



UNIVERSITY OF THE
WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG

POLICY DOCUMENT

COVID-19 POLICY

Version: 1

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1. OBJECTIVE

The objective is to articulate the University's policy regarding the protection of the health and safety of its employees from COVID-19 caused by SARS-COV-2 as reflected in section 7(1) of the OHS Act as well as the applicable Schedules of the relevant Regulations to the Disaster Management Act (Act No. 57 of 2002), as amended from time to time.

2. SCOPE

- The identifiable hazard relating to COVID-19 is the transmission by an infected person to employees and students at Wits, which includes transmission of the virus by members of the public who have access to the University.
- The Consolidated COVID-19 Direction of Health and Safety in the Workplace (hereinafter referred to as "the Directions") provides regulations which explicates obligatory health and safety regulations for the prevention of COVID-19 transmissions in the workplace as well as rules for managing COVID-19 infections. This includes a requirement for the development and implementation of a written policy concerning the protection of the health and safety of its employees from COVID-19. In view hereof, this policy mentions undertakings that the University is committed to implement in order to mitigate the transmission of COVID-19 on its premises.
- This policy is to be read in conjunction with:
 - The regulations promulgated under the Disaster Management Act of 2002,
 - The Occupational Health and Safety Act, Act 85 of 1993 (and regulations),
 - The Wits Occupational Health, Safety and Environmental (OHS&E) Policy,
 - The University's Return to Campus Plan, and
 - The COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan.
- This policy applies to employees, students, contractors, service providers, suppliers and visitors that are required to adhere to all of the University's COVID-19 related rules and protocols.

3. DEFINITIONS

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|------------------|---|
| "OHS Act" | Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 |
| "SARS-CoV-2" | SARS-CoV-2 is the virus that causes COVID-19. Formally termed 'Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2' by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses. When abbreviated it is called SARS-CoV-2'. COVID-19 is the name of the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2. |
| "the Directions" | Consolidated COVID-19 Direction of Health and Safety in the Workplace (Government Gazette 43400 published on the 4 th June 2020) |

4. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- i.) The Disaster Management Act, Act 57 of 2002 and regulations / directives promulgated / published hereunder;
- ii.) The Occupational Health and Safety Act, Act 85 of 1993 and regulations, and specifically, Section 8 of the OHS Act, which 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.

Section 14 of the OHS Act, which requires every employee:

- To take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of their fellow employees.

ii.) Section 20.2 of the Directions obligates the University:

- To develop and implement a written policy concerning the protection of the health and safety of its employees from COVID-19 as contemplated in section 7(1) of the OHS Act;

iii.) Section 6 of the Employment Equity Act, 1998 (Act No. 55 of 1998) requires employers to ensure that infected persons are not discriminated against on the grounds of having tested positive for SARS-COV-2; and

iv.) The Notice on Compensation for Occupationally-acquired Novel Corona Virus Disease (Covid-19) under the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 130 of 1993 as amended.

5. COVID-19 POLICY COMMITMENTS

The University commits to:

5.1 Ensure that the measures it takes are consistent with national strategies, policies and directives to minimise the spread of COVID-19.

5.2 Comply with the guidelines issued by the National Department of Health and the relevant directives issued under the Disaster Management Act of 2000 in respect of COVID-19 symptom screening and testing.

5.3 Comply with the provisions of the Schedule published in the Directions to provide and maintain as far as is reasonably practicable, a working and learning environment that is safe and without risks to people's health (including the implementation of occupational hygiene practices and interventions that prevent the transmission of COVID-19 infection).

5.4 Implement a daily symptom screening system to ascertain whether staff / students have any COVID-19 related symptoms (namely fever, cough, sore throat, redness of eyes, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, body aches, loss of smell or loss of taste, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, fatigue, weakness or tiredness).

5.5 Request its contractors, service providers and suppliers to ensure that persons other than University employees that are coming onto Campus carry out COVID-19 symptom screening measures which comply with the guidelines issued by the Department of Health.

5.6 Request visitors and members of the public to undergo the University's COVID-19 symptom screening process prior to coming on to Campus.

5.7 Prohibit any person to enter Campus if they have COVID-19 symptoms, or advises the University that they are experiencing these symptoms, including visitors and contractors.

