



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

COVID-19: UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA GUIDELINES ON THE MANAGEMENT OF EMPLOYEES WITH COMORBIDITIES AND MANAGEMENT OF APPLICABLE LEAVE WHERE RISK OF EXPOSURE HAS BEEN DETECTED

1. Introduction

These guidelines are developed to provide line managers and employees with the procedure to follow in managing employees with comorbidities during the return to work of staff, and for managing precautionary isolation against the backdrop of COVID-19.

The guidelines will remain applicable depending on the trajectory of the COVID 19 pandemic, availability of a vaccine, further guidance from the State or until the University Executive decides otherwise based on material facts on the ground.

2. Definition of employees with comorbidities

Employees with comorbidities are defined as those with (i) chronic lung disease, (ii) diabetes (poorly controlled) or with late complications, (iii) moderate/severe hypertension, (iv) serious heart conditions, (v) chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis, and (vi) chronic liver disease including cirrhosis. Employees with severe obesity (body mass index [BMI] of 40 or higher), those who are immunocompromised as a result of cancer treatment, bone marrow or organ transplantation, immune deficiencies, poorly controlled HIV or AIDS, prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications, and those who are 28 weeks pregnant or more.

3. Process relating to declaration of comorbidities

Step 1:

All employees must return to work on the date and time they are advised by the line manager to do so, remain on duty and perform responsibilities in accordance with agreed work standards subject to the University's protocols on the management of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Step 2:

Any employee who is unable to return to work due to illness or on any medical grounds, is obliged to formally declare this to the University (line manager) in writing by completing a prescribed form about any comorbidity which the University must consider and must on his/her return to work provide such affidavit and apply for official absence leave (other) covering the prescribed duration of absence from work.

Step 3:

Employees who are over the age of 60 are encouraged to work from home, provided the nature of their work makes it possible to do so and further, that they do have comorbidities.

Step 4:

Employees declaring comorbidities must provide adequate medical confirmation of the condition, which includes a medical note and or report from the medical practitioner who manages the condition. Such declaration of comorbidities must be done annually.

Step 5:

If the employee provides no or inadequate medical confirmation, the line manager must after consultation with the Manager: Employee Wellness, HRBP and the Deputy Director Employee Relations and Wellness refer the employee for a medical/or

further medical assessment at the UP Faculty of Health Sciences or an identified medical practitioner appointed by the University at its cost¹.

Step 6:

If approved, the line manager must refer the employee for medical assessment which must establish whether the person is at an increased risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus and becoming seriously ill as a consequence of the comorbidities, should they return to work.

Step 7:

The only information to be provided will be about the existence/non-existence of a comorbidity that poses an increased risk of that employee returning to work and feedback provided to the Manager: Employee Wellness. *No other confidential or other medical information will be shared or requested.*

Steps	Process	By Whom
1	All employees must return work on the date and time they are advised by the line manager to do so, remain on duty and perform responsibilities in accordance with agreed work standards subject to the University's protocols on the management of COVID-19 in the workplace;	All Employees
2	Any employee who is unable to return to work due to illness or on any medical grounds, is obliged to formally declare it to the University (line manager) in writing by completing a prescribed form about any comorbidity which the University must consider and must on his/her return to work provide such affidavit and apply for official absence leave (other) covering the prescribed duration (10 days) of absence from work;	Employees
3	Employees who are over the age of 60 are encouraged to work from home provided the nature of their work makes it possible to do so and, further, that they do have comorbidities;	Employee over 60 years of age
4	Employees declaring comorbidities must provide adequate medical confirmation of the condition. Such declaration of comorbidities will be done annually;	Declaring employees

¹ "Inadequate medical confirmation" for this purpose means official medical certification which does not state the employee's comorbidity and whether the employee has a comorbidity that poses an increased risk of that employee returning to work which process will be conducted on a case by case basis.

5	If the employee provides no or inadequate medical confirmation, the line manager must after consultation with the Manager: Employee Wellness and the Deputy Director: Employee Relations & Wellness refer the employee for a medical/or further medical assessment at the UP Medical School or an identified medical practitioner appointed by the University at its cost;	Line Manager (Manager Wellness/Deputy Director: Employee Relations and Wellness)
6	If approved, the line manager must refer the employee for medical assessment which must establish whether the person is at an increased risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus and becoming seriously ill as a consequence of the comorbidities, should they return to work.	Line Manager/Declaring Employee/Medical Practitioner
7	The only information to be provided will be about the existence/non-existence of a comorbidity that poses an increased risk of that employee returning to work and feedback provided to the Manager: Employee Wellness. <i>No other confidential or other medical information will be shared or requested.</i>	Line Manager/Manager Wellness/HRBP

4. Management of employees with comorbidities

4.1 Employees with comorbidities that do not place them at risk in respect of returning to the workplace must return to work under strict compliance with COVID-19 protocols adopted by the University;

4.2 Employees with comorbidities that place them at risk in respect of returning to the workplace must be provided with alternatives to reduce the risk in consultation with the Departmental Director, Dean of the Faculty and the Human Resources Business Partner (HRBP) responsible for the relevant area of operation;

4.3 Alternatives may include, but are not limited to:

- 4.3.1 Productively working from home where possible,
- 4.3.2 Providing the employee with own office space,
- 4.3.3 Providing additional/specialised PPE (affordability considered) as may be specified/recommended by the UP Health and Safety Office,
- 4.3.4 Ensuring more deep cleaning/sanitising, and/or
- 4.3.5 Providing for rotational work at shared workspaces where feasible.

4.4 Reasonable accommodation;

- 4.4.1 Temporary redeployment,
- 4.4.2 Temporary change or reassignment of duties,
- 4.4.3 Reduced working hours with reduced pay.
- 4.4.4 Unpaid leave.

5. 'No-fault' termination

Where the procedures and processes established above do not accommodate the return to work, or resumption of productivity of the employee from the reviewed position, or if the employee does not agree to such accommodations, the University will:

- advise and guide the employee on an opportunity to invoke a Temporary or Permanent Disability Benefit with the University's insurers, and
- in the event of unpaid leave or medical boarding being declined, the University may elect to proceed with an incapacity enquiry.

6. Applicability of leave in the case of precautionary isolation

- 6.1 Employees who have been put under precautionary isolation following suspected exposure to the COVID-19 virus must provide proof of such directive and apply for official leave of absence (other);
- 6.2 Employees who are self-isolating must provide to the University (even if asymptomatic) an affidavit confirming their suspected exposure to the virus, the area/place of exposure, and date of exposure, and advise the University if, during that time, they came into contact with any UP colleagues;
- 6.3 Employees who have been placed under precautionary isolation at the request of management/are self-isolating who develop symptoms will be required to submit themselves to a COVID-19 test at designated testing facilities and should they receive results confirming they are positive for COVID-19, they will be

required to immediately advise the line manager and apply for sick leave covering the duration of absence from work.

- 6.4 Following the declaration (which may be done telephonically after awareness) at 6.2 above, the employee must on his/her return to work provide such affidavit and apply for official absence leave (other) covering the prescribed duration (10 days) of absence from work.

7. Indemnity

In instances where employees with confirmed comorbidities choose to return to the physical workplace, such an employee will sign a prescribed form indemnifying the University from any risk that might arise.

8. Human Resources Department Support

The Department of Human Resources will support the implementation of the guidelines through the Human Resource Business Partners (HRBPs) and the Employee Relations Division.