

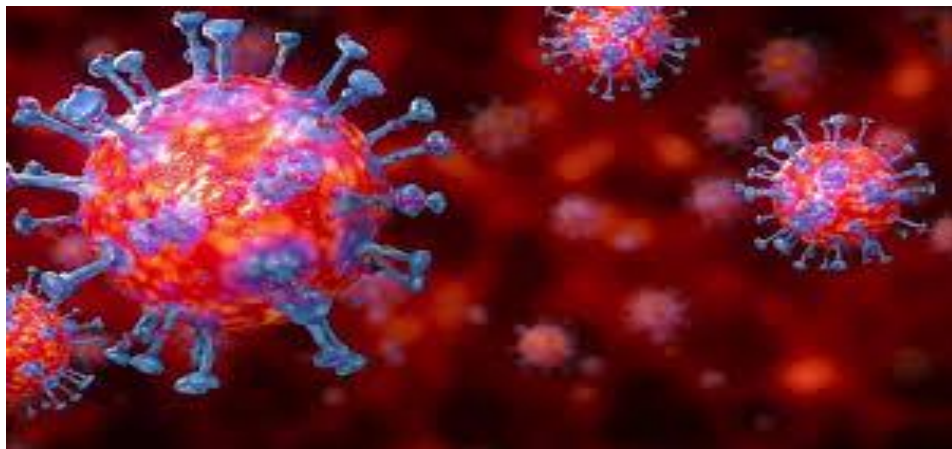


higher education
& training

Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**CORONAVIRUS – COVID-19 GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES FOR
SECTOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING AUTHORITIES**



PREAMBLE

These Guidelines and Procedures are issued in compliance with the Disaster Management Act (Act No.57 of 2002) and related Regulations. Any word or expression or provision to which the meaning has been assigned, shall have such a meaning as long as it is consistent with this Act, related Regulations and Directives issued by the President, the Cabinet and the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, from time to time.

INTRODUCTION

1. On 30 January 2020 the World Health Organisation (“**WHO**”) declared the Coronavirus COVID-19 Outbreak to be a Pandemic.
2. On 15 March 2020 President Cyril Ramaphosa declared the Coronavirus COVID-19 outbreak to be a National state of disaster.
3. On 16 March 2020 the Department of Public Service and Administration (“**the DPSA**”) issued Guidelines for the Containment/ Management of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) in the Public Service in terms of which the Sector Education and Training Authority (“**SETA**”) is obliged to *inter alia* develop guidelines, action plans and protocols to manage confirmed cases of COVID-19 among employees and in its offices.
4. On 17 March 2020 Regulations in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 were published regarding the steps necessary to prevent an escalation of the spread of COVID-19 coronavirus.
5. With effect from 18 March 2020 all Technical and Vocational Education and Training (“**TVET**”) Colleges and all Universities were closed until 15 April 2020.
6. On 23 March 2020 President Cyril Ramaphosa escalated the measures to combat the Covid-19 spread and announced the enforcement of a nation-wide lockdown for twenty one (“**21**”) days with effect from midnight on Thursday 26 March 2020.
7. SETAs are required to constantly keep abreast of communication from various sources including, but not limited to: The Presidency, The National Treasury (“**NT**”), The Department of Higher Education and Training (“**the DHET**”), The Auditor-General of South Africa (“**AGSA**”), the Department of Public Service and

Administration (“**the DPSA**”), South African Qualifications Authority (“**SAQA**”), Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (“**QCTO**”) and any other relevant authorities.

8. In terms of the above measures and regulations and the SETAs’ obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, 1993 to provide as far as reasonably practicable a safe and healthy work environment that is without risk to employees and persons who enter the SETAs’ offices, the DHET implements the following procedure and guidelines.

PURPOSE

9. The SETAs Procedure and Guidelines outlines guidance on the management of the risks associated with the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus and the impact thereof on the operations of the SETAs.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

DHET - the Department of Higher Education, Science and Technology.

NT – National Treasury.

DPSA- the Department of Public Services Administration.

SETA- Skills and Education Training Authority.

COVID-19- the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

PFMA- the Public Finance Management Act, 1999.

QCTO- the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations.

SAQA- the South African Qualifications Authority.

AGSA -Auditor-General of South Africa.

SDPs – Skills Development Providers.

WSP -Workplace Skills Plan.

CEO- the Chief Executive Officer.

CFO- the Chief Financial Officer.

ETQA -Education, Training and Quality Assurance.

