Top scientists roped in to defend Rhodes Covid-19 vaccination policy

Rutger de Vreugden, a lecturer in molecular biology, said research showed the vaccine had been extensively studied and tested, and the benefits outweighed the risks.

"We cannot afford to put our students and staff at risk of catching severe illness or even dying," he said.

But the University of the Western Cape (UWC) has come under fire for its mandatory vaccination policy, with some students and staff expressing concern about the move.

"I feel that the university is violating our rights by requiring us to get vaccinated," said one student.

The university has defended its policy, saying it is necessary to protect the health and safety of the campus community.

"We have a responsibility to protect the health and wellbeing of our students and staff," said UWC spokesperson Anthony Carreira.

But some members of the academic community have expressed support for the policy.

"I think it's important that we do everything we can to protect our students and staff," said Professor Michael O'Sullivan, head of the Department of Health Sciences.

The debate continues as the university continues to implement its vaccination policy.