



## **University of Johannesburg**

### **Mandatory Vaccination Policy**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. The role and functioning of universities, including UJ, in teaching and learning, research, community development and innovation has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 1.2. Although UJ does have limited distance learning offerings, it is an established residential university, with contact teaching and research. Due to this fact, the mandatory vaccination of staff and students will enhance safe and optimal access to its campuses and facilities, enabling its core functions of teaching and learning, research, and community engagement.
- 1.3. The University is cognizant of the fact that many of its students, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, would benefit from being on campuses due to their specific socio-economic circumstances.
- 1.4. Students also require, in addition to teaching and learning, and research, access to other facilities enhancing their pedagogic journey, including but not exclusive to libraries, computer centres and the Centre for Psychological Services and Career Development (PsyCad),
- 1.5. In alignment with the requirements and duties of the Occupational Health and Safety Act (Act 85 of 1993, as amended), and specifically the obligations contained in section 8(1), section 9(1), section 12(1)(b), and section 14(a) and (c), a mandatory vaccination

policy protects the health and safety of the UJ community and by implication, public members that come into contact with employees and students of UJ, and/or otherwise participate in any activity on university premises.

- 1.6. UJs mandate is to be of benefit to the public, and to act in the public interest. Resulting from this and in the interest of broader society for the common good, UJ is required to mitigate against any harm to its stakeholders, including employees and students, as well as external stakeholders of the institution.
- 1.7. UJ is cognizant that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating effect on the country and its people, both socially and economically.
- 1.8. In considering these points, UJ has launched a consultation process with employees and students on mandatory vaccination, which included surveys, consultation with recognised labour and structured discussions. The University has made provision for the vaccination of staff and students at dedicated sites in partnership with public and private service providers. In addition, campus health care services and other stakeholders drove awareness programmes.

## **2. POLICY STATEMENT**

- 2.1. From international and national best practice, peer reviewed literature thus far, there is sufficient evidence that COVID-19 vaccines:
  - 2.1.1 Are safe and effective;
  - 2.1.2 Reduce the risk of being infected with SARS-CoV-2;
  - 2.1.3 Limits the spread of the virus;
  - 2.1.4 Prevents serious illness and death from COVID-19; and
  - 2.1.5 Are an effective intervention for COVID-19 prevention.
- 2.2. Vaccination will allow the UJ community to safely return to in-person and on-site teaching and learning, research, administration, and other daily operations.

- 2.3. In a situation where teaching and learning takes place in large groups, and where students live in on- and off campus accredited accommodation, the risk of infection and outbreaks exist. This risk can be significantly reduced by ensuring that all members of the University community are vaccinated.
- 2.4. In balancing the collective right of the broader University and surrounding community to health and safety, against individual rights to bodily integrity, freedom of religion, belief and opinion, the prevailing view is that the collective right takes precedence. This is in the broader public interest and is reasonable, justifiable, and rational.
- 2.5. Considering this, it will be required off all employees and students to be vaccinated against SARS-CoV-2 before accessing UJ campuses and facilities. This requirement extends to applicants for study or employment at UJ and includes visitors and service providers as determined by the Management Executive Committee (MEC).

### **3. GENERAL PRINCIPLES APPLICABLE TO THE MANDATORY VACCINATION POLICY**

- 3.1. To gain access to UJ campuses and facilities, employees, postdoctoral research fellows, and students will be required to provide their digital vaccine vaccination cards to authorized University officials to confirm their vaccination status. Confirmation of vaccination status will be linked to the student or employee access card, ensuring access to UJ campuses and facilities.
- 3.2. When required, employees will be allowed, within working hours, to be vaccinated. Where applicable, sick leave will be allowed should any side-effects associated with the vaccine be experienced.
- 3.3. Employees and students may be exempted by the Committee: Mandatory Vaccinations from being vaccinated on medical or religious grounds. They will accordingly be required to provide the required substantiating evidence (e.g. confirmation by a medical professional that the vaccination poses a significant health risk).

- 3.4. Where required, UJ retains the right to refer the employee or student for further medical assessment.
- 3.5 Employees and students seeking exemption from being vaccinated will be required to approach the Committee: Mandatory Vaccinations (refer to Section 4).
- 3.6 For employees, reasonable accommodation should be requested in line with the June 2021 Department of Employment and Labour directive.
- 3.7 Employees and students who are approved for exemption from vaccination by the Committee: Mandatory Vaccinations, will be required to adhere to the protocols identified below on an ongoing basis:
  - 3.7.1. Students exempted from vaccination:
    - 3.7.1.1 Will be entitled to receive advice from University Health Services, a Health and Safety Representative, a medical professional, or the Students' Representative Council member responsible for health and wellness;
    - 3.7.1.2 Will be required to undertake daily health screening prior to being allowed entry to UJ campuses and facilities;
    - 3.7.1.3 Will be required to always wear a mask when on UJ campuses and facilities, including during lectures, while in laboratories, during tutorials, and/or during assessments, and using University transport. These masks will be for the students' own cost;
    - 3.7.1.4 At their own cost, be required to undertake weekly testing for SARS-CoV-2 infection irrespective of whether they are symptomatic for COVID-19 or not;
    - 3.7.1.5 Will not have access to activities in common spaces where social engagements occur;
    - 3.7.1.6 Will not be provided with accommodation in any University-owned residence; and
    - 3.7.1.7 Will only be permitted to attend graduation ceremonies online.
  - 3.7.2. Employees exempted from vaccination:

- 3.7.2.1 Will be entitled to receive advice from University Health Services, a University Health and Safety Representative, a medical professional and/or their union representative;
  - 3.7.2.2 Will be required to undertake daily health screening prior to being allowed entry to UJ campuses and facilities;
  - 3.7.2.3 Will be required to always wear a mask when in the workplace, and be responsible for the associated costs;
  - 3.7.2.4 At their own costs, be required to undertake weekly testing for SARS-CoV-2 infection irrespective of whether they are symptomatic for COVID-19 or not;
  - 3.7.2.5 Will not be allowed to participate in activities in common spaces for the purposes of social engagement;
  - 3.7.2.6 May not refuse to return to work on account of not being vaccinated;
  - 3.7.2.7 Will be required to approach the Committee: Mandatory Vaccination to apply for reasonable accommodation; and
  - 3.7.2.8 In instances where reasonable accommodation cannot be provided, the University may exercise its rights, where applicable, to place the employee in another role, or terminate the employee's services based on incapacity in line with the relevant regulated processes, procedures and UJ policies.
- 3.8 Service providers and employees of service providers, and visitors who elect not to be vaccinated or who are unable to provide the University with proof of vaccination will not be permitted access to UJ campuses or facilities.

#### **4. COMMITTEE: MANDATORY VACCINATION**

- 4.1. This Committee, comprising of experts with the required skills and knowledge will be established by the MEC to:
  - 4.1.1 Consider applications for exemption on medical and religious grounds;
  - 4.1.2 Monitor compliance with the prescripts of this document.
- 4.2. The operational needs of UJ must be considered in assessing whether reasonable accommodation measures can be extended to an employee. Request for reasonable accommodation must be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

4.3. Where employees and students have been granted an exemption by the Committee, it will still be required of them to undertake daily health screening prior to being allowed access to UJ campuses and facilities and always wearing a mask.

Acknowledgments

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg – Mandatory Vaccination Policy (“MVac”) Framework (2021)

Discovery Limited – Mandatory Vaccination Policy for Employees (2021)

Department of Employment and Labour – Consolidated Direction on Occupational Health and Safety measures in certain workplaces (NO. R. 499 of 11 June 2021)

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