 11.1 The University will continuously work with the relevant local or provincial department of health and other relevant authorities to communicate with the UP Community with regards to the infection, in accordance with the institutional communication plan, maintaining the confidentiality of any infected person.
- 11.2 In severe cases, closure of all or some of the University facilities may be considered or, in less severe cases, social distancing measures may be increased, and other mitigating measures introduced. Decisions with regards to the appropriate response will be made in consultation with health officials, bearing in mind that the health and safety of the UP Community remain the UP priority.
- 11.3 Where staff members have tested positive for COVID-19 and are asymptomatic, they are encouraged to stay at home for a period of five (5) days following the COVID positive test and not to attend at the workplace. This is to protect fellow staff members and students who may be at risk of contracting the virus from them. In such cases, Line Managers should facilitate work from home as far as possible.
- 11.4 Where staff members have tested positive for COVID-19 and are symptomatic and are accordingly, required to isolate in terms of the relevant Protocol issued by the University in relation thereto, the following principles will apply:
 - 11.4.1 If the staff member is able to work from home during this period, then there is no requirement to submit a sick leave or annual leave request. The staff member may apply for official leave. The staff member is, however, required to report daily to his/her line manager.
 - 11.4.2 Should the staff member be unable to work from home due to illness or otherwise, the provisions relating to sick leave as per the leave policy of the University will apply.
 - 11.4.3 If the Staff member's sick leave entitlement has been exhausted, his/her line manager may submit an application to the Department of Human Resources for consideration of submission of a claim for an illness benefit in terms of section 20 of the Unemployment Insurance Act, 2001 (Act No. 63 of 2001);

11.4.4 If there is evidence that a staff member contracted COVID-19 arising out of and in the course of employment, the University, through its Human Resources Department, will lodge a claim for compensation in terms of the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 130 of 1993, in accordance with Notice No. 629 published on 22 October 2019.

12 Travel

12.1 Members of the UP Community are required to abide by the regulations with regards to travel, promulgated from time to time by the Government.

12.2 All non-essential travel, particularly on public transport, is discouraged.

12.3 Where public transport is unavoidable, members of the UP Community are encouraged to abide by all hygiene regulations with regards to the wearing of face masks, sanitisation, social distancing and the like.

13 Meetings

Staff members are encouraged to consider the following with regards to meetings:

13.1 whether a face-to-face meeting or event is needed and whether or not it might be possible to host it by way of a teleconference or on an electronic platform;

13.2 where a physical meeting is preferred, the number of participants in the meeting should be limited to the absolute minimum;

13.3 all meeting attendees are encouraged to wear a face mask or a homemade item that covers the nose and mouth when entering and inside the venue;

13.4 facilities must be made available in the venue to allow for hand sanitisation before the meeting;

13.5 such social distancing measures between meeting attendees as may be contained in the Risk Assessment Plan of UP applicable at the relevant time should be followed; alternatively in the absence of such measures, social distancing between meeting attendees is encouraged, to the extent that this may be reasonably possible;

13.6 ensuring that the venue is well ventilated as per ventilation provisions hereunder; and

13.7 ensuring that, at times when there may be a sudden rise of Covid-19 cases, an appropriate record of the names and contact details of all participants in the meeting is taken and retained and informing all participants in the meeting if a participant tested positively for COVID-19 shortly after the meeting as required by prevailing regulations.

14 Hygiene in the workplace

14.1 All members of the UP Community are encouraged to wear face masks or a homemade item that covers the nose and mouth when accessing buildings on UP premises.

- 14.2 Hand sanitisers will be available at all key entrances to UP premises.
- 14.3 Coughs and sneezes must be covered with a tissue and the tissue must be disposed of in a suitable waste bin.
- 14.4 In the absence of a tissue, persons should cough or sneeze into their elbow.
- 14.5 Hugging, shaking of hands or other close physical contact are discouraged.
- 14.6 Frequently touched objects, including workstations and surfaces, must be cleaned and disinfected using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe. Cleaning of the environment is an important measure in preventing the spread of the virus. It is easily destroyed by most common household cleaning agents. Thus, all surfaces that people come into contact with should be cleaned regularly. This is especially important in respect of communal areas and facilities such as toilets and other ablutions, high-contact areas such as toilet handles, taps, door handles, telephones, desk surfaces, staircase railings, lift buttons, light switches, window latches and the like.
- 14.7 Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through but has spent very little time, for example, corridors, and which are not reasonably, visibly contaminated do not need to be specially cleaned and disinfected.
- 14.8 If a person becomes ill in a work area or shared space, such area or space should be specially cleaned and disinfected and all waste that has been in contact with the individual should be bagged and disposed of in accordance with Higher Health Guidelines.
- 14.9 All persons should wash their hands regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom, before eating and after blowing their noses, coughing, or sneezing.
- 14.10 If soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol-based hand sanitiser with at least 70% alcohol content must be used.

