

FRAMEWORK TO MANAGE THE RETURN OF STUDENTS TO CAMPUS DURING LEVEL 2 COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

1. Introduction

The health, wellbeing and safety of our staff, students and those required to be on our campus is of paramount importance. All decisions relating to a gradual phased, structured and highly risk-controlled return of students to campus informs these precepts. In addition to the social/physical distancing regulations, the availability of running water to ensure students and staff are adhering to good hygiene practices, are vital preventative measures that will curb the transmission and spread of the virus.

The University promotes self-agency of both students and staff with pre-existing medical conditions (for example obesity, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and other chronic diseases), to self-disclose and is advised to stay at home and continue to work remotely. The return of students will be by University invitation only. All students returning to campus will be required to make use of the Higher Health “app” for daily health assessments and abide by all health and safety protocols.

In addition, students will be required to sign a declaration form to adhere to the regulations necessitated to curb the transmission of COVID-19.

2. Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide an Institutional Framework for Deans, Heads of Department (HoDs) and Directors to decide on the cohort of students who need to return to campus, for what purpose and under what conditions. This must be done in accordance with the directives issued by the Minister of Higher Education, Science & Innovation, Dr. Bonginkosi Nzimande and in the context of local conditions and preparedness to ensure the safe return of students to campus.

This document also stipulates the minimum requirements expected of all people on campus to ensure that at all times we prioritise the safety, health and wellbeing of students, staff and our surrounding Makhanda community.

Furthermore, it serves as a framework for systems and procedures to be in place to ensure the safe return of students to campus during COVID-19. The document should be read in conjunction with the COVID- 19 guidelines as laid out by World Health Organization (WHO), National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD), Higher Health, Department of Health (DoH), Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and all related Post School Education and Training (PSET) COVID- 19 RU protocols.

3. Five Pillars underpinning the framework

The five pillars as outlined by the Guidelines for PSET Institutions for management of and response to the COVID-19 outbreak inform the framework. The five pillars are:

- Preparation and Planning
- Prevention and Health Promotion
- Appropriate Response and Action
- Communication
- Authentic Information

4. Principles underpinning the framework are the following: -

- Social /physical distancing
- Hygiene
- Screening
- Wearing of masks

5. Definition of terms and abbreviations

COVID-19	A disease - usually a respiratory tract illness – caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoH	Department of Health
Isolation	A period during which someone who is suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 is separated from people who are healthy. The period stops if they test negative or, if they test positive, they remain in isolation until they are well. Isolation can be involuntary if demanded by the State.
NHLS	National Health Laboratory Service
NICD	National Institute for Communicable Disease
Quarantine	A period during which someone who is healthy and has been exposed to someone who is confirmed to have COVID-19 is separated from healthy people and observed for development of symptoms of COVID-19. This is for a period of 10 days in the case of Level 2 COVID-19 regulations, and can be involuntary if demanded by the State.
Screening	A process to identify individuals who may have an infection from SARS-CoV-2; usually ascertained by a symptom questionnaire.
Self- quarantine	A term used widely in the context of COVID-19 to imply that an individual who either has COVID-19 or is exposed to someone with COVID-19 voluntarily selects to separate themselves from other healthy people. It thus covers both the terms of 'isolation' and 'quarantine'.
Social/physical distance	Social distancing is the practice of maintaining a greater than usual physical distance from other people or of avoiding direct contact with people or objects in public places during the outbreak of a contagious disease in order to minimise exposure and reduce transmission of infection. In the case of the Coronavirus (COVID-19), a minimum distance of radius 1m is recommended.
Surveillance	The process of determining the proportion of the population who have recent or past infection with SARS-CoV-2, relies on blood tests for antibodies to the virus (not yet approved in South Africa)

Testing	Diagnosis of individuals with COVID-19 by taking a swab of their nose and throat and testing for the virus using PCR.
WHO	World Health Organization

6. Compliance to the Rules and Regulations of the University

6.1 Slowing the rate of transmission of the virus is our individual and collective responsibility.

This is in the interest of Rhodes University and the greater Makhanda community at large, to deal effectively with the enforcement of Government Regulations relating to COVID-19

6.2 Rhodes University will first and foremost ensure that all the necessary protocols are in place to enable staff and students to comply with Government regulations.

Of utmost importance the following must be adhered to at all times: -

- All staff and students will be required to do a daily COVID-19 screening using the HIGHER HEALTH Integrated Digital COVID-19 Screening System (“Health Check”).
- All students and staff are required to wear a face mask at all times in public, except when eating or drinking.
- All dining hall rules, in particular those that pertain to strict hygiene requirements, must be observed at all times.
- All students and staff are expected to observe a physical distance of at least 1.5m from others.
- The University shall ensure that the National Legislation is not undermined in any way.
- No social, cultural or sporting gatherings will be allowed on campus.

6.3 Student Discipline

The constantly evolving situation brought about by COVID-19 may necessitate adjustments to student discipline when the need arises.

