

# COVID-19 Safety Procedure

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## Purpose

This procedure describes the University’s safety measures to limit the spread of COVID-19, including when University staff, on-campus Higher Degree by Research candidates, consultants, contractors and volunteers are required to be vaccinated against COVID-19, how vaccination is evidenced and how to apply for an exemption from vaccination.

## Applicable governance instruments

Instrument	Section	Principles
<i>Safety and Wellbeing Policy</i>	1 People safety and wellbeing	1.1 – 1.2

## Procedure

### 1. Introduction

The University is committed to ensuring a safe and healthy workplace for the University community by providing a positive safety culture. We have a primary duty of care to ensure that as far as reasonably practicable, people are safe at work and in University workplaces. As a major employer for Tasmania, we must have in place measures to safeguard members of our University Community against COVID-19. These measures include:

- Following all public health requirements and advice in relation to the movement of people on campus, for example, in relation to social distancing and numbers of people occupying any given space.
- Implementing additional safety measures to limit or prevent the spread of COVID-19 including:
  - The requirement to be vaccinated.
  - The requirement to wear masks.

## 2. Vaccination

### 2.1. Requirement to be Vaccinated

For the purpose of this procedure:

- vaccine means a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration for use in Australia
- a person is considered vaccinated after completion of the relevant vaccine series or subsequent booster.

Individuals should seek medical advice before being vaccinated, if required. University employees are entitled to take sick leave if required following a vaccination, in line with entitlements in the *University of Tasmania Staff Agreement*.

All University staff, on-campus Higher Degree by Research candidates, consultants, contractors, and volunteers must be vaccinated before accessing University premises, attending University operated programs or undertaking University business.

### 2.2. Evidence of Vaccination

A person must provide evidence of vaccination to the Director of Safety and Wellbeing at least 48 hours before the person is required to be vaccinated under this procedure.

Evidence must include the date of vaccination and be proof of vaccination from one of the following:

- a) the Australian Government (such as a COVID-19 digital certificate)
- b) the person's vaccination provider (including a medical practitioner licensed and registered to practice medicine in Australia)
- c) the Australian Immunisation Register
- d) a verifiable international agency.

The University may request a person to provide evidence of vaccination at any time.

### 2.3. Exemptions from Vaccination

Exemptions from vaccination can be requested by staff, on-campus Higher Degree by Research candidates, consultants, contractors, residents in University accommodation and volunteers on the following grounds only:

- a) medical grounds (see section 2.4);
- b) religious belief (see section 2.5), or
- c) an inability to obtain a vaccination appointment by the required date.

The University will not grant an exemption if:

- a) it is not required for genuine medical, religious or other reasons protected by safety or discrimination laws;
- b) to do so would be unlawful;
- c) to do so would create a risk to health and safety which cannot otherwise be eliminated or reduced, or
- d) to do so would cause the University unjustifiable hardship.

Requests for exemptions are to be made at least 10 days before the person is required to be vaccinated under this procedure, as follows:

- a) the request is to be made in writing and directed to the University's Director of Safety and Wellbeing
- b) the request must provide detailed reasons
- c) all requests must be supported by evidence.

In assessing the request, the Director of Safety and Wellbeing may require further information, or seek professional or expert advice or an opinion (including from a medical practitioner).

While the request is being considered, the person must not attend University premises or University related programs, unless the Director of Safety and Wellbeing determines otherwise.

#### **2.4. Exemptions on Medical Grounds**

The University will not unlawfully discriminate on the grounds of a disability, including certain medical conditions. The University also recognises that it may not be safe for people with certain medical conditions to be vaccinated.

The Director of Safety and Wellbeing may grant an exemption on medical grounds if reasonably satisfied that the exemption is required:

- a) to avoid unlawful discrimination, or
- b) for safety reasons on the basis of a genuine medical condition.

The request for exemption must be accompanied by reasonable evidence to support the request for exemption.

#### **2.5. Exemptions on Grounds of Religious Belief**

The Director of Safety and Wellbeing may grant an exemption if required due to a genuinely held religious belief of a formally recognised religion.

The request for exemption must be accompanied by evidence including certification from a religious leader that the person is unable to receive a dose, or a further dose, of a COVID-19 vaccine due to the core beliefs of the religion that apply to all believers of that religion.

#### **2.6. Outcome of Requests for Exemption**

Following assessment of an exemption request, the Director of Safety and Wellbeing will either:

- a) approve the exemption from vaccination
- b) reject the request for an exemption
- c) defer the requirement for vaccination – for example, for a reasonable time until vaccines are available.

If an exemption or deferral is granted, the Director of Safety and Wellbeing will require the person to wear a mask whenever accessing University premises or attending University operated programs, and may impose other requirements to manage COVID-19 risks for example:

- a) limiting physical attendance on campus or in accommodation
- b) implementing a regular testing plan.

If an exemption is granted on the basis of medical grounds or religious belief the University will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate the person unless:

- a) the adjustments needed will cause the University unjustifiable hardship, or
- b) even with the adjustments, the person cannot perform the inherent requirements of their role or studies safely.

In these circumstances, the University may need to terminate a staff member's, consultant's or contractor's employment or engagement or cancel or vary a Higher Degree by Research candidate's enrolment.

If the University does not grant an exemption, the person will be expected to be vaccinated in accordance with this procedure. If they do not do so, it will be dealt with as non-compliance with this procedure (see section 2.7).

## **2.7. Non-compliance**

The obligations imposed on staff, consultants, contractors and volunteers by this procedure are lawful and reasonable directions, with which they must comply.

If a staff member, consultant or contractor, without reasonable excuse, does not comply with this procedure, the University may take disciplinary action against that person, which may include termination of employment or engagement.

If a Higher Degree by Research candidate does not comply with this procedure, they may be refused access to University premises and programs and their enrolment may be cancelled or restrictions imposed on the units in which the candidate can enrol.

## **3. Other Requirements**

### **3.1 Risk Assessments**

The University undertakes risk assessments to ensure the health and safety of the University community in accordance with the University *Risk Management Procedure*. A risk assessment may identify other requirements to manage safety and limit the spread of COVID-19. These requirements will depend on the specific circumstances and may include the following:

- a) hygiene and sanitisation requirements
- b) the requirement to wear personal protective equipment (including masks)
- c) physical distancing requirements.

These requirements will be a condition of entry to University premises and University operated programs.

### **3.2. Masks**

In addition to the requirement to wear masks under section 2.6 or as a result of a risk assessment under section 3.1, individuals are encouraged to wear masks in circumstances where they are in close proximity with others (for example University courses, research or programs involving patient or student interaction).

#### 4. Privacy

The University will need to view and collect information about the vaccination status of people to whom this procedure applies, in order to comply with its obligations under work health and safety legislation and in certain cases, public health orders.

The University will collect, use, disclose and store records containing information about an individual's vaccination status or other health information in accordance with the University Privacy Statements, the privacy principles in the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* (Tas) and its obligations under the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).

#### Related procedures

*Risk Management Procedure*

*Professional Experience Placement Procedure*

#### Versions

<u>Version</u>	Action	Approved by	Business Owner/s	Approval Date
Version 1	Approved	Chief People Officer	Director, Safety and Wellbeing	23 December 2021
Version 2	Approved	Chief People Officer	Director, Safety and Wellbeing	23 June 2022
Version 3	Approved	Chief People Officer	Director, Safety and Wellbeing	18 October 2022
Version 4	Minor amendment approved	Director Governance and Compliance	Director, Safety and Wellbeing	22 December 2022
Version 4	Revoked	Chief People Officer	Director, Safety and Wellbeing	5 July 2023