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| MEMORANDUM FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY OFFICE |

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**QUESTION 421**

**DATE OF PUBLICATION OF INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER: 25/2/2022**

**INTERNAL QUESTION PAPER NO 4 OF 2022**

**Mr I M Groenewald (FF Plus) to ask the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation:**

(1) Whether, with reference to the statement issued by the North-West University (NWU) to students and staff on 11 February 2022, indicating that the specified university is awaiting directives from the Department of Higher Education on the implementation of mandatory vaccinations at the NWU, his department will instruct the NWU to implement a policy of mandatory vaccinations for students and staff at the university campuses; if not, why not; if so,

(2) whether his department supports mandatory vaccinations for students and/or staff at institutions of higher learning, such as universities and colleges; if not, why not; if so, what are the relevant details;

(3) whether he will make a statement on the matter? **NW486E**

**REPLY:**

The sector has taken different approaches to the vaccination issue, with some public universities opting for mandatory vaccination policies for accessing campus, and others still consulting and taking a more cautious approach. Universities and TVET colleges decisions on policies are guided by the Council of each institution. I have not yet issued any directive to any institution of higher learning in relation to mandatory vaccination.

My Department is in the process of consulting via Natjoints, which is the advisory forum of the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) with a view to advise me and I will seek the support of the NCCC in whatever advice I receive.

Currently, HIGHER HEALTH, our implementing agency, that is guiding institutions on the management of the pandemic, has finalised the guidelines that institutions will follow in determining various matters around vaccination. I am currently studying the guidelines before I can release them for implementation by all our institutions. Whilst this process is underway I have urged all our institutions to ensure that the policies and procedures they put in place have been widely consulted on campus. Whilst this matter has not been finalised at government level I have urged institutions to encourage everyone in our higher education and training community to get vaccinated.

Scientific advice provided with the support of Higher Health and led to the basic education sector opening up in full was also provided for the post-school education and training sector. It is only when a large number of staff and students is vaccinated that a return to full time face to face teaching, without space restrictions is implemented. This assumes that all other safety protocols such as masking, hand-washing/sanitising will continue. We are prioritizing this work as it has to be concluded as a matter of urgency, so that the sector is able to operate effectively for the 2022 academic year. I have briefly discussed this matter in my press briefing on 1 February 2022. Again, once all this work is finalized I will release a statement.