- Of necessity, additional Rules will be included in the Student Disciplinary Code and in Hall Codes. This is in the interest of the Rhodes community in general and in order to deal effectively with the enforcement of Government Regulations relating to COVID-19.
- The well-being of students is of paramount importance. Students who by their conduct place the well-being of other students at risk may face exclusion from Rhodes or from residence, particularly for repeat offences.
- Social distancing of 2 meters, and the wearing of face masks, will be required at all disciplinary hearings.
- Where appropriate, Rhodes may conduct disciplinary hearings, or portions thereof, remotely.

7. Screening and Testing

The severity and rapidly expanding pandemic of COVID-19 has placed a significant need for Screening, Testing, Contact Tracing, Self-Isolation, and Linkage to Care as important in the prevention and response to curb the spread of the disease. Staff and students will be required to perform a daily COVID-19 screening using the HIGHER HEALTH Integrated Digital COVID-19

Screening System (“Health Check”).

It is worth noting that one measure of prevention is not sufficient on its own for a campus-wide practice in the context of teaching and residence spaces. In addition, no one measure can contain COVID-19 spread. Rhodes University will attempt to contain the spread of the virus by taking into consideration that the rapid spread of the virus is fueled in part by the virus’ ability to be transmitted by asymptomatic people who are not showing any signs of the virus. By implementing what is described by the surgeon Atul Gawande [2020], of the Brigham & Women’s Hospital in Boston, MA, as a [“drug cocktail” of measures](#) to curb transmission. We recommend that all preventative measures should be informed by the following: -

- Physical distancing
- Hygiene
- Screening
- Wearing masks

The recommendations for Screening are: -

7.1 Pre- travel screening and testing

- Before students make any travel arrangements, they are required to go through a screening process for COVID-19 at their designated homes. Do not come to campus if you are sick or exhibit COVID-19 symptoms such as fever, coughing, difficulty in breathing. Please seek medical attention
- **On arrival at Makhanda all students are required to self- quarantine in their residences/digs or designated on-campus self-quarantine space for 10 days. The on-campus self-quarantine facility is available for all registered students, including Oppidan students to allow for instances where on/off-campus accommodation is a shared space.**

7.2 Screening at Campus Access Points

- Campus Protection Unit will be screening at the access points of the campus.
- These access points allow each person/vehicle to be screened before entering campus.
- Each person entering the campus will need to have a symptom screening done, and then triaged into a separate area for testing (or referral for testing) if they have reported a COVID-19 symptom(s) or have a temperature.

7.3 Residence-based screening

- A COVID-19 screening response team will be available in each residence.
- The Residence Management will take the lead in the screening process, with the support of the HIGHER HEALTH team.
- These screening teams should ensure that all people within the residences conduct screening daily.
- Where persons display/report symptoms or a temperature, they will be referred to the Health Care Centre.

7.4 Classroom-based screening

- Before a student or staff member attends a lecture/tutorial/practical they will need to ensure that they have conducted the daily self-screening and volunteers at entrances may request proof thereof.
- The trained volunteers will be required to ensure that staff/students are not subjected to prejudice and stigma and therefore should do this confidentially, and sensitively. The HIGHER HEALTH Integrated Digital COVID-19 Screening System (“Health Check”) should be used for this purpose.

7.5 Student Volunteerism

- Students are encouraged to volunteer their time to support their peers towards the daily education and screening programme of combating COVID-19 on campus.
- Pharmacy Students, Peer Educators and Wellness leaders are identified and encouraged by the University to be part of the student volunteer programme.
- Student Volunteers will work under the guidance of their team leaders.
- Student Volunteers will have to follow strict institutional protocol concerning students and staff that may report or present with COVID-19 symptoms.
- Should the Student Volunteer want to withdraw from the programme, they are free to do so at any time.

7.6 The functions of student volunteers shall be: -

- to support the Institution with health education information that will be given to students about COVID-19, using the Health Promotion and Prevention Strategy;
- to carry out screening of students in designated areas, using the verbal screening tool (no physical contact).

8. Response to a positive case

- In the case of confirmed COVID-19 in a single or multiple persons, the Health Care Centre (HCC) shall immediately consult with the Department of Health (DoH).
- The DoH will facilitate the move of the student(s) to the Frontier Hotel where the DoH has oversight of their wellness.
- The HCC will assist with tracing individuals who have been in contact with the infected individual/s.
- Any person who has been in direct contact with an individual/s who tested positive for COVID-19 shall be required to self-quarantine for 10 days after exposure.
- Assessment of who is a close contact must be done on an individual basis and public health officials will advise on specific actions or precautions that should be taken.
- In all the above, all information will be managed sensitively.

9. Fumigation, disinfecting and sanitizing of classrooms, residences and dining facilities The protocol on cleaning underpins and aligns to the guidelines of the Higher Health guidelines for the PSET sector: -

9.1 Cleaning vs disinfecting

RU Residential Operations staff have been trained on Applying Basic Microbiological Cleaning Principles which focused on COVID- 19, in accordance with the Global Biorisk Advisory Council (GBAC) protocol for response and remediation and the practical guidelines of the Professional Body for Environmental Hygiene in South Africa.

