



**2020/2021 Academic Year**

**COVID-19 Staff Guide**

This guide has been prepared for DCU staff to provide comprehensive information of the measures and processes that are in place to ensure a safe work environment for staff for the 2020/2021 academic year. This document will be updated as required in-line with national public health advice and updates will be posted on the DCU COVID-19 website. We fully appreciate that we are starting into a new academic year that will be like no other as we learn to manage our personal and professional lives with the threat of COVID-19. The University has and will continue to take all appropriate measures to protect staff and keep all staff informed of latest developments, risks and any additional measures that may be required on campus.

The 2020–2021 academic year will commence for all students on Monday, October 5th with on-campus, in-class instruction combined with online teaching. Students will have access to the full-range of campus support services—either in-person or remotely—and the University will adhere to public health guidelines in an effort to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of our community.

On September 15th, the Government published its guide for [Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021 Plan for Living with COVID-19](#) which provides Five Levels of restrictions that can be applied, on a regional basis as required, based on the COVID-19 case numbers in any one region. It should be noted that Higher Education has been deemed to be an essential service and that the University has appropriate measures in place to ensure we can remain open with on-campus activities up to and including Level 4 in the *National Framework for Restrictive Measures in Response to COVID-19*.

## 1.0 Some key dates

- ❖ First year on-campus orientation will take place the week of September 28th
- ❖ Semester 1 of the new Academic Year will commence on Monday October 5th and finish on Saturday December 12<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ Online Semester 1 examinations will take place between Tuesday January 5th and Saturday January 9<sup>th</sup>
- ❖ Semester 2 will begin on January 18th 2021 and conclude on April 17th.
- ❖ Erasmus Year abroad will be cancelled for the coming academic year (both Erasmus year abroad and also degrees with a structured year abroad such as ALTS and INTB) for the full academic year 2020-21. (separate arrangements will be necessary for Global Business)
- ❖ Incoming study abroad and Erasmus students will be accepted on a blended/hybrid learning basis. Incoming students will be accepted for a blended learning experience with the majority of Semester 1 provided online.
- ❖ There will be a hybrid approach to the delivery of learning programmes with lectures primarily online

## **Primary COVID-19 Health and Safety Measures**

The following primary measures should be followed by all staff:

- **maintain a 2m social distance, where feasible, in all settings on and off campus - this is the most important health and safety measure we can all take.** DCU's campuses and facilities have been set-up in so far as possible to ensure 2m social distance is maintained.
  
- **maintain good personal hygiene including:**
  - regular hand washing / disinfection
  - respiratory etiquette by covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
  - wearing of face covering in all indoor public spaces on campus
  - avoid crowded areas and keep your contacts to a minimum when out and about
  - use of the 'Check-in' on the DCU SafeZone app for logging attendance on campus for contact tracing purposes
  
- **Know the symptoms of COVID-19, which are:**
  - a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above)
  - a cough - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
  - shortness of breath or breathing difficulties
  - loss or change to your sense of smell or taste
  - flu like symptoms

**The first, and most important measure, is that staff and students should not come to the campus if they are feeling unwell, or if they have any symptoms of COVID-19, or if they have been advised that they should self-isolate.**

In this document information is provided on the following:

1. Delivery of face-to-face teaching and related activities
2. Pre-arrival Health & Safety Training for Students
3. Health Declaration
4. Capturing campus attendance for contact tracing purposes
5. Preparing students for attending campus
6. Timetabling
7. Physical Distancing
8. Logistics & Movement
9. Face coverings and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
10. Cleaning and Disinfection
11. Cleaning (decontamination) of surfaces, tools, and equipment
12. Ventilation
13. Toilet Management
14. Good personal hygiene and hand washing
15. Response to a suspected COVID-19 case
16. Support for Staff
17. DCU Winter Flu vaccination support scheme

### **1. Delivery of face-to-face teaching and related activities**

The student experience for 2020/2021 will be different from previous years at DCU. The threat posed to public health by the coronavirus pandemic has led to universities across the globe having to address how they can continue teaching while keeping their staff and students safe. In many cases, lectures will be delivered remotely while students will attend campus in smaller groups for face-to-face sessions, tutorials and practicals/laboratory work.

