



University of Otago COVID Testing and Management Protocols

Category	Administration and Management
Type	Procedure
Approved by	Vice-Chancellor, 9 March 2022
Date Takes Effect	16 March 2022
Last Approved Revision	30 March 2022
Sponsor	Vice-Chancellor
Responsible Officer	Chief Operating Officer
Review Date	23 September 2022

Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance on the settings in which staff and students may be eligible for funded COVID testing ensuring that each testing scenario has a rationale that is well understood and the risks associated with the scenario exceed that of the risks in the New Zealand community as a whole.

Organisational Scope

This Protocol applies to all staff and students of the University.

Definitions

RAT(s)	Rapid Antigen Test(s)
UniFlat	University owned student flats
StarRez	Resident management platform used by residential colleges
AskOtago	University contact centre and knowledgebase
H&S	University of Otago Health and Safety team
MOH	Ministry of Health
Colleges	University residential colleges
Close Community	Where the cases and close contacts are having to share the same bathroom or eating facilities and cases cannot truly self-isolate
High Risk Close Contact	Includes masks off, for a period of more than 60 minutes in a small, closed space within 2 metres. It may include eating and drinking OR sharing the same small room for more than 8 hours.

Content

The following document provides guidance on the settings in which staff and students may be eligible for funded COVID testing. In almost all instances this will likely be for Rapid Antigen Testing (RAT) and for the purposes of the document, RATs are the test referred to by default. RATs provided by the University of Otago may have an associated cost and there is a collective responsibility for good stewardship of RATs in New Zealand. Therefore, it is important that each testing scenario has a rationale that is well understood, and the risks associated with the scenario exceed that of the risks in the New Zealand community at a whole.

Each testing scenario comes with a set of measures including isolation requirements or testing frequency. Testing protocols should include plans on what actions need to be taken if tests are positive or negative. Testing does not stop transmission but identifies that transmission has occurred. Therefore, it should be seen as a secondary tool to preventative measures such as masks, distancing, and good self-care.

There are five main reasons to test which will be outlined. There are other scenarios where testing is appropriate however, they fall outside of the scope of this document. These include predeparture testing for travel or testing for workers affected by legislation such as Border Orders. The five following scenarios considered relevant for the University of Otago domestic setting are:

1. Symptomatic and household contacts of cases
2. Testing of critical workers who are household contacts of cases in order to return to work
3. Testing of students and staff in accordance with lead agency testing requirements during placements off campus
4. Testing during an outbreak in a closed community setting where standard measures have failed to control transmission
5. Surveillance/assurance of workers eligible based on the risk they pose to others

1. Testing of People who are symptomatic and household contacts

(a) Funding

Provided by the Ministry of Health.

(b) Eligibility Criteria

If a person has symptoms that could be COVID, they and their household are eligible for RATs. In the college and Uniflat setting, household contacts are defined as students sharing a bedroom. They will be eligible for RATs as household contacts.

(c) Availability

RATs can be ordered online through [My COVID Record | Ministry of Health NZ](#). The request will ask how many people are in the household and provide a package of tests for the entire household. Individuals will receive an order number and can collect from a local testing station. They can be accessed from these locations.

For colleges and Uniflats, RATs are available through the university. RATs are supplied to the University H&S Office for distribution to Colleges and Uniflats for testing. The colleges/Uniflats provide the tests and record the issuing of the test in StarRez. Reports are generated from StarRez of RATs issued and returned to H&S for documenting in the national Eclair system.

(d) Actions taken if positive

The RAT result is uploaded onto My COVID Record. If the result is positive, information will be sought for contact details of household contacts. It is important for the person with COVID to advise their household contacts as soon as possible so that they can isolate in case there are delays in being contacted by MOH.

Staff and Students who have COVID are also asked to phone AskOtago for a screening of health and welfare needs and referral to appropriate services. Queries from Māori students or staff can be directed to the Māori Centre, and from Pacific students or staff can be directed to the Pacific Islands Centre, as appropriate.

2. Testing of critical workers who are household contacts of cases in order to return to work

(a) Funding

Provided by Ministry of Health

(b) Eligibility Criteria

Workers recognised as critical workers under Ministry of Health Critical Worker Exemption Scheme.

Critical workers are staff that work in or support one of the critical services delivered by the University. These services fit into the following categories:

- food production and its supply chain
- human and animal health and welfare
- key public services like health and emergency services
- social welfare
- lifeline utilities such as power and water supplies
- transport
- critical financial services
- news media
- social welfare

This category applies to workers who are living in a household with someone who has COVID. Under normal conditions, the critical worker is required to isolate due to being a household contact. But if they have a job that is critical to life and infrastructure, they may need to go into the workplace to complete critical tasks.

Critical workers should seek approval from their Head of Department or Director prior to coming back on site. Having household contacts on site does present a risk as rapid antigen tests are not 100% accurate. As such, other business continuity approaches should be explored prior to utilising the close contact exemption scheme.

