



GUIDELINES FOR OFFERING RISK-CONTROLLED FACE-TO-FACE ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

South Africa and the town of Makhanda have recently emerged from the second wave of the Coronavirus pandemic. The president announced the move from the adjusted Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 1 on 28 February. Under Alert Level 1 some restrictions on gatherings have been lifted. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet over, and the virus will probably stay with us for much longer, while there are also possibilities for a third or even fourth wave as a result of this virus mutating and forming new variants.

The recent decline in the viral infections has been achieved at great human and economic cost, and we would not want to compromise what we have achieved by lowering our guard for a moment. This is particularly important in the light of the discovery of a new variant of the virus, known as 501Y.v2 that has become the dominant variant in the country. This variant is transmitted more easily and can infect more people, thus resulting in an over-burdened healthcare system causing more deaths.

Until the majority of the population has been vaccinated, we must keep adhering to the strict health and safety protocols and non-pharmaceutical interventions of wearing a face mask, washing our hands regularly with soap and water or using a sanitiser and practising safe physical distancing at all times. We must continue living and spreading a message of care and concern for the safety and wellbeing of our students, staff and local communities.

While some students have been invited back to campus, the University will continue with remote online or physically distanced teaching and learning for the foreseeable future. Face-to-face activities that were allowed during Alert levels 4, 3 and 2, i.e. practicals and studio work, will continue to be permitted. The University leadership, the Coronavirus Response Task Team (CVRTT) and the Coronavirus Monitoring Group will continually monitor the progression and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and take advice from the relevant provincial and national health authorities and health experts before any decision is taken regarding face-to-face teaching and learning.

Face-to-face activities will be sanctioned only in instances where it is absolutely necessary that people gather together in the same space and there are no other viable modalities of achieving the intended outcome(s) of the gathering.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

These guidelines should be used to guide the development of risk-controlled plans for limited face-to-face activities. The guidelines should be read in conjunction with the following frameworks and protocols:

- RU Protocol for managing the use of venues
- RU COVID-19 Institutional Framework
- RU COVID-19 Institutional Plan
- RU COVID-19 Health and Safety Protocol
- RU COVID-19 Initial Risk Assessment
- RU COVID-19 Daily Self-Assessment
- RU COVID-19 Access Protocol
- RU Framework for Management of Return of Students (Health and Safety)
- RU Response to Confirmed COVID-19 Cases
- Higher Health Guidelines for Managing Clusters of Outbreaks within the PSET Sector
- RU Plan for Return of Students

These protocols and the template for requesting risk-controlled face-to-face activities and events can be accessed at <https://www.ru.ac.za/humanresources/> under Useful Information on COVID-19.

TERMINOLOGY

COVID-19 preventative strategies

Measures implemented to control the spread of COVID-19 including physical/social distancing, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, face masks, regular environmental cleaning and daily symptom screening to prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 from a COVID-19 positive case to other students or staff on campus.

Comorbidity

Comorbidity refers to an overlap of different conditions and, medically, when conditions are comorbid they impact one another even though their causes may be unrelated. The condition may also be a behavioural or mental disorder.

Face-to-face Activities

All activities requiring people to be physically present in a common venue or shared space. These include lectures/classes, practicals, interviews, meetings, conferences, etc.

Social/Physical Distancing

Social/physical distancing is the practice of maintaining a greater than usual physical distance from other people or of avoiding direct physical 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 COVID-19 a minimum distance of 1.5m to 2m between individuals is recommended.

Supervisor/convenor/organiser

Person in charge who is requesting permission to offer face-to-face activities other than lectures/classes.

Vulnerable people and people living with comorbidities

People who have pre-existing health conditions related to their immune systems, i.e. they are already immunocompromised (as defined by the World Health Organization Report of 2019).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles should be considered by departments in developing risk-controlled plans for limited face-to-face academic activities:

1. The University's priority is the health and safety of the students, staff and local communities.
2. Any requests for face-to-face classes and activities other than those mentioned above will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and will be allowed if there are no alternative ways of satisfying the course requirements.
3. Face-to-face academic activities will be considered for practicals and studio work.
4. A compelling motivation should be submitted to show how the lecturer explored alternative modes of achieving course outcomes.
5. A risk-controlled plan highlighting possible risks, controls and risk owners should be developed by the department/person requesting permission to offer face-to-face activities.
6. All plans for face-to-face classes and activities related to teaching and learning must be supported by the HoD and Dean of faculty.
7. The Dean will submit plan(s) to the Chair of the Coronavirus Response Task Team at Covidmeetingpermission@ru.ac.za for review and approval.
8. Plans will be evaluated by a sub-committee of the Coronavirus Response Task Team.
9. All plans must ensure the following:
 - 9.1 The number of people in a venue (students, staff, etc.) should not exceed the 50% space occupancy limit.
 - 9.2 Classes or groups that are larger than 100 should be split. Especially where a class/laboratory/venue cannot accommodate the students/participants/attendees and maintain physical distancing of 1.5 - 2m.
 - 9.3 Physical distancing of 1.5m should be maintained and the floors and seating arrangements must be properly demarcated.
 - 9.4 Students and staff should always carry with them a small bottle of a sanitiser and a cloth to clean the desks or any other surfaces they use or make use of the sanitizer and paper towel available in the lecture venues to disinfect their work spaces.
 - 9.5 A lecturer/supervisor/convenor/organiser of face-to-face activities (meetings/classes, etc.) should be present at all times to ensure adherence to all protocols.
 - 9.6 The lecturer/supervisor/convenor/organiser must ensure daily health screening of all people involved, e.g. students and staff by:
 - Using the Higher Health (HH) App, and
 - Temperature screening.
 - 9.7 Daily records of all students, staff and other participants (Name, Surname, ID, Staff or Student number and Cell phone number) must be kept to ensure that should there be any COVID-19 infection, contact tracing can be done.
 - 9.8 Staff, students and people who have not done and do not provide proof of the Initial Risk Screening should not be permitted to enter the venue.
 - 9.9 All students, staff and other people allowed in the venue should wear face masks covering their nose and mouth at all times.
 - 9.10 All venues must comply with health and safety protocols, as well as gazetted national lockdown regulations. The venue should be cleaned and surfaces sanitised daily.
 - 9.11 Eating and drinking will not be permitted in venues.
 - 9.12 Students and staff with comorbidities should be catered for through the creation of a hybrid learning environment which allows for online/remote course delivery alternatives.
 - 9.13 Sanitiser dispensers should be present at entry and other key points. The lecturer/supervisor/convenor/organiser should contact the cleaning services staff who must ensure that sanitiser dispensers contain sanitiser, are re-filled at regular

intervals and are in good working order.

9.14 The venue (s) should be well-ventilated.

9.15 All COVID-19 preventative measures and strategies must be adhered to at all times.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY	CONTACT PERSON	CONTACT DETAILS
Approval of request for face to face activity	Sub-Committee of the Coronavirus Response Task Team	Chair of CVRTT	Covidmeetingpermission@ru.ac.za
Cleaning and disinfecting a building, residence, classroom, office or any other facility if someone is found positive for COVID-19	Residential Operations	Deputy Director: Residential Operations, Jay Pillay	jay.pillay@ru.ac.za or 082 801 2389
Communication	Communications and Advancement	Manager: Communications & Marketing, Veliswa Mhlope	v.mhlope@ru.ac.za or 082 484 0161
Counselling (staff)	Human Resources Division	Manager: Learning and Development, Schalk van der Merwe	<p>s.vandermerwe@ru.ac.za or 083 260 2522</p> <p>Higher Health PSET Helpline Toll-free call – 0800 36 36 36 or SMS 43336</p> <p>FAMSA – 046 622 2580 or famsa@imagnet.co.za</p> <p>National Counselling Line – 0861-322-322 Gender Violence – 0800-150-150 HIV and AIDS Helpline – 0800-012-322</p> <p>Staff can also contact their medical aid RUMED www.rumed.co.za</p> <p>BONITAS www.bonitas.co.za</p>

Counselling (students)	Student Affairs Division	Head: Counselling Centre, Christine Lewis	counsellingcentre@ru.ac.za or 046 603 7070 (08h00 to 16h30, Monday to Friday) Crisis Line - ER 24 0102053068 (for psychological emergencies)
Health and Safety	Registrar's Division	SHE Officer, Belinda Nomji	b.nomji@ru.ac.za or 046 603 8278/ 081 839 7676
Injury on Duty (IOD) Submissions to the Department of Labour	Human Resources Division	Manager: Total Rewards, Tandile Nyati	t.nyati@ru.ac.za or 078 157 1880
Notification to the Department of Health regarding COVID-19 infections	Student Affairs Division – Health Care Centre	Sister Heather Ferreira and Sister Thamie Fanisi	Health Care Centre 046 603 8523 (office hours)
Notification to the Department of Health regarding COVID-19 infections	Human Resources Division	Acting HR Director, Susan Robertson	susan.robertson@ru.ac.za or 082 576 0172
Staff queries	Human Resources Division	Acting Director: HR, Susan Robertson	susan.robertson@ru.ac.za or 082 576 0172
Student queries	Student Affairs Division	Director: Student Affairs, Noma Mrwetyana	n.mrwetyana@ru.ac.za or 082 485 0271
Contact tracing assistance with the Department of Health (students and staff)	Student Affairs Division (Health Care Centre)	Sister Heather Ferreira and Sister Thamie Fanisi	Health Care Centre 046 603 8523 (office hours)
Conferences, events and functions	Residential Operations – Conferencing and Events	Manager: Conference and Events, Charmaine Avery	c.avery@ru.ac.za or 082 801 2391
Facilities	Facilities Servicing	Deputy Director: Facilities Servicing, Dawie van Dyk	d.vandyk@ru.ac.za or 082 788 9589

Booking of lecture rooms and venues outside of the academic calendar.	Residential Operations- Conferencing and Events	Manager: Conference and Events, Charmaine Avery	conference@ru.ac.za
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5 March 2021
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