15 Wearing of face masks

- 15.1 The wearing of face masks or a homemade item covering the mouth and nose is recommended when entering any building and/or when inside any building or workspace and when utilising public transport.

16 Seminars, training and conferences

- 16.1 Gatherings will be permitted in accordance with the restrictions imposed by prevailing COVID-19 Regulations and / or in line with the provisions of the University's Risk Assessment Plan
- 16.2 As UP does not have a vaccine rule and does not require participants in gatherings to produce a valid vaccination certificate or a valid certificate of a negative Covid-19 test which was obtained not more than 72 hours before the date of a gathering, the attendance of the

indoor gathering shall be limited to 1000 people or only 50% of the venue capacity, whichever is the smaller.

- 16.3 As UP does not have a vaccine rule and does not require participants in gatherings to produce a valid vaccination certificate or a valid certificate of a negative Covid-19 test which was obtained not more than 72 hours before the date of a gathering, the attendance of the outdoor gathering shall be limited to 2000 people or 50% of the venue capacity, whichever is smaller.
- 16.4 No gatherings in excess of permitted numbers will be allowed. Where gatherings take place, all health and safety measures must be exercised and the venue should be ventilated as per the provisions hereunder.
- 16.5 Should there be a sudden escalation in positive cases nationally, seminars, training or conferences, should take place on electronic platforms as far as possible. In such circumstances, staff and students are encouraged to limit their attendance of external seminars and training sessions and conferences that require physical attendance as far as possible.
- 16.6 The University reserves the right to vary access requirements for participation in gatherings where a vaccination certificate or a valid certificate of a negative Covid-19 test which was obtained not more than 72 hours is required in terms of revised national regulations, where a sport or similar code sets this as a requirement for attendance of and participation in, certain sporting events and where UP hosts events of external parties or funded by external parties who require same.
- 16.7 The University is bound by any national regulations and sectoral determinations that may be promulgated.

17 Ventilation

The University will:

- 17.1. Keep the workplace well-ventilated by natural or mechanical means where possible; and
- 17.2. Identify areas usually occupied and poorly ventilated and take all reasonable measures to improve ventilation through opening of doors, windows and vents or by using fans, air conditioners or mechanical ventilation.

18. Specific Personal Protective Equipment (“PPE”)

The University will issue Staff members with PPE if required on the basis of the nature of their duties.

19. Roles and responsibilities:

UP COVID-19 Officer The Registrar will be the UP COVID-19 Officer who will be supported by Compliance Managers on the various UP campuses so as to ensure compliance across the entire institution. The Compliance Officer and Managers will ensure the implementation of and

adherence to this Policy and the Legislation, Regulations and/or Guidelines as set out below. A Workplace Safety Committee has been formed to assist, where necessary, with the implementation of and adherence to Standard Operating Procedures for the risk mitigation of COVID-19 in the workplace.

The Workplace Safety Committee This Committee will be responsible for overseeing the development of a Risk Assessment Plan for the institution.

20. Associated documents

20.1 Legislation, Regulations and Guidelines

- National Health Act 61 of 2003;
- Government Notice No. 46048 15 March 2022 – National Health Act, 2003: Regulations relating to the surveillance and the control of notifiable medical conditions: Amendment;
- Government Notice No. 46319 4 May 2022 – National Health Act, 2003: Regulations relating to the surveillance and the control of notifiable medical conditions: Amendment
- Covid-19 Occupational Health and Safety Measures in Workplaces Covid-19 (C19 OHS);
- Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993;
- Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 130 of 1993 read with Notice No. 629 published on 22 October 2019; Government Notice No. 46593 of 24 June 2002: The Code of Practice: Managing Exposure to SARS-COV-2 in the Workplace; and
- Government Notice No. R1887 of 2022, 16 March 2022: Regulations for Hazardous Biological Agents.

20.2 University policies

- Code of Conduct for Employees;
- Disciplinary Code and Procedure for Staff Members;
- Disciplinary Code for Students;
- Leave Regulations; and
- Anti-discrimination policy.

21 Policy life cycle

This policy is susceptible to changes with the introduction of additional and/or amended governmental guidelines and/or regulations and accordingly, will be updated as, and when, required.

22 Document metadata

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