



COVID-19 Policy

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish and communicate Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka | Unitec Institute of Technology (Unitec)'s position on COVID-19 as it relates to the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF) and vaccination requirements. It also outlines how Unitec will operationalise appropriate actions to ensure the ongoing safety and wellness of anyone coming onto Unitec campuses during the pandemic.

This policy will be reviewed as Government mandates and direction are released and will be updated when deemed necessary.

Definitions

Ākonga (Student/Learner)	Any person enrolled on a course or programme of study with Unitec
Kaimahi (Staff member/Worker)	Any person who carries out work at Unitec including work as an employee, contractor, subcontractor, employee of a contractor or sub-contractor, employee of a labour hire or temporary agency company who has been assigned to work at Unitec, or a volunteer worker
Manuhiri (Visitor/Guest)	Any person who is a visitor or guest to Unitec
Covid Protection Framework	Covid Protection Framework (CPF), also referred to as the Traffic Lights (Red Orange Green) details the Government settings for minimising and protection from COVID-19
Fully vaccinated	'Fully vaccinated' currently means having at least two doses of an approved suitable Ministry of Health (MOH) vaccination such as Pfizer/BioNTech or AstraZenica, noting the Government may change this direction in the future

Audience and scope

Unitec is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our ākonga (students), kaimahi (worker/staff member), manuhiri (visitors/guests) and our Te Tiriti partners, and that any harm that may be caused by COVID-19 is minimised. As part of this commitment, and aligned to [Te Noho Kotahitanga](#) this policy is being implemented to provide clarity and clear guidelines for anyone coming onto either of the Mt Albert or Waitākere Unitec campuses.

This policy applies to:

- kaimahi (including permanent, fixed term and casual staff members), contractors, volunteer workers and people gaining work experience;
- ākonga of Unitec (currently enrolled, recently graduated and prospective students); and

- manuhiri who come to campuses managed by Unitec to work, study or visit.

This policy does not apply to:

- secondary school students who are involved in secondary-tertiary provision at a Unitec campus, as per the Ministry of Education guidelines in the CPF;
- Patients enrolled, and a support person who may attend with them, at either or both of the Te Puna Waioira Medical Centre and the Osteopathy Clinic; and
- Other groups exempted by New Zealand Government legislation and regulations.

Review, related documents and version control

This policy will be reviewed and updated as Government mandates and directions are released and when deemed necessary as guided by Health and Safety risk assessments, with the approval of the Unitec Chief Executive and Te Pūkenga Council.

This policy should be read in conjunction with relevant Unitec policies and guidelines, together with Government regulations and legislation, for example:

- [Unitec Health and Safety Risk Assessment](#)
- [Unitec Pandemic Management Procedure](#)
- [Flexible Working Guidelines](#)
- [Children on Campus Procedure](#)
- [COVID-19 Protection Framework](#)
- [Unitec Student Regulations](#)
- [Code of Practice for Pastoral Care of all students 2021](#)
- [Privacy Act 2020](#)
- [Education and Training Act 2020](#)
- [COVID-19 Public Health Response \(Protection Framework\) Order 2021](#)
- [COVID-19 Public Health Response \(Vaccinations\) Amendment Order \(No 6\) 2021](#)
- [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1993](#)
- [New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990](#)
- [Employment Relations Act 2000](#)
- [Public Service Act 2020](#)

Version number	1.1	Issue date	22 February 2022
Reason for review/comments	New policy following conclusion of consultation		
Approval authority	Chief Executive	Date of approval	22 February 2022
Sponsor (with authority to make minor amendments)	Deputy Chief Executive People & Culture	Policy owner	People and Culture
Contact person	Chris Hutton	Date of next review	As required

Consultation

This policy was developed in January 2022 in response to the Government's public health response to COVID-19 and with support and following consultation with Unitec kaimahi in December 2021, on the Health and Safety Risk Assessment of COVID-19.

This policy has been endorsed by Unitec's Chief Executive, together with Te Pūkenga's Council, for implementation.