The importance of staff and students following health and safety protocols that have been implemented, exercising their own judgement and taking personal responsibility in protecting themselves and others cannot be overstated. Steps outlined below may not always be convenient but they are necessary to protect our community and we ask for your patience and understanding as we open our campuses.

All teaching spaces in the University have been prepared for teaching with measures that include:

- Clear signage to support public health 2m social distancing measures.
- Adjustments have been made to building ventilation systems to ensure no re-circulating air. This may result in rooms being slightly colder than normal but health and safety is being prioritised over comfort at this time.
- There are over 180 alcohol hand sanitizer units across all campuses - at every building entrance and in high trafficked areas.
- New enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols have been put in place and a specific cleaning team is in place on each campus to clean frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, handrails, lift buttons etc. throughout the day.

In lecture rooms/classrooms, the space around the lecturer at the top of the room has been laid out with a clear 2m separation zone between staff and students. Staff where practicable should wear a face covering but there may be circumstances where this is not feasible such as personal health reasons, difficulty in projecting your voice or absence of a podium microphone. In those instances, a face visor may be a better alternative and face visors are available through your COVID-19 co-ordinators.

### **Required Class Attendance Logging for Students**

It is a Government requirement that all third-level institutions log attendance at all on-campus 'events' which includes classes/ labs etc.

In order to capture attendance, DCU will be using a functionality in Loop where a unique QR Code is generated for each on-campus 'event'. This functionality has been used by a number of schools to date to capture attendance at on-campus events. Events include any classes, practicals, tutorials and small group teaching etc. Students use a QR scanner on their phones which captures the QR code displayed by the lecturer. This will allow them to log into Loop and record their attendance. Further details will be provided to staff on how this system works.

Students are being told to wear face coverings indoors in all buildings in the University. There will be exceptions where for valid reasons a student cannot wear a face covering and in those cases we are advising, in accordance with HSE guidelines, the wearing of a face visor is acceptable (See Section 9).

## **2. Pre-arrival Health & Safety Training**

DCU has developed mandatory education/training on public health practices, campus safety policies, and student expectations. For staff this is available on LOOP and for students this is available through MyDCU. Training must be completed in advance of attending campus.

Students who travel to Ireland from other jurisdictions are being told to follow Government advice on restricted movement on arrival in Ireland and should seek support from the International Office.

**3. Health Declarations**

All staff have completed health declarations as part of the Return to Campus Phase A protocol.

All students will complete a Health Declaration via Loop when they first log into the system for the start of the new academic year.

**4. Capturing campus attendance for contact tracing purposes**

For Staff

DCU as an employer, under the Government’s return to work regulations is required to capture staff member’s attendance on campus for work for contact tracing purposes only. As communicated previously, staff are being asked to download and use the ‘Check-in’ function on the [DCU SafeZone App](#) to ensure we comply with this regulation.

For Students

As discussed in Section 1, a Loop QR code system is being used to capture student attendance at campus events.



In addition, in order to facilitate broader contact tracing in the community, all the Irish Universities have agreed that they will encourage all their students to download the HSE [COVID-19 Tracker App](#) and to use the symptom checker on the App on a daily basis.

By using the app students will:

- be alerted if they have been in close contact with another app user who has tested positive for coronavirus
- be able to track any symptoms they have and get advice on what to do to protect themselves and others
- be able to anonymously warn other app users that they were in close contact with, if they test positive for coronavirus

DCU encourages all members of its community to register with a GP (student health centre or other GP) to whom they have access if they require medical attention for COVID-19.

Students will be advised to notify their Programme Chair if they have been alerted that they may have been a close contact or been exposed to someone who has tested positive and they have been instructed to self-isolate.

If a student has symptoms of coronavirus or are awaiting a test or test result, they will need to [self-isolate](#). If a student shares accommodation with a person who has tested positive they will also need to self-isolate and follow the [guidance available from the HSE](#).

