



UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

Mandatory Vaccination Policy: Implementation Protocol

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¹ The Protocol was approved by the MEC on 17 January 2022. It was subsequently aligned with the MEC decision of 03 February 2022 relating to the Terms of Reference of the Exemptions Committee.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council has approved the Mandatory Vaccination Policy, which requires all UJ Employees, Students and Visitors to be vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, in order to access UJ campuses and facilities and describes the context of the adoption of the Mandatory Vaccination Policy as well as the general principles applicable to its implementation.
- 1.2 This Protocol should be read concurrently with the Mandatory Vaccination Policy (which is available on the UJ website at: www.uj.ac.za/COVID-19, together with further resources relevant to the status and management of COVID-19 in South Africa, including information relating to Vaccines). In the event of any inconsistency arising between this Protocol and the Mandatory Vaccination Policy, the terms of the Mandatory Vaccination Policy shall prevail to the extent of such inconsistency.
- 1.3 The purpose of the Protocol is to provide practical detail regarding the procedures enabling the implementation of the Mandatory Vaccination Policy. In particular, the Protocol details the procedures relevant to:
- 1.3.1 timelines for compliance with the Mandatory Vaccination Policy;
- 1.3.2 disclosure of vaccination status by UJ Employees, Students and Visitors; and
- 1.3.3 the submission of applications for exemption from the vaccination against SARS-CoV-2 on medical or religious grounds.

2. Definitions

2.1 "Booster Shot"	means an immunising agent administered as a supplementary dose of a Vaccine, after the protection afforded to fully vaccinated persons by the original dose decreases as a result of the effluxion of time;
2.2 "Committee: Mandatory Vaccination Exemptions" (the "Exemptions Committee")	means the committee established by the UJ Management Executive Committee (MEC) to decide on applications for exemption from the vaccination requirements contained in the Mandatory Vaccination Policy and the Protocol;
2.3 "Council"	means the the governing body of UJ, established in terms of section 26(2)(a) of the Higher Education Act, 1997;
2.4 "COVID-19"	means the infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus;
2.5 "Digital Vaccination Certificate"	means the certificate available for download by fully vaccinated persons

	through the EVDS, using the code received via SMS following vaccination;
2.6 "Employee"	means academic staff employed by UJ. For the purposes of this document it includes special academic appointments and postdoctoral research fellows, and any other persons employed on a full-time, part-time, or temporary basis by UJ;
2.7 "EVDS"	means the national Electronic Vaccination Data System, the national online system created to facilitate registration for, and record of, vaccinations in South Africa and the downloading of Digital Vaccination Certificates;
2.8 "fully vaccinated"	means the status of having received the full dose of a Vaccine, as well as, where applicable, the Booster Shot(s) required following a Vaccine;
2.9 "Mandatory Vaccination Policy"	means the policy adopted by the Council on 25 November 2021, and published by UJ on 3 December 2021 (attached as Annexure "A"), and any amendments that may be made thereto;
2.10 "partially vaccinated"	means the status of having received the first dose of a Vaccine, in instances where the particular Vaccine requires two doses for maximum efficacy;
2.11 "Proof of Vaccination"	means the official vaccination certificate downloadable from the EVDS which confirms a person's vaccination status;
2.12 "the Protocol"	means this document, including any subsequent amendments effected and published;
2.13 "Student"	means a person registered for any programme, course, or module at UJ;
2.14 "UJ"	means the University of Johannesburg, a public higher education institution established in terms of the Higher Education Act, 1997;
2.15 "UJ Health Services"	means the Primary Health Care services and Occupational Health Practice], located on each of the UJ campuses;
2.16 "UJ Premises"	means all UJ campuses and facilities;
2.17 "UJ Visitor"	means any person other than an UJ Employee or Student who seeks admission to UJ campuses or UJ facilities and includes, but is not limited to, independent contractors, service providers and their employees, suppliers and their employees, secondees, visiting academics, and visitors;

