

## **University of Zululand: Policy on HIV/AIDS**

### **1. Introduction**

The country's Higher Education Sector appears to be particularly badly affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, with some estimates indicating that infection levels amongst undergraduates might be as high as 1 in 4. Given these figures, it would be hard to dispute SAUVCA's assertion that "within the next 5 years, AIDS will become an everyday reality in the University system".

Given the nature of the disease and the devastating effect it is already having on our society, the University affirms the need to take a clear position on key questions related to HIV infection and AIDS. It also needs to clearly define and implement programmes to address preventive and management aspects of HIV/AIDS.

In respect of employment capacity, risk of workplace transmission and entitlement to employment benefits, there are no relevant differences between HIV/AIDS and other life threatening conditions. Therefore, there should be no special burdens placed on employees with HIV/AIDS. The same should apply to students living with HIV/AIDS.

### **2. Principles**

The fundamental principles are:

- To treat HIV/AIDS in all relevant respects like other comparable life-threatening conditions
- To provide equal opportunities and equal access for employees and students living with HIV/AIDS
- To respect the right to confidentiality of employees and students living with HIV/AIDS as well as others affected by this status
- To involve representatives of all sectors of the University (including those living with HIV/AIDS) where possible, in the development of all prevention, intervention and care strategies
- To involve all sectors of the University in the fight against HIV/AIDS through education, prevention, treatment and care
- To create a working and learning environment that is supportive, sensitive and responsive to employees and students living with HIV/AIDS and that encourages employees and students to take personal responsibility for preventing the further spread of HIV.

### **3. Objectives of the Policy**

The objectives of the policy are:

- Through the provision of education and information, to reduce the transmission of HIV
- To seek to maintain a safe environment on all campuses of the University, which empowers both men and women to resist coercive sex
- To raise the level of understanding of HIV/AIDS throughout the University
- To identify and disseminate the available resources to be used in the fight against HIV/AIDS
- To equip students and staff to be able to live and work in societies with increasing rates of HIV infection and AIDS
- To provide HIV/AIDS counselling
- To create an environment where people living with HIV/AIDS are safe to reveal their status and seek appropriate support and counselling
- To facilitate access to care and treatment where appropriate, and to referral where appropriate, for those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS

#### **4. Code of Good Practice**

The University will adopt the Code of Good Practice on key aspects of HIV/AIDS and employment provided by the Minister of Labour. Copies of this document are available in the Library, the Clinic, and in the Resource Centre for University Learning and Teaching (D5).

#### **5. Implementation of Code of Good Practice at the University of Zululand**

Employees living with HIV/AIDS will have the same rights, duties and obligations as any other employee.

##### 5.1 Employee specific policy

##### 5.1.1 Employment conditions

- Employees with HIV/AIDS will be governed by the same contractual obligations as all other employees according to the University's conditions of service, including appropriate promotion, work alternatives and training opportunities
- Employees with HIV/AIDS will not be prevented from attending any campus activities
- No employee will be dismissed or have their employment terminated merely on the basis of HIV/AIDS, nor will HIV/AIDS status influence retrenchment procedures
- HIV/AIDS will not in itself be a reason for unilateral medical "boarding" of an employee
- HIV/AIDS will not be used as a justification for the non-performance of duties in terms of the employment contract
- If an employee is no longer able to work due to AIDS, the appropriate conditions of service will apply with regard to possible medical boarding

##### 5.1.2 Health, Leave, Performance Employees living with HIV/AIDS will be

governed without discrimination by agreed existing sick leave procedures.

5.1.3 Benefits Employees living with HIV/AIDS are entitled to the same benefits as all other University staff.

Unizul commits itself to reviewing restrictions of benefits, which specifically discriminate against those with any infection or AIDS and to reconsidering its contract with the schemes.

Similarly, Unizul commits itself to scrutinising provident fund, pension, group and spouse life insurance cover for restrictions of benefits which specifically discriminate against those living with the HIV infection or AIDS and to reconsidering its contract with the insurers.

Unizul will inform all employees of any limitations of medical or insurance benefits, as well as changes to medical or insurance benefits with regard to HIV/AIDS.