APPLICATION AND SCOPE

10. The guidelines and procedures are implemented specifically to address and provide guidance on the containment of the COVID-19 strain of the coronavirus and is applicable to all employees of the SETA whether permanent or temporary including, all contractors and service providers unless otherwise specified. These Guidelines and Procedures shall be in force for the duration of the Disaster Management Act (Act No.57 of 2002) and related Regulations.
11. These guidelines and procedures are effective immediately and will continue to be effective until notice is provided by the DHET,

PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES TO BE ADOPTED BY ALL SETA EMPLOYEES/ CONTRACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS

12. The COVID-19 coronavirus is spread mainly from person-to-person who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes and these droplets land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly inhaled into the lungs.
13. All employees are required to take basic preventative measures to protect themselves and others from infection and spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus.
14. These preventative measures include:
 - 14.1 Regular and thorough cleansing of hands with alcohol based hand rub or soap and water especially after bathroom visits, eating food, sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose for at least 20 seconds at a time.
 - 14.2 Social distancing and maintaining a distance of at least one metre from a person who is coughing and sneezing.
 - 14.3 Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
 - 14.4 Practicing good respiratory hygiene by covering you nose and mouth with a bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze and discarding the tissue immediately.
 - 14.5 Stay at home if you feel unwell and have flu like symptoms.
 - 14.6 The wearing of masks is not necessary unless you are taking care of an infected person.

- 14.7 If you have a fever, cough or difficulty breathing seek medical attention immediately.
- 14.8 Use non-physical greetings and avoid shaking hands.
- 14.9 Clean shared surfaces and equipment with disinfectant or cleaning wipes before use.

PRECAUTIONARY STEPS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IMMEDIATELY

15. The following preventive measures will be implemented immediately to curb and mitigate against the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus and will continue to be enforced until further notice by the DHET:

SOCIAL DISTANCING

16. Social distancing to reduce population density is to be implemented with immediate effect.

17. The mandatory implementation of social distancing is as follows:

- 17.1 All non-essential/ non critical meetings between employees, contractors and other stakeholders both inside the SETA and outside are suspended until further notice by the DHET.
- 17.2 Interaction between the SETA and its employees and stakeholders will be through the ERP web-based systems, other SETA systems, e-mails, skype, zoom or other tools.
- 17.3 Research is to be conducted remotely where possible.
- 17.4 No face to face meetings will be held. E-mails, teleconferences, Skype, Zoom Application and video conferencing are to be utilized instead.
- 17.5 There will be no site visits until lockdown has been lifted.
- 17.6 High Risk Employees, employees in the ETQA Division and contractors who can work from home must do so without exception unless there is exceptional reason why the employee or contractor is unable to work from home. Those employees who are working from home are to report to their line manager daily who will determine the functions to be performed and completed by the employee.

TRAVEL BAN

18. All international and domestic business-related travel are suspended with immediate effect and until further notice as determined from time to time.

SUSPENSION OF SITE VISITS

19. All site visits for purposes of monitoring and reporting learners' progress and approvals for workplace learning are suspended with immediate effect until further notice by the DHET.

20. Where possible services will be provided remotely through the utilization of electronic communication platforms.

MEASURES TO BE IMPLEMENTED WITH IMMEDIATE EFFECT TO ENSURE BUSINESS CONTINUITY

21. The following measures and guidelines will be implemented to ensure business continuity and to address the impact of the national state of disaster and the lockdown:

HUMAN RESOURCES

22. During the period of the national state of disaster and the national lockdown human resource activities will be adjusted to the current guidelines, and the SETAs will ensure that staff in general can work from home ("remotely"), are productive as far as possible and adhere to the internal policies of the SETA as well as employment contract terms and conditions.

23. The SETAs are required to pay its employees in full during the period of lockdown from 00h00 on 26 March 2020 to 16 April 2020. Should the lockdown be extended beyond 16 April 2020 further communication to the SETAs will be made.

24. In the event an employee of a SETA is, during the period of the nationwide lockdown diagnosed with COVID- 19 the relevant SETA's policies on sick leave will be applied.

25. Any SETA employee who falls ill through exposure at the workplace will be paid through the Compensation Fund.

26. All disciplinary and incapacity hearings will be suspended until the national state of disaster is uplifted. Those employees who are suspended pending such proceedings will remain on paid suspension.

FINANCE

27. The SETAs will be guided by the National Treasury in preparation of year end accounts for audit as the Public Finance Management Act (Act No. 1 of 1999) ("**the PFMA**") statutory deadlines.
28. As payment to suppliers, service providers and projects may be significantly delayed, the SETAs must put contingency measures in place to communicate with the suppliers, service providers and the projects as to when and how payment will be made.
29. The publication, awarding of tenders and the appointment of service providers will be suspended with immediate effect until such time the national state of disaster is uplifted.
30. All contracts between the SETAs and the relevant service providers will be reviewed and extended for an appropriate time.
31. Emergency procurement guidelines, must comply with the relevant National Treasury Guidelines.