2.18 "Vaccine"	means a vaccine authorised by the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority to provide active acquired immunity against SARS-CoV-2 or other COVID-19 vaccines as approved by the Exemptions Committee.
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3. **Effective dates of the Mandatory Vaccination Policy and the Protocol**

- 3.1 The Mandatory Vaccination Policy became effective on 1 January 2022 and will remain in force until it is rescinded. The Protocol is effective from 18 January 2022 until such time as the Mandatory Vaccination Policy is expressly rescinded by the Council, and may be amended from time to time.
- 3.2 In order to afford UJ Employees, Students and Visitors an opportunity both to familiarise themselves with the contents of the Mandatory Vaccination Policy and Protocol and to be vaccinated, the vaccination requirements in the Mandatory Vaccination Policy will be phased in on the basis set out in this Protocol.

4. **Campus access by UJ Employees and Students**

- 4.1 Save for where an exemption is applied for and approved by the Exemptions Committee, UJ expects and requires:
- 4.1.1 all Employees to be at least partially vaccinated and to have uploaded their Proof of Vaccination to <https://ulink.uj.ac.za/ujvac> by 01 February 2022; and to be fully vaccinated and to have uploaded their Proof of Vaccination to <https://ulink.uj.ac.za/ujvac> by 15 March 2022; and
- 4.1.2 all Students to be at least partially vaccinated and to have uploaded their Proof of Vaccination to <https://ulink.uj.ac.za/ujvac> by 14 February 2022; and to be fully vaccinated and to have uploaded their Proof of Vaccination to <https://ulink.uj.ac.za/ujvac> by 31 March 2022.
- 4.2 In the event that a UJ Employee or Student is not fully vaccinated by the applicable dates stipulated in paragraph 0 above, and in the absence of an approved exemption application, they will not be permitted to access or make use of the UJ Premises until fully vaccinated.
- 4.3 While on UJ Premises, or making use of transport provided by UJ, all UJ Employees and Students (regardless of vaccination status) are required to continue to comply fully with all legislated and internal COVID-19-related health and safety protocols.

5. **Campus access by UJ Visitors**

- 5.1 UJ Visitors will be required to wear a mask at all times and to provide Proof of Vaccination at the initial point of access to UJ Premises from 31 March 2022.

6. Vaccine-related absences

6.1 In the case of Employees:

6.1.1 Employees will be given paid time off to receive their vaccination. Proof of attendance at the vaccination site will be required.

6.2 In the case of Students:

6.2.1 To the extent necessary, reasonable accommodations may be made on an *ad hoc* basis between the affected Student and the relevant member(s) of academic staff. Proof of the vaccination appointment will be required and Students are expected to schedule their vaccinations at times that will not interfere with important academic commitments (e.g. assessments and practical/clinical classes).

7. Proof of Vaccination

7.1 UJ Employees and Students are required to upload Proof of Vaccination to <https://ulink.uj.ac.za/ujvac> by the dates stipulated in paragraph 0 above.

7.2 Proof of Vaccination may be obtained in the following manner:

7.2.1 UJ Employees, Students and Visitors must register on the EVDS Registration Portal under the "*Vaccine Updates*" section of the South African Department of Health's COVID-19 Online Resource and News Portal. The EVDS Registration Portal can be accessed directly at: <https://sacoronavirus.co.za/evds>. The EVDS Registration Portal can also be reached via the "*COVID-19 Coronavirus South African Resource Portal*" link on the UJ website at www.uj.ac.za/COVID-19.

7.2.2 For persons vaccinated in South Africa: proof of vaccination can be obtained by vaccinated registered persons via the EVDS Registration Portal. In order to access the certificate confirming vaccination from the EVDS, UJ Employees, Students and Visitors must access the EVDS Registration Portal and follow the link titled "*Download your COVID-19 Vaccine Certificate*". After inputting the identity number, passport number, asylum-seeker number, or refugee number used at the time of vaccination, as well as proof of vaccination code sent via SMS following vaccination, the certificate confirming vaccination will appear on screen. Both PDF downloads and clear photographs of the certificate will be accepted as Proof of Vaccination. It is important that the image of the vaccination certificate be clear, in order for UJ to be able to verify its veracity.

