

VACCINE EXEMPTION IMPLEMENTATION PROTOCOL

1. Preamble:

Rhodes University is a residential institution with teaching and learning taking place face-to-face in large groups and where students (and some staff) live in residence or in communal housing in a small city/town. The University regards the health, safety and wellness of students, staff and the surrounding community as of paramount importance in pursuit of its academic mission. The risk of COVID-19 infection and outbreaks does exist, but can be significantly mitigated by ensuring that members of the University community are vaccinated. Scientific evidence has irrefutably shown that vaccines are the most critical and effective intervention for COVID-19 prevention. Vaccination will allow the University community to return safely to on-site, face-to-face teaching and learning, research, operations, and other in-person activities.

2. General Principles:

- 2.1 To return to the Rhodes University Campus in 2022, all staff and students are required to be vaccinated or be in possession of a Vaccine Exemption Certificate granted by the University Vaccine Exemption Committee.
- 2.2 Employees and students who cannot be vaccinated on medical grounds or choose not to be vaccinated on religious grounds, **must apply for a Vaccine Exemption between 01 January and 01 March 2022.**
- 2.3 Exception will be granted only if the applicant can be reasonably accommodated within their Faculty and/or place of work. Reasonable accommodation is defined as an environment, as far as is reasonably practicable, that is safe and without risk to the health and safety of the University community and members of the public who visit the campus
- 2.4 No exemptions will be granted to staff and students within the residence system.
- 2.5 If an exemption application is denied, staff and students can appeal to the Vaccine Exemption Appeals Committee.

3. Regulations for students with Vaccine Exemptions

- 3.1 Students who are exempted from vaccination **will be required to:**
 - 3.1.1 undertake daily health screening prior to being allowed entry to campus;
 - 3.1.2 buy and always wear an N95 or KN95 mask, including in lectures, laboratories, on field excursions, during tutorials, seminars and research meetings, and/or during assessments and any other activity that involves other students or staff;
 - 3.1.3 provide a weekly, validated negative test (at their own cost) for SARS-CoV-2 infection irrespective of whether they have COVID-19 symptoms or not, within 48 hours of face-to-face tuition activities or
 - 3.1.4 provide proof of a COVID-19 infection, within or up to the last three months.
- 3.2 Exempted students will also **not be allowed:**
 - 3.2.1 into common areas where social engagements take place including dining halls;
 - 3.2.2 to reside or to visit friends in the Rhodes University residences;
 - 3.2.3 to attend in-person graduation ceremonies;
 - 3.2.4 to attend any cultural or social events including societies and meet and greets;
 - 3.2.5 to participate in any sports activity or to attend as spectators at any sports event.

4. Regulations for staff with Vaccine Exemptions

- 4.1 Staff members who are exempted from vaccination **will be required to:**

- 4.1.1 undertake daily health screening prior to being allowed entry to campus;
 - 4.1.2 buy and always wear an N95 or KN95 mask at all times;
 - 4.1.3 provide a weekly, validated negative test (at their own cost) for SARS-CoV-2 infection irrespective of whether they have COVID-19 symptoms or not, or
 - 4.1.4 provide proof of a COVID-19 infection, within or up to the last three months.
- 4.2 Exempted staff will also **not be allowed:**
- 4.2.1 into common areas where social engagements take place;
 - 4.2.2 to attend in-person graduation ceremonies;
 - 4.2.3 to attend any cultural or social events;
 - 4.2.4 to participate in any sports activity or to attend as spectators at any sports event.

5. Applications for exemption

- 5.1 Exemption applications should be made on the designated form and accompanied by the appropriate evidence from the applicant to support their inability to comply with the vaccination mandate. The forms will be available from December 16th online at:
 Staff: <https://my.ru.ac.za/imbizo/humanresources/>
 Students: <https://www.ru.ac.za/registrar/forms/>
- 5.2 Grounds for vaccine exemption
- 5.2.1 Applications for vaccine exemption on medical grounds must provide confirmation from a medical professional that COVID-19 vaccination poses a significant medical risk.
 - 5.2.2 Rhodes University reserves the right to require staff/students to undergo further independent medical assessment if required.
 - 5.2.3 Applications for vaccine exemption on religious grounds must be accompanied by a detailed motivation and documentary evidence of previous vaccine exemptions.
 - 5.2.4 The Vaccine Exemption Committee shall be responsible for approving the grounds for an application for vaccine exemption.
- 5.3 Reasonable Accommodation – for students:
- 5.3.1 Will be course dependent. Exemptions will not be granted in courses that require extensive face-to face interaction. A list of courses for which exemptions will not be granted will be provided.
 - 5.3.2 The relevant Dean shall, in consultation with the relevant Department(s), be responsible for making a recommendation on whether reasonable accommodation can be provided for exemption applicants.
- 5.5 Provision of Reasonable Accommodation – for staff:
- 5.4.1 Applications must be accompanied by a current job profile.
 - 5.4.2 Where the applicant is a staff member in an academic department, the relevant Dean shall, in consultation with the Head of Department, make a recommendation on whether the applicant can be reasonably accommodated.
 - 5.4.3 For all other support staff, the Director, shall be responsible for making a recommendation on whether the unvaccinated staff member can be reasonably accommodated within their place of work.
 - 5.4.4 The Vaccine Exemption Committee shall be responsible for approving the provision of reasonable accommodation.
- 5.5 Applications together with attached documentation should be emailed to vaxex@ru.ac.za for consideration by the Vaccine Exemption Committee.