5.1.4 Support services Unizul will provide the following services and support:

- Pre-and Post-test counselling
- Referral to appropriate professionals, institutions/organisations within the community, for further management
- Provision of training and refresher courses for support personnel who deal with HIV/AIDS

## 5.2 Student-specific policy

5.2.1 Conditions of study Students who are living with HIV or AIDS will not be prevented from attending lectures, living in residences or being involved with campus activities on account of their HIV/AIDS status. Students who refuse to study or work with any fellow student or staff member who is, or who is perceived to be, living with HIV/AIDS, will be subject to the following:

1. education
2. counselling
3. disciplinary action

5.2.2 Grievances and Disciplinary Procedures A student living with HIV/AIDS has the same rights, duties and obligations as all other students. Where discrimination occurs as a result of HIV/AIDS status, the student will have recourse to existing University mechanisms for redress. HIV/AIDS status may not be used to evade University rules and regulations. Standard disciplinary procedures will apply for infringement of University rules, regardless of

HIV/AIDS status.

## **6. Programme of Implementation**

### 6.1 Awareness

6.1.1 General and private access to information and resources Access to HIV/AIDS information will be facilitated in the following ways:

- Ongoing networking with the Dean of Students and the SRC with regard to counselling, resource access and community activity
- Advice for parents, so that the making of informed decisions is facilitated. (One of the mechanisms for offering this advice will be
- the publication of leaflets for parents and students to be sent out with application forms)
- Provision of material in all residence rooms for students so that these can be perused in private
- Facilitation of access to testing on request, with the assurance of confidentiality
- Referral to hospital when necessary advice on treatment, including alternative therapy, for opportunistic infections

### 6.1.2 Human Rights

Staff and students at Unizul will be apprised of human rights policies under the South African Constitution with special reference to the rights of women, sexual preference, and people living with HIV/AIDS.

### 6.2 Prevention

The University will take every opportunity to promote creative and innovative HIV/AIDS programmes.

#### 6.2.1 Provision of condoms

Access to condoms will be widely provided.

#### 6.2.2 Opportunities for HIV Testing

The University will establish a centre for HIV testing, where pre- and post- HIV counselling and testing will do facilitated, according to the Clinic's policies, and with strict confidentiality ensured.

#### 6.2.3 Universal precautions

Universal precautions should be available at all times. A Safety Officer will be responsible for ensuring that universal precautions are observed on campus.

### 6.3 Care, Management and Confidentiality

All staff and students with living with HIV/AIDS will be treated in life-affirming ways, without any discrimination. Symptomatic treatment, e.g. treatment for opportunistic infections, will be provided at the University at the level of primary

health care.

#### 6.3.1 Counselling

Existing counselling and guidance services will be strengthened and expanded to include HIV/AIDS. With regard to rape and sexual violence, all students and staff should have access to counselling and support provided by the University. Support groups, comprising students, staff and community members, will be formed after appropriate counselling training has been offered. Professional staff will offer supervision of counsellors. Records connected to counselling will be kept confidential.

#### 6.3.2 Referral

When appropriate, referrals will be made to relevant institutions and organisations within the area, for further assessment, treatment and management.

#### 6.4 Research

- The University will promote research into all aspects of HIV/AIDS
- The University's staff and students should benefit from any research and community activity undertaken within the institution through relevant focussing and participation.

#### 6.5 HIV/ AIDS in the Curriculum

With the Higher Education sector likely to be so adversely affected, and given its key role as a driver of social and economic development, it is clear that our graduates must be equipped to manage the pandemic, whilst at university and, possibly even more importantly, after they have left. In addition to recruiting students for peer-counselling projects and community outreach programmes, academic staff should investigate ways in which the topic of HIV/AIDS, be it to do with prevention, treatment, or changing attitudes, might be integrated into the curriculum. Concrete suggestions (some of which are already in place at other HEIs, and which are variously department-specific or multi-disciplinary) include:

- Inclusion of HIV/AIDS in the 'Lifeskills' curriculum (e.g. at diploma level)
- Multi-disciplinary programmes in the management and treatment of HIV/AIDS, including provision of kits for home care, and the preparation of medication
- Including HIV/AIDS education as part of the core curriculum
- Using HIV/AIDS data and statistics (instead of discipline-based data) when

- developing numeracy and computer literacy.
- Student-conducted surveys on such topics as the impact of social and sexual practice on the epidemic, and investigating ways of positively changing attitudes towards those who are HIV positive
- Courses/modules on the legal rights of HIV/AIDS employees and their employers
- Using HIV/AIDS web sites for practical sessions in teaching Internet usage.

#### 6.6 Evaluation and Monitoring (UZ Committee)

The University will establish an HIV/AIDS Committee, residing under the University Council. The HIV/AIDS Committee will meet to:

- Consider new submissions to the Policy
- Implement changes in legislation, regulations and/or codes of good practice
- Review this Policy on an annual basis during the month of September of each year.
- Plan and discuss any activity to further the intention of this Policy.