7.2.3 Assistance for Employees and Students having difficulty to submit their vaccination certificate, can be requested from +27 11 559 4555 or mylife@uj.ac.za.

7.2.4 The vaccination status of each UJ Employee and Student will be linked to the access card that they utilise to access UJ Premises. Save for instances where an exemption has been applied for and approved, the access cards of UJ Employees

and Students that are not fully vaccinated by the applicable dates in paragraph 4.1 will be deactivated and access to campus will be denied.

7.2.5 By signing the UJ registration agreement, as part of the online registration process at the commencement of the academic year, Students accept the requirements introduced by the Mandatory Vaccination Policy and the Protocol and consent to UJ verifying all relevant information pertaining to registration, including the student's vaccination status.

8. **Conditional Student registration pending full vaccination**

8.1 In accordance with the UJ registration agreement, Students that have not been fully vaccinated at the time of registration will be registered conditionally until they are fully vaccinated, or successfully apply for an exemption from the vaccination requirements set out in the Mandatory Vaccination Policy and the Protocol.

8.2 Students' registration statuses will be rendered unconditional following the upload of Proof of full Vaccination, or the approval of an exemption application. Should a Student that has been granted an exemption subsequently elect to be vaccinated, Proof of Vaccination should be uploaded to <https://ulink.uj.ac.za/ujvac>. This will have no effect on registration status.

9. **Exemptions from vaccination against SARS-CoV-2**

9.1 UJ Employees and Students are entitled to apply for an exemption from the vaccination requirement imposed by the Mandatory Vaccination Policy and the Protocol on either medical grounds, or on the basis of religious belief. These grounds of exemption are discussed in further detail below. All exemption applications must be made by no later than 31 January 2022, in respect of Employees, and 14 February 2022, in respect of Students, and on the relevant online form <https://ulink.uj.ac.za/ujvac>.

9.2 Only applications submitted via the online form will be considered. Assistance will be provided where required to Employees and Students with the online submissions. No in-person representations will be considered unless the contrary is determined by the Exemptions Committee.

9.3 The burden of proof rest with the applicant to provide a motivation in writing to the Exemptions Committee. This implies that the applicant must provide the Exemptions Committee with sufficient and necessary documentation to substantiate the application.

9.4 All exemption applications will be considered and determined by the Exemptions Committee. The Exemptions Committee will be chaired by an independent person and will include multidisciplinary expertise.

- 9.5 When dealing with applications from Employees, the Exemptions Committee will include the Executive Director: HR and an expert from HR in Employer Relations as members. A representative from each of the recognized Unions at UJ will be invited to attend, without voting rights.
- 9.6 When dealing with applications from Students, the Exemptions Committee will include the Senior Director: Student Affairs and another senior staff member in Student Affairs. Two representatives from the Central Student Representative Council (SRC) will be invited to attend, without voting rights.
- 9.7 The Exemptions Committee may co-opt additional members as deem fit. Co-opted members will count for the quorum and will have voting rights.
- 9.8 The meetings of the Exemptions Committee may be held in-person or online.
- 9.9 The meeting is quorate if the majority of members and co-opted members are in attendance.
- 9.10 Decisions require the support of the majority of members and co-opted members.
- 9.11 The Exemptions Committee have a wide discretion to determine the appropriate process to be applied in assessing and determining applications for exemption, subject to principles of fairness and rationality. The Exemptions Committee may consult with suitable internal and external experts when required.
- 9.12 *Applications for exemption on medical grounds*
- 9.12.1 Exemptions may be applied for on any legitimate medical ground, including, but not limited to:
- 9.12.1.1 having experienced an allergic reaction and/or a past severe life-threatening reaction to receiving a vaccine;
- 9.12.1.2 clinical contra-indications;
- 9.12.1.3 demonstrable allergy to a component of the vaccines; and
- 9.12.1.4 any underlying medical conditions that have left the applicant's immune system compromised such that vaccination poses a greater risk than the contraction of COVID-19.
- 9.12.2 Applications for exemptions on medical grounds must be made on the online form <https://ulink.uj.ac.za/ujvac>. All relevant information and supporting documents must be included. These should include at least:
- 9.12.2.1 a medical certificate issued by a medical practitioner, registered as such under the Health Professions Act, 1974, which must clearly specify the medical reason(s) for seeking an exemption; and
- 9.12.2.2 a detailed recommendation on how, if at all, the applicant may be accommodated at the campus in the light of the medical condition(s) so disclosed, as considered against UJ's mandatory vaccination requirement.