5.8 Require employees and students to immediately inform their Supervisors or Line Managers if they experience any COVID-19 symptoms while on Campus.

5.9 Implement access control measures to control the return to Campus of persons that were previously tested positive for SARS-COV-2 or had symptoms related to COVID-19.

5.10 Inform the Department of Employment and Labour and Compensation Commissioner if there is evidence that an employee contracted COVID-19 arising out of and in the course of employment.

5.11 Give administrative support to any contact-tracing measures implemented by the National Department of Health.

- 5.12 Conduct a University-wide, as well as entity-specific, COVID-19 risk assessment prior to the return to Campus of staff and students. Amongst others, such risk assessments must be aimed at preventing the transmission of the virus on Campus and consider risks to vulnerable persons (i.e. Persons over the age of 60, those with chronic medical conditions¹ and those that are immuno-compromised).
- 5.13 Discuss the findings / plans arising from risk assessments at OHS&E Committee meetings and also communicate these to employees in their particular University entities.
- 5.14 Develop risk mitigation plans and implement risk mitigation measures through monitoring and supervision to eliminate or minimise the identified risks in University entities to the greatest extent reasonably possible prior to the return of staff and students to Campus.
- 5.15 Investigate the cause of infections if there is evidence that an employee contracted COVID-19 arising out of and in the course of employment, including any control failure and, review its risk assessment to ensure that the necessary controls and personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements are in place.
- 5.16 Display notices advising employees and others entering Campus of the precautions that they are required to observe while on Campus.
- 5.17 Implement suitable physical distancing rules and take appropriate measures to minimise contact between employees, between students, between employees and students, as well as between employees and members of the public.
- 5.18 Provide employees and/or students with information in any form or manner² that raises awareness, notifies of the dangers of the virus, the manner of its transmission, as well as the measures to prevent transmission (such as applying personal hygiene protocols / etiquette, physical distancing, the correct use of masks), and what to do if presenting with COVID-19 symptoms.
- 5.19 Supply employees, free of charge, with appropriate PPE based on the outcome of a risk assessment of the workplace. This includes providing each employee with a minimum of two cloth masks to wear while at work and while commuting to and from work.
- 5.20 Inform employees as to the correct use of the above-mentioned cloth masks and ensure that these are worn properly at all times while in public and open spaces.
- 5.21 Insist that members of the public and/or visitors, contractors, service providers and suppliers wear masks when entering, and while on Campus.
- 5.22 Provide hand sanitisers that are in accordance with the recommendations of the National Department of Health (this includes ensuring that there are sufficient quantities of hand sanitisers based on the number of persons who access the Campus at the entrance of, and on Campus, that employees and/or students are required to use and for persons that interact with the public).
- 5.23 Ensure that there are adequate facilities for the washing of hands with soap and clean water and encourage persons to wash and/or sanitise their hands regularly.
- 5.24 Provide every employee who works away from the workplace, other than at home, with an adequate supply of hand sanitiser.
- 5.25 Perform routine cleaning and/or disinfecting of all work surfaces and equipment before work begins during the working period and after work ends.
- 5.26 Perform frequent cleaning and/or disinfecting of all high contact areas and/or equipment (this includes cleaning surfaces and/or equipment that employees, students and/or members of the public frequently come into contact with).

¹ Diabetes mellitus, hypertension, underlying severe heart and lung diseases, kidney failure etc.

² By for example, displaying COVID-19 related posters and keeping a Covid-19 intranet webpage frequently updated (www.wits.ac.za/covid19). SET will also distribute frequent notices / updates containing topical Covid-19 related information.

5.27 Perform thorough cleaning and/or disinfecting of workspaces if a person on Campus experiences symptoms of COVID-19 or has been on Campus up to 14 days prior to a positive diagnosis being made.

5.28 Disable all biometric systems as well as minimise to the greatest extent reasonably possible any paper based systems where multiple persons are each required to fill in a common register or form, and where the handling of such a register or form, and the use of a common pen to do so, will be done by multiple persons.

5.29 Provide paper towels in ablution facilities to dry hands after washing and ensure that the use of fabric towelling in all public areas is prohibited.

5.30 Continue having quarterly OHS&E Committee meetings in all University entities on Campus as per OHS Act requirements and having COVID-19 as an agenda item for discussion at every such meeting.

