



31 March 2020

### **NUST Volunteer Framework for COVID-19**

On 14 March 2020 Namibia reported its first cases the COVID-19 disease. The Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) has joined the nation at large in taking strong steps to decrease spread of the deadly virus that is causing this disease. Therefore, NUST went on recess immediately after the first cases were reported. This recess has now been extended in line with the national state of emergency as declared by His Excellency the President of the Republic of Namibia, Dr Hage Geingob as well as the subsequent lockdown of Khomas and Erongo regions. The disease is likely to overwhelm the current national health system and put a strain on all governmental services as well as the private sector, even with deliberate planning and adjustments. Hence, help is needed in all areas, and will be needed more in the weeks and months to come.

Against this background, it is proposed that any staff and students who would like to volunteer to combat the disease be given opportunities to organize themselves and to do so. The variety of our skills and expertise will enable us to make an impact in the fight against this disease. In addition, the Ministry of Health and Social Services (MOHSS) will provide training as well as personal protection equipment to all volunteers. This will be a completely volunteer exercise with no liability to the University.

There are various ways in which volunteers will assist, such as the following:

1. Educational campaigns in the townships on handwashing, and the setting up of handwashing stations.
2. surveying townships to locate the most vulnerable, and engaging community members to come up with solutions on how to protect those individuals.
3. Assist with laboratory needs at NIP and PathCare.
4. Drivers for patient and staff transport.
5. Data entry and compilation of spreadsheets for surveillance and contact tracing.
6. Cleaning up at hospitals and testing sites.
7. Clinical assistance at hospitals and clinics for medically trained staff/students.

8. Bringing meals to patients and staff.
9. Setting up new makeshift healthcare facilities, as the need arises, and helping transport supplies to these facilities.
10. Serving as nursing assistants to keeping an eye on patients and informing nurses when they need help, changing linens, etc.
11. Sourcing sponsorships from businesses and individuals for items or money or services as needed.

Now is not the time to react in fear, but to prepare for any possible coming wave of this virus, and to look for ways to jump in and make a difference.

Ideally this could be organized programme-by-programme, with programme coordinators reaching out to students and staff in their programme and seeing who would like to volunteer to help and looking for how to help. This would be in each student or staff member's own capacity, not under the covering of the University. Dr Adam Flowers ([aflowers@nust.na](mailto:aflowers@nust.na)) is a medical doctor and he is currently involved in various volunteering projects with MOHSS. Dr Flowers has agreed to assist programme coordinators, once they have created a volunteer list, with finding opportunities to serve at MOHSS. Since the needs are great and may not be matched perfectly with the training programme, it is also encouraged that each programme thinks of ways they could serve the greatest need, even if it is not in their specialty. For example, an engineering programme could be involved with a meal preparation and delivery rotation for a local clinic.

The Emergency Medical Care programme is currently being organized and mobilized to serve in the medical response. If other programmes and departments could also consider joining in the response it would be appreciated. The first step is to ask for volunteers from your departments/programmes, and then to contact Dr Flowers to work on a plan of action for mobilization.

Let us organise and prepare ourselves while we can.

Sincerely,



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Adam Flowers, MD, MPH