

## MANAGING STUDENTS WITH COVID-19 SYMPTOMS DURING EXAMS

It is considered necessary to address the following two scenarios when students are writing exams:

- A). A scenario where a student indicates **during** an exam that he / she is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, as well as
- B). A scenario where a student becomes ill **after** an exam with a suspected / confirmed case of COVID-19.

Based on information provided by Higher Health as well as directives provided by the National Department of Health as well as the Department of Employment and Labour the below protocol / guideline has been developed to manage these two scenarios.

### A. SCENARIO WHERE A STUDENT INDICATES **DURING** AN EXAM THAT HE / SHE IS EXPERIENCING COVID-19 SYMPTOMS

#### 1. Management of the student

- If a student indicates that they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms while writing an exam then the exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor must take immediate charge of the situation. The person should promptly be asked to leave the exam venue as soon as possible and be taken to a separate room or area away from all other students. Call Campus Health and Wellness Centre to assist in managing the situation.
- If immediate assistance is required, the number of people administering such care to the student must be limited to the absolute minimum.
- Those assisting must wear a face mask and any other personal protective equipment that is required.
- Once immediate care has been administered, the responders should ensure that they follow all appropriate hand washing and self-sanitisation routines.
- Regarding the affected exam room: Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- Immediately ascertain:
  - i. If emergency care (including resuscitation) is required, take urgent steps to summon such help by calling Campus Health and Wellness Centre (and, if considered necessary also an emergency health care practitioner, ambulance, etc.) while at the same time assuming that the ill / affected person may have COVID-19.
  - ii. If the person is able to respond to questions, the invigilator / supervisor / medical responder should enquire if the affected person has symptoms that indicates that he / she may have COVID-19. The specific symptoms to consider are: fever, cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing, generalised body pain or flu-like symptoms, recent chest infection, pneumonia and, recent contact with a person with COVID-19 or flu-like symptoms. If any of these symptoms / conditions are present, or if it is not possible to ascertain if these symptoms are present, then further management must be based on the assumption that the person has COVID-19.
  - iii. If there is a possibility that the affected person's symptoms are due to COVID-19, the exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor should continue to ensure (and if necessary instruct) that the person remains in an isolated place and is wearing a face mask. If such a self-isolation facility is not available in close proximity to the exam venue then the staff member / student should be advised to access care at an off-campus Healthcare Facility for further medical examination / management if they are able to do so safely and without placing other people at risk. If the student is safely capable of doing so without placing other people at risk of exposure, then he / she should leave the Campus and proceed to a place where he / she will be able to self-isolate. He / she should then be advised to seek care from their usual healthcare provider (ideally initially by telephone).

- iv. If the student is not in a position to leave Campus safely by him/her self, then arrangements must be made for the student to be transported, in a manner that does not place other persons at risk, to an off-Campus Healthcare Facility by using appropriate ambulance services.
- v. In all instances, Campus Health and Wellness Centre must be informed of the situation. In doing so it will be necessary to provide the name and condition of the person. Campus Health and Wellness staff may in return give advice or specific instructions that must be followed.
- vi. The exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor and Campus Health and Wellness Centre staff should stay in touch with the student on a regular basis to continue offering appropriate University support and assistance.
- vii. If there is a possibility that the affected person's symptoms are due to COVID-19, the exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor should inform Campus Protection Services regarding the student number to ensure that the necessary access control measures are actioned.

## 2. Identification and management of contacts

- The exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor should attempt to reasonably assess as best as possible the level of exposure to other students (and staff) in the exam venue and specifically students and/or staff that may have had sustained contact with the index case for more than 15 minutes, and within 2 metres of the index case.
- If the contact tracing indicates that other persons may have been exposed then the Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor must determine for each contact case whether the exposure was low risk or high risk. The exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor would reasonably assess as best as possible which persons in the exam venue are low risk and which are high risk (while taking into consideration that all students would be wearing masks and seated at least 2 metres from each other in all directions, whether hand sanitising was done, whether ventilation was effective, etc.).
- **Low risk contact exposure** is generally regarded as instances where there was no face to face contact within 2 meters for more than 15 minutes with the person who tested positive to Covid-19. **High risk contact exposure** is generally regarded as instances where there was face to face contact and where such contact took place within 2 meters and for more than 15 minutes with the person who tested positive to Covid-19.
- For **low risk contact exposures**, the exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor may permit such students to continue writing exams using a cloth mask while complying with standard precautions; and they must daily monitor for symptoms.
- For **high risk contact exposures**, then the following applies.
  - i. As per the various protocols mentioned in point A1 above, the **"high risk contact"** must be requested by the exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor to go into self-isolation for the prescribed period (even though not ill).
  - ii. The high risk contact must carry out daily self-screening to check for symptoms / signs of illness
- If a high risk contact develops COVID-19 symptoms, the University's protocols for managing COVID-19 cases strictly applies.
- Full support and cooperation must be provided to persons carrying out contact tracing roles.

