

12 October 2020

UFS management expresses concern about number of positive COVID-19 cases Received from Lacea Loader

The Free State is currently one of the provinces in the country with the highest percentage of new tests that turn out positive for COVID-19. This also impacts on the staff and students at the University of the Free State (UFS), as the number of positive cases on the campuses has increased considerably during the past few weeks.

The UFS experienced an increase of **47%** in the number of students who tested positive from Level 2 of the national lockdown to Level 1. During the past few days, an increase of 21% in positive student cases has been experienced. In the case of staff, an increase of **34%** in the number who tested positive occurred from Level 2 of the national lockdown to Level 1. Over the past few days, an increase of 11% in positive cases has been experienced.

1. Adherence to national protocols and regulations

The safety, health, and well-being of staff and students remain a priority. Therefore, the university management is concerned about the rise in positive cases on the campuses and appeals to staff to adhere to the national protocols and regulations issued by the Ministers of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Employment and Labour, Higher Education, Science and Innovation, and Health.

It is important to note that non-adherence to certain of the national protocols and regulations is a criminal offence and is punishable by a fine or imprisonment of up to six months. By not adhering to national protocols and regulations, our staff is not only putting their own health at risk, but also the health of others.

2. Behaviour observed on campus

The following behaviour has been observed among staff working on campus:

- Not adhering to social/physical distancing of 2 metres;
- Face-to-face contact without wearing masks (e.g. in boardrooms and tearooms, visiting each other in offices, etc);
- Not wearing a mask while moving on campus, as well as in buildings (except in the privacy of offices);
- Dishonesty during the screening process; and
- Non-compliance with isolation and quarantine guidelines.

Staff members are reminded that they may face disciplinary action if they do not adhere to the national COVID-19 protocols and regulations as issued by the different ministers. It is important that staff members be honest at all times during the screening process, as it has been observed that some staff members display some COVID-19-related symptoms but answer in the negative on the online screening app.

3. Reporting of positive COVID-19 cases

In terms of the directives issued by the Minister of Employment and Labour, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, the UFS is required to report all COVID-19 positive cases to the Department of Labour, the Department of Health, and the Department of Higher Education and Training. All COVID-19 positive cases must thus be reported directly to the Senior Director: Human Resources (vjaarsj@ufs.ac.za) and Kopsie Health (johnr@ufs.ac.za) for further handling and reporting to the relevant government departments.

Please do not come to the campuses if you are experiencing any COVID-19-related symptoms and get tested as soon as possible.

Those staff members who test positive will receive the necessary advice from their medical practitioners and they can also contact Kopsie Health for assistance.