In order to be eligible under this category there are conditions that must be met by the worker:

- i. They are recognised as a critical worker
- ii. They test negative on RAT and are asymptomatic at the start of their shift
- iii. When they complete their shift, they are required to return to isolation
- iv. They undertake the following precautions while on shift:
 - Use a mask at all times (including wearing a mask before entry to the workplace, and changing as needed during the day)
 - Anyone working in the same space must also wear a mask
 - Travel solo or with a household member, to, from and around work or between jobs.
 - Eat alone in a well-ventilated space, outdoors where possible
 - Use a dedicated bathroom (if this is not possible, no others should be present in the bathroom while the worker is using it)
 - ensure that if symptoms develop at any stage they follow the public advice for close contacts with symptoms at: [Actions for contacts\(external link\)](#)

More information on this scheme and workplace responsibilities are available here [Testing and isolation requirements for businesses during Omicron — business.govt.nz](#)

(c) **Availability**

If you are a critical worker, you are able to order RATs through participating collection centres, at the following link: <https://ncts.force.com/ratorder/s/> The University's Critical Services Register unique identifier is: AOGCSR-5463

As supplies allow, the University will also be issuing boxes of 5 RATs to critical workers so that you have supplies on hand to begin your testing if required.

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/COVID-19/?COVIDTesting=rats>

(d) **Actions taken if positive**

The RAT result is uploaded onto My COVID Record. If the result is positive, information will be sought for contact details of household contacts. It is important for the person with COVID to advise their household contacts as soon as possible so that they can isolate in case there are delays in being contacted by MOH. You will not be able to return to work under the exemption system if you test positive, and you must isolate for 7 days.

Staff and Students who have COVID are also asked to phone AskOtago for a screening of health and welfare needs and referral to appropriate services. Queries from Māori students or staff can be directed to the Māori Centre, and from Pacific students or staff can be directed to the Pacific Islands Centre, as appropriate.

3. Testing of students and staff in accordance with lead agency testing requirements during placements off campus

Context

Some organisations that the University of Otago works closely with may have unique circumstances that require them to undertake surveillance testing in addition to routine testing. Organisations likely to have these requirements include those working directly with COVID cases such as healthcare facilities and emergency services, those working directly with vulnerable populations or non-critical businesses that require surveillance testing for Health and Safety at Work obligations (e.g. health services and education services).

(a) Funding

To be determined with the supervisor or placement arranger. Depending on the type of organisation, some testing may be funded by MOH, or in other circumstances they are funded by the organisation. If the organisation is considered non-critical and has introduced their own surveillance testing protocols, the lead agency can be assumed to be responsible for funding and provision of RATs unless negotiated otherwise with the University of Otago.

(b) Eligibility Criteria

The testing eligibility and protocols are outlined by the lead agency responsible for the work site. As there are multiple scenarios for placements, departments will identify the placements where RAT tests are required.

(c) Availability

Provision of RATs is to be negotiated with the lead agency. For placements, the coordinator will liaise with the lead agency to determine who will be responsible for RAT provision. If the University of Otago is providing RATs via the placement organiser, then RATs are available for ordering through the supply chain process. All requests for University of Otago provided RATs should be submitted by either the Purchasing Request Smart Form or department's local request system. Packs of 5 or 20 are available, please enter 'PPE Store' as the supplier. RATs should be charged to the requesters Cost Centre, using the C97 Activity Code and 2421 Dissection Code.

(d) Actions taken if positive

The RAT result is uploaded onto My COVID Record. If the result is positive, information will be sought for contact details of household contacts. It is important for the person with COVID to advise their household contacts as soon as possible so that they can isolate in case there are delays in being contacted by MOH.

Staff and Students who have COVID are also asked to phone AskOtago for a screening of health and welfare needs and referral to appropriate services. Queries from Māori students or staff can be directed to the Māori Centre, and from Pacific students or staff can be directed to the Pacific Islands Centre, as appropriate.

People tested under this category are also responsible for advising the worksite that they are undertaking the testing and reporting of results as according to their protocols.

4. Testing during an outbreak in a college or closed community setting where standard measures have failed to control transmission

(a) **Funding**

University of Otago

(b) **Eligibility Criteria**

As determined by the Director of Health, Safety and Wellbeing. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- An outbreak in a particular college location or in a closed setting where staff or students who have COVID cannot adequately separate from others, for example where cases and contacts are sharing bathroom or eating facilities.
- An outbreak that triggers the use of this protocol must meet the following criteria:
 - The definition of the close community is one where the cases and close contacts are having to share the same bathroom or eating facilities and cases cannot truly self-isolate
 - Within the closed community there are at least three cases AND at least 10% of the closed community is infected at the same time.
 - Standard precautions taken have not been effective at controlling transmission

Outbreak measures

- Reclassify the entire affected closed community as household contacts and arrange for RAT testing.
- Document an infection control plan to reduce/limit the potential for spread. This will be designed by H&S in conjunction with the applicable department.
- Daily RAT testing of all people classified as household contacts for a period of 10 days or until new case numbers reduce.

