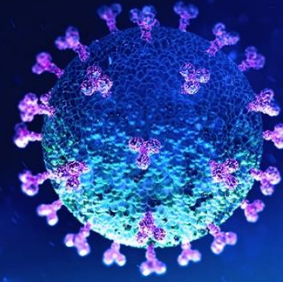




UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN  
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA - UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

**Find out more about UCT's approach  
to COVID-19 on the UCT website**



**22 March 2020**

## **UCT redefining the workplace in response to COVID-19**

In line with the principle of social and physical distancing and in order to ensure the safety of staff, the University of Cape Town UCT is redefining the workplace to include working from home where appropriate.

This means that staff will, with due urgency, be duly authorised to work offsite by their line managers and are legally protected in terms of the relevant legislation, while remaining subject to UCT's staffing policies and protocols.

UCT chief operating officer, Dr Reno Morar, said: "Ensuring the success of this approach will require alternative ways of working: prioritising electronic communication and other online functionality, reducing meetings and walk-ins, consultations via email/circular wherever possible, and scheduling meetings only as an exception."

In response to COVID-19, line managers at UCT are:

- producing business continuity plans for their areas of oversight and accompanying resource plans. Standard management practices are in place while classes are suspended and the residences are closed, including the delivery of work and services while ensuring staff safety and care.
- expected to segment work based on the nature of the work, whether it is a priority during this period and whether it can be performed remotely. Line managers are also to familiarise themselves with the modes of transport used by their staff members to inform decisions about work segmentation.
- reducing the presence of staff on site. Only where it is absolutely necessary for work to be delivered "on-site", or as part of an "essential service" line managers will put in place leaner staffing models/skeleton services, limited shift rotations and make special arrangements to transport staff to limit exposure to the virus in public transport.

During these unusual times the university's approach to dealing with leave will be guided by whether there is a need for work to be performed or not. This will apply to remote and on-site work.

"If a staff member suspects that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 or are feeling unwell, they must apply for "special leave". The COVID-19 guideline for special leave of 14 days will apply. A staff member diagnosed with COVID-19 must complete the sick leave process and notify UCT's Occupational Health and Safety unit. A member of staff who has recovered from COVID-19 must contact their line manager for back-to-work discussions and provide the necessary health records to work as required," said Morar.

For staff who are working in critical/essential areas and are required to take care of children as a result of the national directive to close schools, the principle of special leave will apply where they are unable to perform their duties at home.

Immunocompromised staff are a special area of consideration for line managers and supervisors. Line managers need to identify such staff members under their care, but staff may also self-identify. Line managers must ensure confidentiality in cases where staff have a particular diagnosis which links to their immunocompromised status.

"Staff who fall within this category are better protected from exposure to the virus by working remotely, where this is required, and will not be required to perform on-site work. Staff members who fulfil essential/critical functions and are unable to work onsite due to their immunocompromised status, will therefore be covered through special leave provisions."

The university will provide the appropriate safety gear and protocols as advised by UCT's Occupational Health and Safety unit for on-site and essential services staff.

- **READ:** [Full communication by the COO, Dr Reno Morar.](#)

***ENDS***

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