Given that SARS-CoV-2 can survive/last for up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel, less than 4 hours on copper, and less than 24 hours on cardboard, it is clear that different surfaces need different level of cleaning and disinfectants in the context of the environments, with hard surfaces, soft surfaces, electronics, and laundry.

Routine cleaning and disinfecting is key to maintaining a safe environment for students and staff, therefore cleaning will be an ongoing routine activity, with disinfecting taking place daily, or as the need arises after the obvious soiling of an area.

9.2 Identified special areas:

i) Residences/rooms

Residences are potential areas where spread may occur at a higher rate. This is because of many people being in a confined space; the same people using tables, chairs, and other amenities that make the spreading of the virus possible through droplet spread: -

- These need cleaning according to normal household protocols within residence rooms.
- Outside the confines of each resident's room, the general housekeeping protocol for cleaning of all surfaces in common areas, applies.

ii) Lecture venues

- Lecture venues will be cleaned on a daily basis.
- There will be hand sanitizers dispensers available that are easily accessible to students, lecturing and cleaning staff to sanitize before entering.

iii) Dining Halls

RU as a residential university has a significant number of dining halls. These are also potential areas where the spread may occur at a higher rate. Thus, it is important that, in addition to wearing masks and social/physical distancing regulations, the following are implemented: -

- The dining hall and servery demarcated with a floor marking/sticker placed at 2m intervals;
- Stickers placed on the back and on the seat of every second chair to ensure it remains empty in support of social/physical distancing;
- Regular cleaning of tables, surfaces, trays, chairs, etc. throughout the day;
- Routine cleaning is scheduled for the dining halls;
- ensure proper ventilation of the facility;
- Staggered meal times observed – ensuring that only $\frac{1}{3}$ of the full capacity is occupied at any time;
- Hand sanitizer dispensers will be easily accessible and regularly refilled for students, wardens, their dependents and catering staff to use before entering and re-entering the next day;
- Only students of the Hall, wardens and their dependents can access the dining hall;
- no student or warden will be permitted to book meals for guests;
- Students, wardens and their dependents using these facilities will be required to test for COVID-19 if they exhibit any COVID-19 related symptoms.

9.3 The role of students and staff in cleaning

- All students and staff must understand the importance of washing hands and of cleaning their environments.
- All students and staff will also be encouraged through posters, social media and other forms of communications to sanitize with hand sanitizer available at strategic points at lecture venues, biometric readers and in the residences.

- All students and staff are to use the hand sanitizers from sanitizer dispensers and paper towels at their disposal to disinfect and wipe down their tables, chairs and keyboards in their study spaces.

9.4 Cleaning and disinfecting a building or facility if someone is found Positive for COVID-

- As we learn to “live with this virus”, it is anticipated that only affected components of campus will close, rather than the entire institution.
- Cleaning after a confirmed COVID-19 person has a more meticulous version of routine cleaning.
- In cases where there is a positive student or staff COVID-19 case on campus, based on information about where on campus the student/staff was over the prior two days, those spaces will be closed off immediately to follow meticulous cleaning and disinfection as per afore-mentioned cleaning guidelines.

10. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Precautions & Prevention

All people conducting screening, that includes Student Volunteers, Support Staff, and HIGHER HEALTH Staff shall: -

- Observe strict PPE precautions;
- Maintain social/physical distancing by keeping 2 meters from any person at all times;
- Have no physical contact with other people i.e. no handshaking and ensure that they sneeze and cough into their elbow or a tissue (safely discard the tissue immediately);
- Have no hand-to- hand contact through the exchange of paper, cell phone devices, or any other material or commodity.
- Wearing face masks is mandatory at all times.
- Continuous use of hand sanitizers or alternatively the washing of hands with soap is encouraged.
- On a daily basis, all student volunteers and staff will self-screen using the HIGHER HEALTH Integrated Digital COVID-19 Screening System (“HealthCheck”) which will be confirmed by their team leader.

11. Mental Health Support

The Rhodes University Counselling Centre shall: -

- Develop plans to support students who may feel overwhelmed by COVID-19 and associated events on campus.
- Ensure continuity of established mental health services, such as offering remote counselling.
- Encourage students to seek help if they are feeling overwhelmed with emotions such as sadness, depression, anxiety, or feel like wanting to harm themselves or others.
- Disseminate the campus helpline for mental health counselling as well as national helplines, such as the South African Depression and Anxiety Group 24-hour helpline 0800 456 789 and the suicide line 0800 567 567.

12. Communication Guidelines

- Rhodes University’s Communications and Advancement Division will be the only authentic and trusted news source for campus information and updates related to COVID-19.
- Several methods of broadcast media for communication including social media platforms, emails, text messages and campus radio will be used.
- To promote education as the most powerful means of preventing infection, addressing

misinformation and stigma, and reducing the impact of COVID-19.

- Keep the campus community informed with accurate information. This can counter the spread of misinformation and fake news. The Rhodes Science Engagement group has up to date and accurate information that can be shared with the campus community. [<https://www.ru.ac.za/covidscicomm/>]