GOVERNANCE

32. The SETA CEOs are expected to ensure these guidelines and procedures are adhered to and operations of the SETAs continue as far as possible, so as to ensure operations are brought up to full capacity, during and once the national state of disaster is lifted
33. Internal audits will be performed remotely where possible. If not possible the internal audits will be postponed.
34. The external audits will be conducted remotely in terms of any guidelines that may be issued by the Auditor General of South Africa, from time to time.
35. The SETAs shall implement contingency plans and shall take all reasonable measures to achieve the set targets as per the Annual Performance Plan ("**APP**") and Service Level Agreements ("**SLA**"). Measures will be put in place to extend deadlines and contracts if and necessary.
36. Each SETA will determine practice for Governance meetings. There are various options available to communicate with the Accounting Authority ("**AA**") relating to any urgent matters for approval.

37. Induction of the new SETA AAs is to be delayed until notice.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, ETQA AND RESEARCH

38. ETQA operations will continue, however, no face to face meetings will be held with SDPs.

39. All communication with the SDPs will be via e mail, teleconferencing, video conferencing, Skype or Zoom Application.

40. Desktop assessments relating to ETQA operations will be put in place to ensure continued operations however the SDPs are to expect delays that may be caused by the national state of disaster and nationwide lockdown.

41. The SETAs will support employers remotely and the date for the submission of Workplace Skills Plans (“**WSPs**”) will be extended to 31 May 2020, as also provided for by the Regulation.

42. The following must be noted with regard to training by SETA providers:

42.1 It is noted that the training will be severely affected, affecting learners, affecting learner stipends, and possibly affecting SETA performance.

42.2 Compliance of SDPs to the national state of disaster and lockdown measures must be adhered to.

42.3 Communication must be maintained by the SDP, employer and the SETAs so that the effect of the national state of disaster can be quantified and known by the SETAs.

42.4 Stipends to learners during this time should be continued at full value. This however will have an effect on the duration of the contract as it may have to be extended, and the financial resources of the SETA to carry stipends to learners during this period. Other options of resourcing can be explored to assist the SETAs.

42.5 Workplace based learning programmes will also be suspended for the period of the national state of disaster, and hence any stipend and contracts will have to be extended resulting in a financial burden to the SETAs.

42.6 Bursary funding will continue, and operations relating to TVET colleges and Universities will be dictated by guidelines determined by the DHET.

- 42.7 Documentation relating to training/projects can still be sent and communicated to the SETAs through electronic means or the SETAs' automated systems.
- 42.8 Trade testing has been suspended until further notice. Issuing of trade and other SETA certificates will be delayed due to the National state of disaster period, however where possible endeavours should be made not to delay.
- 42.9 WSPs can be submitted to SETAs as required, but a blanket approval to 31 May 2020 will be implemented to allow employers more time to submit WSP as SETAs will support employers remotely.
- 42.10 Research can be done remotely where possible, but again there will be some delays/postponements on some research.

QUARTERLY REPORTING

- 42.11 Quarterly reporting remains in force, as per the DHET deadlines, owing to further guidance by AGSA and the DHET, should situation, otherwise be warranted.

REFERENCES

- A. Statement by President Cyril Ramaphosa on escalation measures to combat COVID -19 pandemic
- B. Higher Education in a time of Coronavirus; A handy guide on what's happening in the Post School Education and Training Sector.
- C. Circular No 07 of 2020 State of Disaster: Guidelines for the Containment and Management of the Coronavirus (COVID 19) in the Public Sector issued by the DPSA.
- D. Regulations issued in terms of section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002.
- E. Notice on Compensation for occupationally Acquired Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID 19) under Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act, 130 of 1993, as amended.
- F. Department of Employment and Labour "Workplace Preparedness: COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-19 virus).
- G. Unemployment Insurance Fund "Easy- Aid Guide for Employers
- H. National Treasury Instruction No. 08 of 2019/2020 – "Emergency procurement in response to National State of Disaster"

KEEPING UP TO DATE

- A. National Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.za>
- B. National Institute for Communicable Diseases : <https://www.nicd.ac.za>
- C. National Institute of Occupational Health : <https://www.nioh.ac.za>
- D. National Health Laboratory Service : <https://www.nhls.ac.za>
- E. World Health Organisation: <https://www.who.int>

F. Coronavirus Hotline Number: 0800 02 99 99.

KEY CONTACTS WHILE THIS GUIDELINE IS EFFECTIVE:

43. DHET –

44. Artisan related queries-

ANNEXURES:

45. Remote Work Guidelines.

46. National Treasury Instruction No. 08 of 2019/2020 – “Emergency procurement in response to National State of Disaster”