9.12.3 The Exemptions Committee may request additional information or refer the applicant for further medical evaluation to a service provider identified by UJ in order to inform the determination of the application.

9.13 Applications for exemption on religious grounds

9.13.1 Exemptions may be applied for on the basis of a seriously-held religious belief that materially conflicts with vaccination, notwithstanding the wider public health benefits of vaccination.

9.13.2 Applications for exemptions on religious grounds must be made on the online form <https://ulink.uj.ac.za/ujvac>. All relevant information and supporting documents should be attached. These should include at least:

9.13.2.1 a written motivation, having regard to the consideration factors set out in paragraph 9.13.3 below;

9.13.2.2 an affidavit from a senior religious leader setting forth the key tenets of the religion relied upon and supporting the contention that these ground an objection to receiving the vaccination; and

9.13.2.3 a recommendation as to how UJ might accommodate the Employee or Student in the light of the objection to vaccination as considered against the mandatory vaccination requirement and the rights of other UJ Employees and Students.

9.13.3 The Exemptions Committee will assess the exemption application having particular regard to:

9.13.3.1 the cogency of the written motivation, which should clearly demonstrate that vaccination presents an unavoidable and serious conflict with the applicant's religious beliefs;

9.13.3.2 whether the applicant can provide examples of other instances in which adherence to their religious beliefs caused them to adjust their behaviour, particularly in relation to medical interventions;

9.13.3.3 whether the subjective beliefs expressed by the applicant are aligned with, or have some relation to, the accepted doctrines, widely adopted practices and known philosophical or theological underpinnings of a particular religion; and

9.13.3.4 whether the applicant's rights are justifiably limited by mandatory vaccination.

9.13.4 The Exemptions Committee may request additional information from the applicant, in order to inform the determination of the application.

9.14 Appeals against decisions by the Exemptions Committee in respect of exemption applications

9.14.1 Applicants may appeal the outcome of their exemption application by no later than five working days following receipt of the outcome of their application. All appeal applications must be submitted online: (1) to the Registrar in the case of Students and (2) the Chief Operating Officer in the case of Employees, who shall forward the appeal to an Appeals Committee, established by MEC. The

decision of the Appeals Committee shall be final and binding on the Employee or Student concerned.

- 9.14.2 UJ will communicate the outcome of an appeal following consideration thereof, within five working days of considering the appeal.

10. Risk mitigation measures for exemption holders

10.1 Mindful that, while vaccination currently offers the best possible protection against COVID-19, individuals that are granted exemptions from vaccination requirements are required to mitigate the risks posed to other (vaccinated) UJ Employees and Students.