5.31 Keep the workplace well ventilated by natural or mechanical means to reduce the SARS-CoV-2 viral load, check that ventilation systems are regularly cleaned and maintained, and that vents do not feed back in through open windows. Ensure that filters are cleaned and/or replaced in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions by a competent person.

5.32 Communicate and insist that every employee, student, contractor, service provider, supplier and visitor is obligated while on Campus to comply with all measures introduced by the University to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 (and, as required by the provisions of the Schedule contained in the Directions).

5.33 Appoint a COVID-19 Compliance Officer to check whether the University of the Witwatersrand is compliant with the requirements contained in the Directions including, overseeing adherence to the health and safety measures established in the workplace.

5.34 Develop and implement a 'Return to Campus Readiness Plan' describing amongst others which employees are permitted to work on Campus and/or remotely, plans for the phased-in return of employees, protocols to protect employees from COVID-19 and the details of the COVID-19 Compliance Officer.

5.35 Implement suitable and reasonable measures to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 for students commuting on University buses.

5.36 Develop a COVID-19 symptom and infection management protocol³ in accordance with the Directions and guidelines from the National Department of Health which defines how situations should be managed.

5.37 Implement reasonable COVID-19 protective or preventative measures in lecture theatres including but not limited to wearing the required PPE, safe physical distancing between seating, not exceeding venue occupancy capacities, consideration for the installation of physical barriers or screens between class attendees (as is considered to be practical and appropriate), provision of ventilation, routine cleaning of venues, equipment, seats, desks as well as the provision of sanitising liquid.

5.38 Check that reasonable COVID-19 protective and/or preventative measures are implemented in on-Campus cafeterias, canteens, dining halls as well as retail outlets to lower the risk of COVID-19 transmission on Campus. This includes implementing safe physical distancing, safe food preparation / distribution as well as supplier control strategies.

5.39 Implement a COVID-19 awareness presentation to provide employees, students and contractors or service providers with an understanding of the virus and its manifestations, the obligatory requirements relating to COVID-19, hygiene factors, how to prevent transmission, the significance of conducting risk assessments, risk mitigation planning and implementation, and on-Campus symptom / infection management.

5.40 Implement measures, where the University provides services during which contact is made with the public, to protect employees against the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Such measures are based on the outcome of risk assessments and could include installing physical barriers or screens, providing face shields, fixing physical markers on floors in areas where queuing occurs, and instructing employees to sanitise their hands after each interaction.

5.41 Maintain mental health support programmes for employees and family members.

5.42 Ensure that infected persons are not discriminated against on the grounds of having tested positive for COVID-19 in terms of section 6 of the Employment Equity Act, 1998 and follow protocols to address this matter³.

6. Employee Expectations

While the University will make every effort to put in place measures to comply with its obligations in terms of the law, it is the responsibility of individuals to adhere to the University's protocols and conduct themselves in a manner which mitigates against the risk of infection to themselves and others. In view hereof, employees will be expected to;

6.1 Take reasonable care of their own health and safety as well as that of other persons.

6.2 Bring unsafe situations to management's attention.

6.3 Report incidents which may affect his/her/their health or the health of others.

6.4 Perform daily symptom self-screening prior to entering the University's premises and, if experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms, not attempt to enter Campus.

6.5 Wear the required personal protective equipment (PPE).

6.6 Implement / adhere to socially acceptable personal hygiene measures / health etiquette.

6.7 Adhere to the required physical distancing parameters and protocols.

6.8 Not do anything that will place their lives or the lives of other persons at risk.

7. Consequence of Breach

COVID-19 is a potentially fatal disease for which this policy and workplace rules have been developed in an effort to prevent its transmission. In view hereof, if an employee breaches this Policy the necessary disciplinary action will be taken in line with the University's rules and policies.

8. Version History

| Version | Date | Summary | Developer/Reviewer |
|------------|---------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Draft 1 | 24 June 2020 | Covid-19 Policy (Original Version) | J De Villiers |
| Drafts 2-9 | 3-8 July 2020 | Revision / amendments | Registrar's Office T Wadvalla B Fleming K Kasankola M Veller S Patel |
| Version 1 | 8 July 2020 | Final version for approval | J De Villiers |

³ Return to Campus Plan, Section 10.3 (g) and other applicable University social justice plans