



**TEU**

**TERTIARY EDUCATION UNION**  
**TE HAUTŪ KAHURANGI**

## **COVID-19 commentary for the tertiary education sector**

**10 March 2022**

The leaders and managers of the tertiary education sector must put the well-being, health and safety of staff and learners at the heart of all COVID-19 responses.

Added to this, we must do our part as a sector to slow and reduce the spread of Omicron.

There must be a COVID-19 Protection Plan at every institution in the tertiary education sector. The health and safety responses to COVID-19 must include physical health, mental health, and well-being considerations. These plans must be generated using health and safety representatives (including legislated worker representatives), and both staff and student unions. Each plan must be reviewed on a regular basis to take account of new health advice, new strains of COVID, and changes in the numbers of active cases.

The plans are critical to the ongoing welfare of the people in tertiary education. For the plans to be effective, staff must be involved in all decision making as they understand the nuances of classes, support services, programmes, and student requirements.

### **COVID Protection Plans must encompass the following:**

- 1) During Red Phase 3 all activities that can be done from home (online) should be. There will be some exceptions for work best carried out on campus, on worksites, in community spaces, in marae, or other places where learning and student support takes place.
- 2) Institutions must ensure any critical face-to-face teaching and support services are carried out in well-ventilated rooms. These rooms must comply with physical distancing, hygiene, and mask wearing requirements (which must be clearly set out). All staff and students who feel unwell should stay home and take a COVID-19 test.
- 3) Staff, in consultation with their manager, must be empowered and enabled to make decisions about whether being on-campus is critical to their work, their learners, and the institution.
- 4) To enable good decision-making by staff and learners, institutions should notify staff when there have been positive cases and provide regular and accurate information around active cases and where there are hotspots.
- 5) There must be clear communication from the employer on health and safety measures. This must include information on how staff can log health and safety concerns into the institution's health and safety reporting systems.
- 6) Health and safety team members need to be clearly identified to staff, so they can be approached by staff who may want to formally raise health and safety concerns.
- 7) Institutions must provide masks to all staff, and these should be of the highest efficacy. Currently it is recommended that the best masks are N95 or surgical grade masks.
- 8) For staff who are required to be on campus, institutions should provide easy access to Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs). Information on where and how to access RATs should be readily available to all staff and learners.
- 9) The monitoring of vaccine passes, and campus access, should be managed by staff dedicated to this role.

- 10) The requirement for correct mask wearing by everyone on campus is explicit.
- 11) Given the vaccination exemption for secondary students going onto tertiary education campuses, all employers must require secondary students to wear masks at all times and ensure that this is enforced.
- 12) Staff must not be expected to do teaching and service delivery both on-campus and online as this creates a significant increase in workloads.
- 13) Institutions need to take into account that periods of isolation will affect how much and what work can be carried out because of the competing demands when isolating at home, and in some cases the lack of appropriate equipment.
- 14) Workload conversations must account for staff picking up work of sick colleagues.
- 15) Managers must make arrangements for work to be covered or prioritise what gets done and what is left. This is not the responsibility of a sick worker.
- 16) There must be recognition from leaders and managers that during a pandemic some work may not be able to be carried out.
- 17) General workload approaches and principles still apply – workloads should be safe, fair, equitable, reasonable, and transparent.
- 18) Staff who are self-isolating are working from home and must not be required to use sick leave. As good employers, tertiary education institutions should ensure staff who are sick with COVID are taking 'special' or 'pandemic' leave, not sick leave.
- 19) Staff caring for family members because a school, early childhood centre, rest home, or other care facility is closed, should be enabled to work from home and not be required to use sick, annual or other forms of leave.

## WORKING REMOTE

## COVID-19 PRINCIPLES

1. You are not "Working From Home", you are "At your home, during a crisis, trying to work".
2. Your personal physical, mental, and emotional health is far more important than anything else right now.
3. You should not try to compensate for lost productivity by working longer hours.
4. You will be kind to yourself and not judge how you are coping based on how you see others coping.
5. You will be kind to others and not judge how they are coping based on how you are coping.
6. Your team's success will not be measured the same way it was when things were normal.



**TEU** | TE HAU TŪ  
KAHURANGI  
TERTIARY EDUCATION UNION

Thanks to a viral tweet from Jonathan Lundberg (@TechJonathan) we have this very real and truthful statement

#AwhiAtu #AwhiMai  
#COVID-19

teu.ac.nz  
teu@teu.ac.nz  
0800 278 348