

# Register for HealthCheck before entering campuses

Approximately two million students and staff in all Post School Education and Training (PSET) institutions will be required to register for HealthCheck and use it to assess their temperature level prior to entering campuses.



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Higher Education, Science and Innovation Minister Blade Nzimande said HealthCheck, which is part of the department's Higher Health programme, is secure to use by students and staff entering campuses daily to self-check their body temperature, and will link such data to the tracking system of the Department of Health.

"Based on the answers entered on the platform, the person receives a message with the low/moderate/high level risk reading. If the risk is low, the individual will receive clearance valid for 24 hours.

"The tool allows for early detection, mapping and management of Covid-19 cases within higher education institutions and feeds into the national Department of Health's tracking and tracing system," Nzimande explained.

HealthCheck, which can be accessed through one's cellphone, is available in various platforms, including Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD), WhatsApp or simple web-based.

One does not need to have a smartphone to access the HealthCheck, as it can be accessed from any device.

The Minister was addressing the media through a virtual briefing on the progress in the implementation of Covid-19 measures.

## **Guidelines to deal with mental health of staff**

Nzimande also announced that appropriate Covid-19 guidelines have been developed to deal with the mental health of both staff and students. The guidelines also focus on substance abuse which can be a serious challenge, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Guidelines for the management of and response to mental health and substance abuse related to Covid-19 respond to continued concerns raised by global public health leaders. The United Nations and the World Health Organisation have advocated that mental health and wellbeing of whole societies are severely impacted by Covid-19 and see these as an urgent priority.

“These guidelines outline why and how students and staff may be impacted and how to assist individuals that may experience problems. Through this protocol, the universities and colleges are also urged to keep top-of-mind mental health implications of each decision they make during the forthcoming period,” Nzimande said.

## **Risk adjusted strategy for PSET sector**

Nzimande said the department remains committed to resume academic activities in PSET sector, in line with the national risk-adjusted strategy in dealing with Covid-19.

He said the department has published national directives on the broad parameters and conditions under which each institution must plan for the controlled resumption of all forms and levels of academic activity to complete the 2020 academic year.

## **Selected students to return to residences**

The Minister said the department has further made provision that institutions may consider selected return of other categories of students to residences who may face extreme difficulties in their home learning environments, provided that all safety and logistical requirements are met.

Under level 4, the sector provided for a controlled return of final year students in programmes requiring clinical training, starting with medicine (MBChB) and the phasing-in of all other programmes, such as Nursing, Dental and Veterinary Sciences.

Under level 3, a maximum of 33% of the student population will be allowed to return to campuses, delivery sites and residences on condition that they can be safely accommodated and supported in line with the health and safety protocols as directed by the department.

This includes all groups that have already returned during alert level 4, students in the final year of their programmes, who are on a path to graduating in 2020, final year students who require access to laboratories, technical equipment, data, connectivity and access to residence and private accommodation.

Students in all years of study that require clinical training in their programmes (provided that the clinical training platforms have sufficient space and can accommodate them while adhering to the safety protocols), and post graduate students who require laboratory equipment and other technical equipment to undertake their studies, will also under level 3 be allowed to return to campuses.

“It is critical that we adhere to these criteria to ensure that campuses are ready for students to safely return, and the effective health screening, cleaning protocols are in place to keep everyone safe. All other students will be supported through remote multimodal teaching learning and assessment until they can return to campus.

“I would like to emphasise that we recognise that some institutions may identify other groups of students in line with their particular contexts for their return to campus. However, any deviation from this criterion must be approved by my department and must fall within the maximum of 33% of the student population,” Nzimande said.

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