(c) **Availability**

RATs are available for ordering from supply chain by the department where the above criteria have been met. Assistance can be sought from the H&S office as required. All requests for University of Otago provided RATs should to be submitted by either the Purchasing Request Smart Form or department's local request system. Packs of 5 or 20 are available, please enter 'PPE Store' as the supplier. RATs should be charged to the requesters Cost Centre, using the C97 Activity Code and 2421 Dissection Code.

(d) **Actions taken if positive**

The RAT result is uploaded onto My COVID Record. If the result is positive, information will be sought for contact details of household contacts. It is important for the person with COVID to advise their household contacts as soon as possible so that they can isolate in case there are delays in being contacted by MOH.

Staff and Students who have COVID are also asked to phone AskOtago for a screening of health and welfare needs and referral to appropriate services. Queries from Māori students or staff can be directed to the Māori Centre, and from Pacific students or staff can be directed to the Pacific Islands Centre, as appropriate.

In this setting new cases are to be reported to the site coordinator responsible for implementing the infection control plan.

5. Surveillance/Assurance testing of workers eligible based on the risk they pose to vulnerable populations or where staff are in contact with significant numbers of workers

Context

There are three categories that warrant surveillance testing under this scenario: those at risk of superspreading COVID, those posing a risk to vulnerable people, and those posing a risk to business continuity of critical workforces.

(a) Funding

University of Otago

(b) Eligibility

- i. If a department, workplace or worker is regularly undertaking a task that requires them to undertake high risk close contact with more than 10 people on a daily basis and there are reasons why preventative measures can't be taken to ensure the contact is not high risk.
 - High risk close contact includes masks off, for a period of more than 60 minutes in a small, closed space within 2 metres. It may include eating and drinking OR sharing the same small room for more than 8 hours.
- ii. Alternatively, if a department or staff and students are undertaking a work related activity that requires them to have regular close contact (more than 15 minutes at 2 metres) with people who are vulnerable (see <https://COVID19.govt.nz/prepare-and-stay-safe/about-COVID-19/people-at-higher-risk-of-severe-illness-from-COVID-19/>) and there is not practical means to avoid that contact.
- iii. If there are critical workforces that are unable to bubble or cohort due to numbers, they have regular high risk close contact with each other, or they have had to collapse their bubbles due to COVID infection, and a single case would expose more than 60% of the total workforce to close contact (for example PSD Trades services staff).
- iv. Where activities are occurring in an austere environment or people are undertaking activities that put them at high risk of severe COVID outcomes. Examples include fieldwork or diving/boat operations.

(c) Availability

An application can be made to the Director of Health and Safety for access to funded surveillance/assurance testing. If approved, then they can be ordered through the procurement supply chain. All requests for University of Otago provided RATs should be submitted by either the Purchasing Request Smart Form or department's local request system. Packs of 5 or 20 are available, please enter 'PPE Store' as the supplier. RATs should be charged to the requesters Cost Centre, using the C97 Activity Code and 2421 Dissection Code.

For those staff and students on surveillance testing protocols, testing is every 72 hours until the high-risk activities cease. In some situations, in consultation with H&S, there is the option of testing daily (e.g. for pastoral care) however, the minimum testing regime is every 72 hours.

(d) Actions taken if positive

The RAT result is uploaded onto My COVID Record. If the result is positive, information will be sought for contact details of household contacts. It is important for the person with COVID to

advise their household contacts as soon as possible so that they can isolate in case there are delays in being contacted by MOH.

Staff and Students who have COVID are also asked to phone AskOtago for a screening of health and welfare needs and referral to appropriate services. Queries from Māori students or staff can be directed to the Māori Centre, and from Pacific students or staff can be directed to the Pacific Islands Centre, as appropriate.

Testing after confirmation of infection

TENTATIVE GUIDANCE PENDING MINISTRY OF HEALTH DIRECTION

Once someone has had a positive test, they are not required to have any further tests once they complete their isolation period as specified by the Ministry of Health. They are classified as recovered and able to return to work. There may be some critical workforces that undertaken testing to return to work early, but this is only in exceptional circumstances.

Pending Ministry of Health guidance, once staff and students have been classified as recovered, they are not required to undergo University of Otago surveillance/assurance testing until **90 days** after recovery. They can be assured that they pose a low risk of getting infected or passing on their recent infection to others during this time so long as good precautions remain in place.

If during the **90 days**, recovered staff or students develop symptoms, they are to get tested and isolate.

Contact for further information about this Policy

If you have any queries regarding the content of this protocol or need further clarification, contact Andrea McMillan, Director, Health, Safety and Wellbeing on hsa@otago.ac.nz

Keywords [For use in policy metadata]

- *COVID*
- *RAT*
- *Rapid Antigen Test*
- *Testing*
- *Health*

Implementation Process [This will not appear in the published policy]

Person responsible	Andrea McMillan, Director, Health, Safety and Wellbeing
Communication strategy	Will be communicated from the Health and Safety team using University communications channels to staff and students.
Other Actions/tasks	Advise SEMG, IMT, Supply Chain and CaCLS.
Resources	RAT have been procured. Occupational Health Team to manage as required.
Completion Date	Ongoing