## 3. Precautionary measures and cleaning of the exam venue

- Since the incident is not yet a confirmed case of COVID-19 (i.e. a student is at this stage only experiencing symptoms), the exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor must cordon off / isolate the desk where the person sat and such cordoning off / isolation must extend 1.5 metres in all directions away from such desk (i.e. cordoning should be 1.5 metres in a 360 degree circumference around the desk). This will enable the other students to continue

writing their exam while not being directly exposed to the desk / chair where the person sat. As a precautionary measure the person's exam paper and belongings must be handled by someone that is wearing gloves and such gloves should thereafter be appropriately discarded.

- Since the incident is not yet a confirmed case of COVID-19 (i.e. a student is at this stage only experiencing symptoms), based on the prevailing circumstance, the exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor must as a precautionary measure determine:
  - Whether the examinations should continue (or be postponed / cancelled),
  - Whether it is necessary and /or possible for another venue to be used,
  - How the other low risk students in the exam venue should be managed.
- Since the incident is not yet a confirmed case of COVID-19 (i.e. a student is at this stage only experiencing symptoms), the exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor must contact Services: Cleaning sub-section to determine whether the exam venue should be cleaned / decontaminated / sanitised.
- If, according to Services, cleaning / decontamination / sanitising is to be done then this will take place in terms of the Services Directorate's cleaning protocols.
- If cleaning was considered necessary then, after being appropriately cleaned / disinfected / sanitised, the venue(s) can be opened for use.

## **B. IF A STUDENT BECOMES ILL AFTER AN EXAM WITH A CONFIRMED CASE OF COVID-19**

If a student informs the University that they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or that he / she has been positively diagnosed with COVID-19 after writing an exam then the following protocol applies:

- The designated / responsible exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor is to ensure that the exam register is sourced as soon as possible.
- Arising from the information contained in the exam register an evaluation must be conducted regarding the level of contact exposure risk to all students that shared the same exam room and while paying specific attention to those who sat in direct proximity to the individual who reported the illness (i.e. and, specifically those persons that were seated within 2 metres of the infected persons / where there was a close distance between students and the index person), the duration of possible contact exposure between students and the index person (was the persons in close proximity to the infected person closer than 2 metres for 15 minutes or longer) as well as considering the duration that all other students were in the same examination room as the infected person. The decision as to who is a close contact could be made in consultation with local public health officials and appropriate contact tracing actions taken. See <http://higherhealth.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/HIGHER-HEALTH-Protocol-onManaging-Clusters-of-Outbreak-of-COVID-19-within-the-PSET-Institutions.pdf>
- The exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor should ideally consult with local public health officials to discuss the situation and assist with identifying staff, students and others who have been in contact with the infected person. Administrators may contact the NICD public hotline 080 002 9999 or designated local health officials who could refer the Campus to appropriate authorities for advice.

## **2. Identification and management of contacts**

- The identification and management of contacts must be done in terms of the National Department of Health's guidelines.
- The exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor should reasonably / as best as possible assess the level of exposure that has been incurred by other students (and staff) in the same exam venue. The direct contact with a person suspected of being infected with COVID-19 is not a "casual" contact but refers to sustained contact with the index case for more than 15 minutes, and within 2 metres of the index case.

- If the contact tracing indicates that other persons may have been exposed then the exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor must determine for each contact case whether the exposure was low risk or high risk. The Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor would reasonably assess (as best as possible) which persons in the exam venue were low risk and which were high risk (while taking into consideration that all students would be wearing masks and seated at least 2 metres from each other in all directions, whether hand sanitising was carried out, whether ventilation in the exam venue was effective, etc.).
- **A low risk contact exposure** is generally regarded as a person that had **no** face to face contact within 2 meters for more than 15 minutes with the person who tested positive to Covid-19. **A high risk contact exposure** is generally regarded as a person that **did** have face to face contact and where such contact took place within 2 meters and for more than 15 minutes with the person who tested positive to Covid-19.
- The “high risk contact(s)” must be requested to go into self-isolation (even though not ill) and must carry out daily self-screening to check for symptoms / signs of illness (No testing is required unless the contact develops COVID-19 symptoms and/or if the contact insists on being tested).
- If a high risk contact develops COVID-19 symptoms, then the University’s protocol for managing COVID-19 cases applies.

