**MBALI CONFERENCE COVID-19 PROTOCOL**

Our top priority remains the health and safety of our attendees, sponsors, speakers, and staff. By adhering to Covid-19 safety guidelines established by the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and local health authorities, we believe that we, along with our venue partners, can create a safe, welcoming environment.

Failure to comply with all Covid-19 safety protocols will result in immediate removal from the event.

**Prior to the Event**

Participants will be required to provide emergency contact information to the MBALI organising committee for the duration of the proceedings. In this regard participants will provide their express consent to the recording, storage and use of their personal information for purposes of the conference proceedings during the duration of the conference.

**Registration and Compliance**

During the conference Unizulu staff and participants shall at all times wear face masks when interacting with participants.

All event participants must be registered in advance of the event.

During the registration process, all participants are required to confirm their compliance with all Covid-19 safety protocols as outlined on the event website, confirmed in subsequent communications, and posted onsite. Should it become necessary, Unizulu will work with local health authorities to trace and contact participants at our events while doing our utmost to maintain their privacy.

Participants will be asked not to attend an event if they are feeling unwell, have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 within ten days leading up to the event, or have displayed Covid-19 symptoms within 48 hours preceding the event. These symptoms may include fever, coughing and other respiratory symptoms, and loss of taste or smell.

If a participant becomes unwell during an event, he/she/they should immediately inform a member of the Mbali conference committee who will work with the venue to isolate the participant and seek medical attention as needed. If a participant becomes unwell within ten days following the event, Unizulu must immediately be notified by emailing KaseeramI@unizulu.ac.za.

All participants will be required to have their temperatures checked upon arrival. Any participant with a fever equal to or higher than 37.5 degrees Celsius of 100.4°F will not be permitted to attend the event.

**Personal Protective Equipment**

All participants are required to wear a face mask at all times upon entering the event venue. Masks may only be removed whilst participants are seated while eating or drinking. Speakers and presenters have the option of removing their masks for the duration of their presentation.

Additionally, event and venue staff may wear gloves or other items of personal protective equipment if appropriate.

**Social Distancing**

Unizulu is constantly working to monitor and maintain the required level of social density (number of participants in a designated event space) as established by local health authorities. During the Mbali conference registration will take place online to prevent potential registration queuing.

In instances where a line is anticipated, queue spacing marks will be applied to ensure safe social distancing specified by signage and/or graphic floor indicators.

Unizulu will also modify its use of event spaces to ensure safe social distancing. This includes adjusting event floor plans to include one-way traffic flows as specified by signage and graphic floor indicators and increasing the distance between tables and chairs.

Wider aisles between tables will be applied to ensure each delegates ability to maintain proper physical distance.

The event will be conducted under a “no hugs, no handshaking” policy throughout the meeting area, including common areas, exhibit hall, meeting rooms and at social/meal functions.

Signage to encourage pandemic-aware behaviour will be posted throughout the conference venue.

Unizulu also requests that participants refrain from exchanging printed materials, such as business cards and encourages the use of digital alternatives, which will be available on the event website one week prior to the event.

**Presentations**

Chairs of the conference will be set to allow proper social distancing. A chairperson will be allowed to remove his/her mask for the duration of the presentation/introduction of the speaker.

The podium as well as microphone will be sanitised after every speaker and prior to the next speaker approaches the podium.

Participant may choose to remove his/her mask during his/her presentation.

At no stage will paper, pens or memory sticks be shared during the conference. The speaker and participants must therefore email his/her PowerPoint presentation to the chairperson the morning prior to the start of the day’s session.

**Enhanced Sanitization**

Unizulu maintain the highest standards of hygiene and cleanliness, which includes heightened sanitization of all spaces before and during each event with particular emphasis on high-touch surfaces such as door handles, restrooms, counters, tables, laptops, chairs, handrails, bathroom sinks, toilets and other furniture/equipment/areas. These areas will be wiped down with antiviral and antibacterial agents frequently throughout the day.

During breaks, meeting rooms will be cleaned and refreshed. Wherever possible, participants will be requested to retain the same seat throughout the day.

Unizulu will provide hand sanitizing stations at key locations throughout the event space. Further, all participants are encouraged to frequently wash and disinfect their hands.

**Personal Items**

All goods that are received outside the conference venue are not allowed to enter the conference venue under any circumstances.

Personal items will be sanitized by dedicated Mbali Committee members prior to a participant being allowed into the conference venue. Following receipt of the personal item, the item will be sprayed and wiped down with sanitizer and left for a minimum of five minutes before being allowed into the conference venue. All surfaces that come into contact with personal items must be sanitised immediately.

**Food and Beverage Distribution**

Unizulu and the caterer employ the highest standard of food safety. Self-service buffets will be replaced by pre-plated meals.

Coffee stations will be staffed with attendants that will wear appropriate PPE.

Seating at round tables during meals will be reduced from ten per table to four per table.

The caters will have strictly controlled and limited use.

Used crockery and cutlery will be placed in the dishwasher and washed at the highest temperature as per FCS standard.

Handwashing/sanitizing stations will be placed in all rooms where food is served.

**Notices & Updates**

This protocol is drafted in line with level 3 lockdown regulations. Any amendments will be posted in advance.

**Contact Number**

The NICD Hotline is available to all participants. In the event that anyone feels ill after travelling from countries with coronavirus, the South African Department of Health advises first phoning the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) helpline rather than going straight to a medical facility, to prevent potential contamination. The NICD hotline number is 080 002 9999