



**POLICY ON HIV INFECTION AND AIDS:
A CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE TO HIV/AIDS**
(as approved by Council, November 2006)

Definitions and Principles

Definition

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is a disease caused by infection with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). The HIV is spread only when an infected body fluid enters the bloodstream of a non-infected person.

The dominant modes of transmission of the HIV are unprotected penetrative or oral sexual intercourse where the exchange of bodily fluids takes place, through the accidental or deliberate shared use of HIV-contaminated needles or skin cutting instruments (in and out of health care settings), from infected mothers to infants and through transfusion of infected blood or blood products.

Leadership and Coordination

The Vice-Chancellor is accountable for the University's coordinated HIV/AIDS policy.

Responsibility for the overall co-ordination of UCT's integrated policy for HIV/AIDS is the portfolio responsibility of a designated Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

All members of the University community are responsible for their own health, for avoiding harming the health of others where at all possible, and for contributing to the eradication of HIV/AIDS.

Rights of the Individual

The University rejects all forms of unfair discrimination against those who are HIV positive, and those who have AIDS.

The University regards a person with AIDS as it does a person with any other chronic illness or disability.

Confidentiality

The University respects the individual's right to confidentiality.

Potential staff and students are not refused employment or entry to the University on the grounds that they test positive for HIV. The University does not therefore test for HIV prior to employment, during employment, as a condition of employment, on application as a student, or on admission as a student.

The University's medical evaluation of new staff requires the medical practitioner carrying out the evaluation to report all serious illnesses, including those that are AIDS-related. This is a standard requirement for staff joining the UCT Retirement Fund.

The results of voluntary testing for HIV will be confidential, and testing will be accompanied by appropriate counselling.

Awareness

Most people are potentially susceptible to HIV infection, and prevention through education is attainable in many cases. The University therefore commits itself to education programmes that address HIV/AIDS and the issues associated with the pandemic.

Living with HIV/AIDS

Students and staff are not barred from attending lectures, living in residences, being on campus or involved in any campus activities on account of their HIV status.

Refusal to work with, study with or be taught by a person with HIV is not accepted as a valid excuse for non-compliance with academic or work requirements.

First Aid

The University believes that all individuals administering first aid should adopt universal precautions. The University undertakes to educate all first aid officials in universal precaution techniques and to equip all first-aid kits with the appropriate equipment.

Teaching, Learning and Research

Curriculum Development

The University has a responsibility to combat HIV/AIDS through its curriculum, enhancing awareness and preparing students for careers that will be affected in a variety of ways by the pandemic. Accordingly, aspects of academic programmes that focus on the causes and consequences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic will be highlighted across the full breadth of UCT's teaching enterprise.

Research

HIV/AIDS is a major focus of research at UCT and the Department of Research and Development will conduct an audit of current HIV/AIDS-related research projects across all disciplines on a regular basis.

Needlestick Policy

The University has a separate Needlestick Policy (Appendix A). This policy is to be reviewed and revised on an annual basis by the Health and Safety Co-ordinating Committee.

Prevention and Care

Prevention and Care for Students

The University will provide, via HIV/AIDS Coordination - UCT (HAICU), awareness and prevention workshops. These will be available for all UCT students.

The University will offer HIV diagnostic services to students, with free voluntary counselling and testing available at the Student Wellness Service. CD4 cell count, VDRL tests and other necessary investigations will be offered for full time UCT students who are HIV positive, at the discretion of the Director of the Student Wellness Service. These students will also be financially assisted with the non-ARV related clinical management of HIV at the discretion of the Director of the Student Wellness Service.

Students who are clinically eligible for appropriate state health programmes will be referred to Groote Schuur Hospital.

Supportive counselling for students living with HIV will also be offered through the Student Wellness Service.

Prevention and Care for Staff

Statutory medical assessment protocol will be applied for designated jobs as legally required. Line Managers must ensure that in the event of staff that are immune-compromised being exposed to immune suppressants and/or infectious materials (e.g. agents which inhibit the immune system), normal risk management and placement procedures are followed.

Line managers are required to ensure that all visitors and outside contractors at UCT comply with the UCT Health and Safety policies and procedures, including the first aid policy.

All staff will be offered voluntary counselling and testing, education and prevention programmes by the Human Resources Organizational Health Department, and every effort will be made to ensure that all staff are made aware of the dangers of HIV/AIDS, and the appropriate preventative measures.

Staff who are HIV positive, or who have AIDS, will be offered care and support through the Human Resources Organizational Health Department. This support will include access to counselling support services and referral for treatment for all staff. Permanent, T3 and T2 staff will be referred to UCT's medical aid provider or the staff member's partner's medical aid for treatment as a prescribed minimum benefit. T1 and contract staff not on medical aid will be referred to state health services.

As it does in all cases of chronic illness where work is adversely affected and an objective medical assessment has been carried out, the University makes every reasonable effort to provide alternative, non-strenuous work, so as to maximise the earning capacity of the staff member concerned. If a staff member with AIDS is no longer able to work, and/or no suitable position can be found, the appropriate ill-health/disability income policies will be applied.