### 3. Precautionary measures and cleaning of the exam venue

Cleaning after a confirmed COVID-19 infected person has been present in a venue is a much more meticulous / thorough version of the usual routine cleaning. As per the definition of a confirmed positive COVID-19 student, and in accordance with Services cleaning protocols, the following recommendations for disinfection / sanitising / cleaning of such facilities will apply:

- The exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor must contact Services: Cleaning sub-section to ensure that the exam venue is cleaned / decontaminated / sanitised. If possible, wait 24 hours before cleaning/disinfecting.
- If possible, open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- The exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor must, as a precautionary measure, weigh up:
  - Whether the examinations should continue in such venue (or be postponed / cancelled),
  - Whether it is necessary and possible for another venue to be used in the interim.
- Cleaning / decontamination / sanitising is to be done in terms of the Services Directorate’s cleaning protocols.
- The exam Chief Invigilator / Administrator / Supervisor must arrange for all known areas visited by the infected student to be closed / cordoned off / isolated until Services performs cleaning / decontamination / sanitation.
- After being appropriately cleaned / disinfected / sanitised, the venue(s) can be opened for use.

### C. GENERAL NOTES:

- In the case of a student who is diagnosed with COVID-19, direct contacts may include other students or staff who the person has had close interactions with.
- An assessment of who is a close high risk exposure contact should be done on a person to person / individual basis and, public health officials could be requested to advise on specific actions or precautions that should be taken.
- When COVID-19 is diagnosed in multiple students, the University must immediately consult with the relevant public health officials to assist with contact tracing and must cooperate with the local / provincial department of health leadership. Campus Chief Invigilators / Administrators / Supervisors may contact the NICD public hotline 080 002 9999 for further advice regarding infections and/or who could refer the campus to appropriate public health consultants.

- General safety information applicable to invigilators / administrators present in exam venues:
  - i. Invigilators / administrators present in exam venues must wear a cloth face mask and also check that students are wearing their face masks.
  - ii. Invigilators / administrators present in exam venues must keep safe physical distances and must check that students are also doing so.
  - iii. Invigilators / administrators must check that seating in exam venues is at least 1.5 metres apart in all directions.
  - iv. It is advisable that invigilators / administrators must in advance develop a seating plan that indicates where each student sits. This should be organized by student name or student number and preferably be posted outside the venue so students are able to view it and know where they are to sit before they enter the venue. This will also assist if contact tracing is necessary.
  - v. A register should be kept by invigilators / administrators of all students who attended the exams.
  - vi. If possible, efforts should be made to ensure natural ventilation by opening windows and doors.
  - vii. Hands must be sanitized before students enter the exam venue, prior to the distribution of exam papers as well as during the collection of exam papers.
  - viii. All invigilators / administrators must have carried out the daily symptom screening App / SMS / form prior to accessing Campus. Invigilators / administrators must verify that only students whose symptom screening indicates that they are permitted to be on campus should be permitted to be in the exam venue.
  - ix. Invigilators / administrators must check that sanitizer units have been placed at the entrances to the exam venue and that these are being used.
  - x. Invigilators / administrators must check that bottlenecking / congestion does not occur at the exam venue entrances when students enter as well as when students leave the venue after the exam (Check that students maintain a 1.5m physical distance between each other when entering or leaving the venue).
  - xi. Where possible, it is advisable that distance markers should be placed on the ground or barriers placed outside the exam venue to help ensure ongoing adherence to physical distancing protocols.
  - xii. Students whose exam desks are furthest away from the entrance should ideally be permitted to enter the exam venue first.
  - xiii. Students should be requested to enter the exam venue one at a time while keeping a 1.5m distance from each other and that they must go immediately to their designated seats.
  - xiv. Question papers and exam booklets should ideally be distributed in advance and be placed on the desks by the invigilator(s) before the students enter the venue. If this is not possible, papers and booklets should be handed out by the invigilator(s) to the seated students.
  - xv. If a student refuses to comply with COVID-19 protocols then the student must be requested to leave the exam venue / Campus immediately and Campus Protection Services should be requested to assist in this regard.

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