Overview

As part of Unitec's commitment to providing a safe working and learning environment, this policy is being adopted to support the public health response to COVID-19 and to manage the risk of COVID-19 being contracted by those who come onto Unitec campuses (considering the infectious nature of this virus, its variants and the potential for asymptomatic transmission).

Unitec, as a Person Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU), has a primary duty of care under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015, and must ensure the health and safety of ākonga, kaimahi and manuhiri to its places of work. While risk controls, such as physical distancing, hand sanitising, scanning through use of the NZCOVID Tracer app, and the wearing of face masks, are important to prevent transmission of the virus, the Government position, based on scientific evidence, is that vaccines are the most effective control.

Key policy principles

Unitec intends that all COVID-19 objectives and initiatives are guided by the values and principles of Te Noho Kotahitanga (our partnership), that of: Ngākau mahaki (Respect) – Kaitiakitanga (Guardianship) – Rangatiratanga (Authority and responsibility) – Wakaritenga (Legitimacy) – Mahi Kotahitanga (Cooperation).

This policy is also based on principles set by Te Pūkenga, namely:

- I. Provision of certainty to kaimahi and ākonga regarding vaccination expectations;
- II. A risk-based approach that appropriately strikes the balance between inclusion and equity for ākonga and our health and safety obligations for all;
- III. Acceptance that a risk-based approach may lead to different positions by other subsidiaries in order to meet the needs of their communities, iwi aspirations and the requirements of any COVID-19 laws and regulations;
- IV. Encouragement and support for pro-active measures and early interventions where a high risk of transmission exists;
- V. A partnership approach to strongly encourage everyone in Aotearoa to be fully vaccinated;
- VI. Collection and retention of only personal information needed to satisfy the intent of this statement (and underlying positions taken) and will do so in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020;
- VII. Acceptance that this policy needs to be flexible enough to adapt to the rapidly changing COVID-19 environment in Aotearoa | New Zealand.

Ko Te Tiriti o Waitangi – Statement of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Unitec acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) is the founding document of Aotearoa (New Zealand) and is committed to giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in all our activities – governance, management and operations, as we deliver inclusion and equity for and with Māori. Unitec acknowledges the great importance of this living, dynamic document, and that this policy needs to be supported by an approach, information and resources designed with and for Māori.

COVID-19 policy context

This policy has been prepared in the context of:

- The legislative and regulatory environment relating to COVID-19 evolving rapidly and the need to potentially swiftly adapt and pivot as outbreaks and new virus variants occur;
- Risk assessment guidance produced by WorkSafe and Unitec's own health and safety risk assessment and decisions following consultation in December 2021;

- The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Protection Framework) Order 2021 made under the Public Health Response Act 2020, and the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Order 2021 (Vaccination Order);
- Such further directives that may be issued by the Government;
- The practical reality of kaimahi and ākonga co-existing in an environment where there are learning spaces, retail spaces, public libraries, marae, and hospitality; and
- That dividing on-campus educational delivery into groups of vaccinated and unvaccinated is not feasible.

COVID-19 vaccination requirements

Due to the likelihood of movement between CPF levels, that Unitec's Health and Safety Risk Assessment determined that there will almost certainly be catastrophic harm should the risk of COVID-19 not be managed effectively, and that there was strong support through the Risk Assessment consultation processes for vaccination at all CPF levels for on campus activities, Unitec has chosen to apply a consistent approach for vaccinations across all three CPF levels.

1. Only kaimahi, ākonga, manuhiri (excluding tamariki/children who are not required to be vaccinated) and contractors, who are fully vaccinated with at least two doses of an approved suitable Ministry of Health (MOH) vaccination such as Pfizer/BioNTech or AstraZenica (and can provide evidence of such), are permitted on Unitec campuses;
2. Unitec recognises that the definition of 'fully vaccinated' may change over time, such as for example, to include booster doses or via new MOH approved vaccines;
3. Kaimahi are required to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination by uploading their My Vaccine Pass or Covid Vaccination Certificate in Unitec's 'Staff Vaccination Register' on the Nest;
4. Non-disclosure of vaccination status will be reasonably deemed to mean a person is not vaccinated; and
5. Kaimahi, who are employed by Unitec, are entitled to reasonable paid time off to get vaccinated and should engage in the usual way with their manager about doing this.