10.2 Accordingly, exemption holders are required to comply with the following terms, which are set out in the Mandatory Vaccination Policy, and which may be supplemented by the Council:

- 10.2.1 undertaking daily health screening prior to being allowed entry to UJ campuses and facilities;
- 10.2.2 wearing a mask when on UJ campuses and facilities, including during lectures, while in laboratories, during tutorials, and/or during assessments, and using University transport, in accordance with existing COVID-19-related health and safety protocols;
- 10.2.3 undertaking weekly testing, at their own cost, for SARS-CoV-2 regardless of whether they are symptomatic for COVID-19. Proof of a negative COVID-19 RT-PCR (commonly referred to as "PCR") test from an accredited laboratory must be submitted to Protection Services of UJ and their line manager each Monday or the first subsequent working day when entering UJ Premises. The line manager keeps these reports on record and report any non-compliance in accordance with the UJ processes;
- 10.2.4 will not be allowed to participate in, nor have access to, activities in common spaces where social engagement occur;
- 10.2.5 no accommodation in any UJ-owned residence; and
- 10.2.6 online-only attendance at graduation ceremonies.

10.3 UJ Employees and Students that have successfully applied for exemption, but fail to comply with the risk mitigation measures above, will not be permitted to access UJ Premises. Repeated non-compliance may result in referral of the matter to the Registrar for direction on further action, which may ultimately result in exclusion or dismissal.

11. Non-compliance with the Mandatory Vaccination Policy and the Protocol

11.1 In the case of Students:

- 11.1.1 Subject to 11.1.2, a Student that is not fully vaccinated shall, without an approved exemption application, not be permitted to remain registered for study at UJ. Where applicable, conditional registration will be cancelled and, to the extent that they elect not to be fully vaccinated, the Student shall be deregistered and excluded.
- 11.1.2 Prior to the deregistration of any Student for failure to comply with the vaccination requirements:
- 11.1.2.1 the relevant faculty² will communicate in writing with the Student in question, directing them to comply by a specified date and referring them to UJ's Primary Healthcare Services, with the aim of providing counselling and consultation to address any concerns and with a view to encouraging the applicant to be vaccinated and providing any assistance required; and
- 11.1.2.2 should the Student fail to comply by the specified date, the faculty will deregister the Student and inform the Student accordingly;
- 11.1.3 Standard cancellation rules in respect of fees that would have applied for Students who were unconditionally registered and had cancelled their studies on that day, will apply. These rules are contained in the UJ 2022 Fee Booklet, accessible at <https://www.uj.ac.za/admission-aid/student-finance/>.
- 11.1.4 Any direct or indirect misrepresentation, dishonesty or fraud in relation to Proof of Vaccination, or exemption applications will constitute gross misconduct and will be addressed through the relevant disciplinary procedures.
- 11.2 In the case of Employees:
- 11.2.1 a failure to comply with the Policy through either being fully vaccinated by 15 March 2022 or applying for an exemption in the event that the Employee refuses to vaccinate by 31 January 2022 is a breach of Policy which may be dealt with in terms of UJ's existing disciplinary code and procedures and/or contractual arrangements between UJ and the Employee, where appropriate.
- 11.2.2 Any direct or indirect misrepresentation, dishonesty or fraud in relation to Proof of Vaccination, or exemption applications will constitute gross misconduct and will be addressed through the relevant disciplinary procedures or contractual processes.
- 11.2.3 UJ reserves the right to apply fair, reasonable and justifiable conditions to any exemption taking into account the medical or other reasons for the refusal to vaccinate. Once granted, and if the Employee fails or refuses to fully comply with those conditions, the Employee may be subject to disciplinary process or contractual breach procedures.

² "Faculty" includes the CBE and JBS

11.3 In the event of UJ being unable, despite all reasonable attempts (taking into account operational requirements and health and safety obligations) to provide an Employee seeking an exemption with that exemption, UJ will apply its existing employment policies governing incapacity and/or misconduct, whichever may be appropriate in the circumstances.

12. **Further information**

12.1 Queries regarding the Mandatory Vaccination Policy or the Protocol may be directed to ujcovid19@uj.ac.za. Queries regarding the safety and efficacy of Vaccines against SARS-CoV-2, or vaccination more generally, may be directed to UJ Health Services.