

# UNAM'S STANCE ON CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

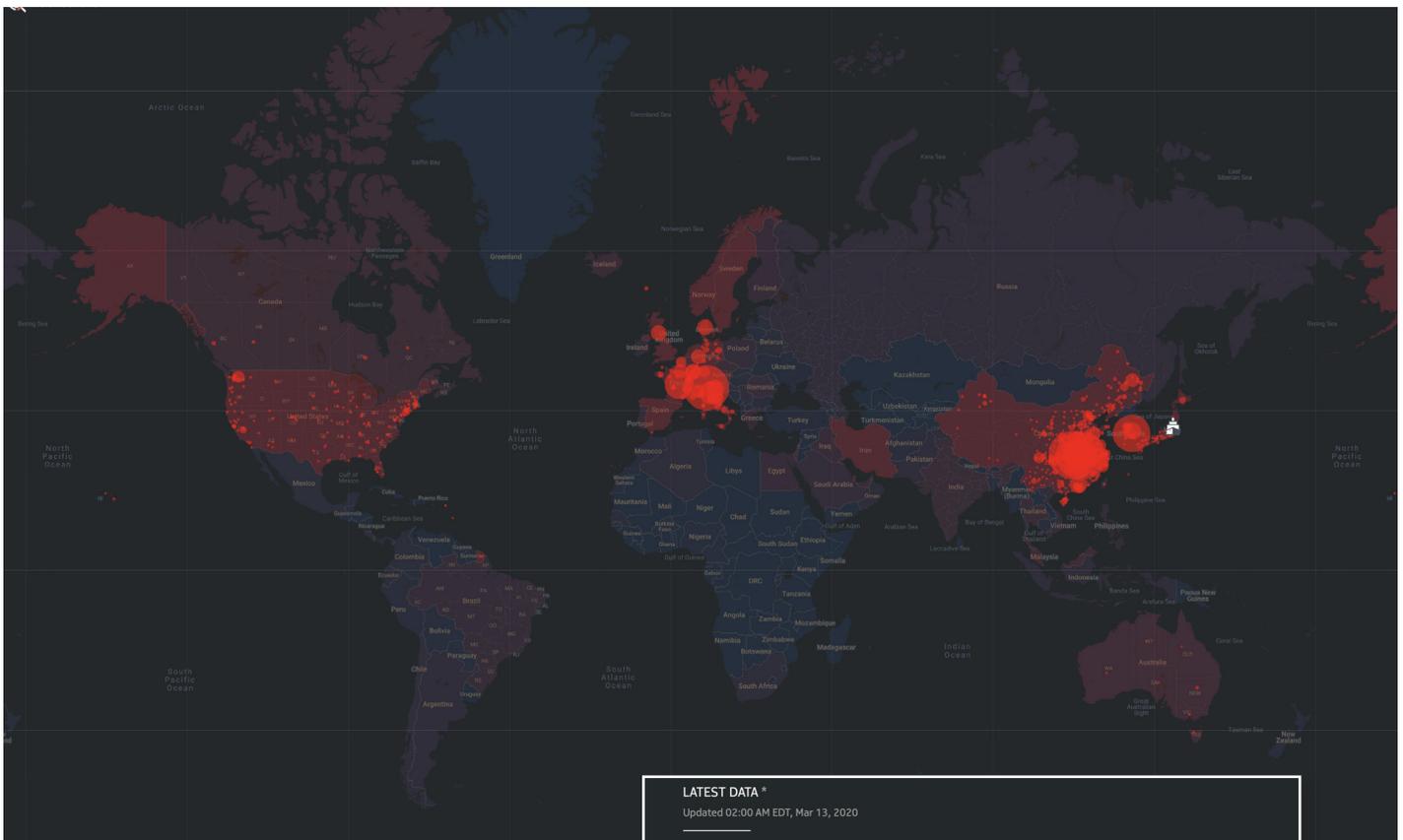
Friday, 13 March 2020

Dear UNAM Staff & Students

The University Management has been paying close attention to the coronavirus (COVID-19) and its spread across the world. While there has, at this point in time, not been any confirmed cases of the virus in the country, as a large community of 30 000 students and more than 2500 staff, UNAM Management thought it prudent to take all necessary precautions to remain safe. This is therefore, a brief note of what we know and our principle stance on fighting the virus.