Unitec may determine the entrance or enrolment requirements for ākonga starting or continuing programmes. As part of Unitec's Health and Safety risk assessment outcome, Unitec's view is that ākonga are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

There may be some situations, where kaimahi or ākonga may be able to get an exemption from being vaccinated against COVID-19. However, in accordance with MOH guidance, Unitec acknowledges there are very few situations where vaccination is contraindicated (meaning, having a reason for a person to not receive a particular treatment or procedure because it may be harmful), and because of this a medical exemption is expected to be rarely required. Holders of an approved MOH medical exemption will be permitted to access Unitec's campuses as long as they provide sufficient proof of this exemption to Unitec staff in advance.

For any kaimahi who remain unvaccinated and without an approved MOH medical exemption, Unitec will:

1. engage in a process that gives all parties full understanding of the other parties' considerations and concerns;
2. support the kaimahi to get vaccinated if vaccination is the agreed option;
3. genuinely consider what alternative options may be available when vaccination remains unacceptable, including but not limited to Unitec having the right to consider termination of employment;
4. provide a reasonable opportunity for feedback on any preliminary decision before a final outcome is communicated; and
5. provide paid notice where termination is the final outcome.

For any ākonga who remain unvaccinated and without an approved MOH medical exemption, Unitec acknowledges that course completion may not be possible if they remain unvaccinated. This is because, except for a very small number of exceptions, all programmes require ākonga to be on campus at times to achieve the learning outcomes of their course. Decisions will be made by Unitec having regard to relevant factors including for example:

1. the relevant programme in which the ākonga is enrolled;
2. the options that can realistically be offered to the ākonga in their scenario;
3. the current terms and conditions of enrolment relating to the ākonga.

If any of the following criteria apply then vaccination evidence would be required:

1. part of the role or learning requires they attend campus or a placement provider or other third party who requires vaccinations;
2. the programme of study falls within scope of the Vaccination Order (or such other legislation as requires vaccination);
3. part of the role or learning requires them to engage in an activity that a risk assessment suggests that vaccination is required for, regardless of location.

COVID-19 face mask requirements

1. The wearing of face masks is mandatory in most campus spaces (such as in buildings that are open to the public like the cafeteria, libraries, public foyers and teaching spaces);
2. If you can physically distance such as when walking to or from your mode of transport, or you are in an open plan office environment and able to physically distance by 1 metre, you are not required to wear a face mask;
3. Kaimahi who are presenting and who maintain 2-metre physical distancing from others when doing so are also not required to wear a face mask, however, the wearing of face masks even where it is not mandatory, is strongly recommended at all times to assist in lowering the risk of spreading or contracting COVID-19.

Ākonga and kaimahi should provide their own suitable face mask. By exception, Unitec may be able to provide a face mask upon request (Facilities Management and Business Administrators will hold a small supply), together with purchases able to be made from the onsite retail store.

Ākonga or kaimahi who can present an exemption card issued by Disabled Persons Assembly NZ, Blind Citizens NZ or Deaf Aotearoa, stating they do not need to wear a face mask, will be exempted from wearing one, provided they meet all other applicable COVID-19 protection requirements per this policy, for example, being fully vaccinated or have an approved MOH medical exemption, using hand sanitiser, scanning their NZCOVID Tracer app, and maintaining appropriate physical distancing.

On a case by case basis, such as due to a health and safety requirement overriding the need to wear a face mask, an exemption may be considered for approval if submitted to the H&S Lead and Director Schools and Performance.