## The Global Situation

The COVID-19 is a new strain of the coronavirus family. The outbreak has been declared a pandemic which means it has spread to all continents. Currently, the virus is mainly concentrated in China, South Korea and Italy, but there are growing reports of cases all over the world. According to the World Health Organisation, about 119 countries are now affected, the death toll due to the virus currently stands at 4 964 people. The number of confirmed cases stand at 132 595, while 70 009 have recovered from the virus. This indicates a fatality rate of 3.71% and a recovery rate of 52.8%, respectively. The incubation period of the virus is between 2 to 14 days.



### **Symptoms, Transmission and Treatment**

Signs and symptoms include high fever, fatigue, dry coughs, and in several cases shortness of breath and pneumonia. It is transmitted through air droplets when an infected person coughes or sneezes. It is also suspected to spread through personal contact and touching of contaminated surfaces. The best fight against this disease is avoiding contact with infected people. People are advised to avoid touching their nose, mouth and eyes with unwashed hands. No vaccine or specific treatment is available for the COVID-19. However, many of the symptoms can be treated based on the patient's clinical condition.

### **Level of Preparedness by the University**

The wellbeing of staff and students is of the highest priority to UNAM management. An Emergency Taskforce consisting of members from the School of Nursing, the School of Medicine, Human Resources, Communications, Dean of Students, Teaching and Learning, and Estates Support Services has been appointed.

This team will primarily be responsible for:

- Devising and implementation of several strategies to help prevent any future spread of the virus, in line with WHO requirements
- Liaise with the relevant local authorities for protocols around any suspected cases
- Keep members of the university community updated on major developments
- Advice management on appropriate actions to take as the situation further unfolds

### **Interim Health Measures for the University Community**

#### **Staff Travels**

UNAM has banned all staff travel outside the country until further notice.

#### **Isolation Room**

In the unlikely event that a student or staff experiences any symptoms, while on campus, the University is preparing isolation rooms at all Campuses. Staff from the School of Medicine will be conducting the training to prepare nurses and staff for all eventualities.

#### **Recess**

Recess begins next week, 16 – 20 March 2020. UNAM Management strongly advises against any unessential international travel by staff and students.

Travel to these specific countries should be avoided at all costs:

- USA
- Australia
- China (Including Hong Kong and Macau)
- Singapore
- South Korea
- Japan
- Italy

## Graduation

Graduation ceremonies will take place as from 8 April and end on 29 April. This year, we expect more graduates than ever before. The Task force is consulting with health experts, relevant offices and agencies on how the university should handle this year's graduation ceremony. Information about the outcome of these consultations will be announced in due course.

## Personal responsibility to help curb the spread

- Do not go to work if you feel any of the symptoms associated with the disease
- Do not visit a doctor, clinic, or hospital without giving them prior notice about your suspected condition as you might put other patients and health workers at risk
- Stay at home, and make an appointment with the hospital, doctor, so that you are received without putting others at risk
- Cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing and avoid contaminating any surfaces
- Wash your hands regularly with running water and soap
- Keep a strong hand sanitizer at hand when moving around (70% Alcohol)

## Sources of information

Although the University's Corona Task Force will provide regular updates, it is imperative that all members of our community keep themselves informed about local and international developments on the spread and behaviour of the virus.

- Track Corona live- <https://www.trackcorona.live>
- The World Health Organisation <https://www.who.int>
- Ministry of Health and Social Services <http://www.mhss.gov.na/>

If you suspect a case, please contact Public Health Emergency Operation Center At:

- **Cell: +264 (81) 7840710**
- **Cell: +264 (81) 2217994**

Or

the University of Namibia Clinic/ODS **+264(81) 775 9333**