Other COVID-19 policy requirements and settings

1. When entering all Unitec buildings, it is a requirement that everyone either scans the QR code using their NZCOVID Tracing app, or manually registers their entry;
2. Having regard for the Children on Campus Procedure and that kaimahi and ākonga have childcare responsibilities which may, from time to time, require bringing children onto campus, the practice of bringing children onto campus is strongly discouraged at this time due to the high risk of transmission and the consideration of proactive interventions to assist and minimise the risk of harm; permission to bring a child onto campus should continue to be sought from your manager or the kaimahi conducting the class or lecture and will be made on a case-by-case basis;

3. Kaimahi or ākonga who are hosting manuhiri are responsible for ensuring that manuhiri follow all aspects of this policy and all relevant legislation. The person hosting is also responsible for checking that the manuhiri is fully vaccinated or has an approved MOH medical exemption before they arrive on campus and that they scan the QR code using their NZCOVID Tracing app or manually register their entry into buildings;
4. As part of Unitec's recruitment processes, to ensure we meet all of the COVID-19 policy settings, all new staff will be required to provide confirmation of vaccination status prior to employment being confirmed.

Failure to abide by a setting in this policy or relevant legislation while on campus

Unitec acknowledges that some kaimahi, ākonga and manuhiri will hold a different position to that of the Ministry of Health (MOH) and these policy settings, either for example, by choosing not to be vaccinated or by declining to wear a face mask without an approved exemption.

Unitec takes its role and commitment as kaitiaki towards ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our ākonga, kaimahi and manuhiri, seriously.

If it is found that any kaimahi, ākonga or manuhiri have deliberately recorded or given incorrect information, or breached relevant legislation and/or any settings related to this policy, Unitec will consider appropriate action. For kaimahi (employees), this could include disciplinary proceedings. For ākonga, this could include action in accordance with the Student Disciplinary Statute.

For anyone refusing to wear a face mask or refusing to meet any of the settings and requirements under this policy, in the first instance they may be asked to leave the Unitec campus. Ākonga may as a result be subject to misconduct proceedings under Unitec Student Regulations and kaimahi may be subject to employment disciplinary proceedings.

Privacy

Unitec acknowledges that information about all people on its campuses is personal, as is information about health and personal circumstances. Unitec will take reasonable steps to ensure information about vaccination status and personal circumstances is collected and stored lawfully, and is only shared on a "needs to know" basis. Unitec will comply with Privacy Act 2020 principles when managing the collection, storage and disclosure of information pertaining to an employee's COVID-19 vaccination status and their individual circumstances. COVID-19 vaccination status details will only be used for the purposes of compliance with the COVID-19 CPF or as otherwise required by legislation including any further COVID-19 regulations.

By providing evidence of COVID-19 vaccination status to Unitec, kaimahi, ākonga and manuhiri are consenting to disclosure of this information for the purposes outlined in this policy document and for any relevant information requirements.

For employed kaimahi, their My Vaccine Pass certificate evidence will be stored securely in each individual person's secure HR file.

For ākonga, their My Vaccine Pass will be verified prior to commencement of their period of study. Ākonga will not be able to access Unitec campuses without completion of this step or having an approved MOH medical exemption.

In accordance with the Privacy Act 2020, Unitec will verify the ākonga's My Vaccine Pass but not store the pass itself. Unitec will retain a record only that it has been verified together with its date of expiration.

Unitec Flexible Working Guidelines

Unitec's Flexible Working Guidelines were updated and issued in January 2022, encouraging the fulfilment of contracted work hours in the way that works for employed kaimahi, finding a balance between what works for individuals, the best way for teams to achieve, communicate and socialise, and organisational needs to nurture a culture of collaboration and equity.

With these guidelines, it is noted that Unitec expects that kaimahi remain flexible to the organisation's and ākonga's needs and this requires individuals to also be available at the workplace as necessary. Unitec does not support fulltime, 100% remote working from home, or at other off-campus locations.

Exceptions and exemptions to this policy

At the sole discretion of the Unitec Chief Executive, on a case-by-case basis, any exceptions, exemptions or variations to this policy can be considered and approved. In doing so, consideration would be given to, for example:

1. Where a new health and safety risk assessment setting identifies a low risk of contamination to kaimahi, ākonga, or manuhiri
2. Where a significantly unique circumstance existed that did not pose an undue risk to kaimahi, ākonga or manuhiri.