DCU is working with the other Universities and the HSE on a COVID Incident Response Plan that will allow the University in close coordination with the HSE to respond to COVID-19 cases within the campus community and thereby minimise the risk of further transmission of the virus.

## **5. Preparing students for attending campus**

Students should be advised of the following guidelines when preparing to attend tutorials/labs on campus;

- Sharing personal items with others is to be avoided.
- They should bring their own filled personal water bottle. Water dispensers will be available on campus for refill.
- Bring their own personal supply of stationary including pens, notebooks etc.
- Laptops should not be shared.
- Face coverings:
  - Students will be advised of the requirement for face covering and face coverings will be available to purchase from campus shops on the Glasnevin and St. Patricks campuses.
  - Staff can get face coverings and face visors from the University through their COVID-19 co-ordinators
- Students should be aware that rooms may be cooler as maximising ventilation will impact temperature. They should be advised to come prepared with a warm outer garment such as a fleece.

- Keyboards will be available for use but students also have the option to bring their own keyboard for use in IT labs. In order to avoid the need to clean and disinfect a mouse, the keyboard should have an integrated mouse.

## **6. Timetabling**

As you are aware, as a result of physical distancing requirements, students will be on campus for scheduled activities less frequently than normal. The amount of scheduled time on campus will vary between programmes, and between modules.

Staff and students should also be prepared for the possibility that there could be temporary suspension of on-campus teaching for a period if there are outbreaks of COVID-19. If this arises, we will continue as much teaching as possible online, and re-open as soon as the public health situation allows.

There is no maximum duration of a teaching session (for example a laboratory practical) from an Infection Protection Control perspective (Note, however, that if people spend 2 hours or more in a shared space together, they may be regarded as COVID-19 contacts in the event that someone present is subsequently identified as a case).

There is no maximum duration which a person can spend in a research laboratory or office space provided distance is adequate and other measures are in place.

## **7. Physical Distancing**

Physical distancing requirements will be set out in each classroom/workshop/laboratory using signage on chairs and floor markings. Students are required to comply with these and to limit movement outside of their assigned areas. Schools should provide details of local arrangements to students in advance of attendance on campus. Students and lecturers will not be permitted to rearrange the room under any circumstances.

Lecturers/demonstrators should ensure they maintain 2m distance from all students and colleagues wherever possible.

Where demonstrators need to be at 1m+ distance to a student they should be wearing face visors/coverings, and this should be limited to short periods of time only, < 15 minutes. Where possible, they should ask the student to step away.

In emergency situations, where a student may be harmed then it may be required to remove the student immediately from that situation. Where possible use verbal cues. Explain in the induction to the students what these verbal cues will be.

However, if the students are wearing ear defenders or the environment is loud, students may not hear verbal cues. In these circumstances it is reasonable to tap the student on the



shoulder to stop and move or intervene and stop the machinery/experiment. The time spent within 1m should be very limited (< 15 minutes) and by wearing face visors and/or face coverings the risk is extremely low in these exceptional situations.

Where students must work in collaborative groups, try to position the students where they can still talk and see each but maintaining the 2m distancing.

If movement around the teaching space is required by demonstrators, ensure that the demonstrator can move safely around whilst maintaining 2m distancing (again students may need to step back on occasion to enable visualisation of their work).

Audio visual equipment can be used to demonstrate techniques/methods onto a screen.

## **8. Logistics & Movement**

The maximum occupancy rate has been determined for each teaching space. This information has been shared with timetabling who build this into the on campus schedule for Semester 1.

A sign outlining the maximum occupancy will be displayed on the door.

In post-graduate research, rotas may be considered to ensure that the number of people present at any one time allows for maintaining of distance. If a rota system is used, the same group of people (pods) should consistently be rostered together to minimise mixing of groups of people.

Clear signage will be in place to indicate entry and exit points to buildings.

“Walk on the Right” will be the strategy for general circulation in corridors and stairwells where there isn't a one-way system in operation.

Hands should be sanitized when entering a building. A hand sanitizing station will be located at the entry point of each building.

It is important that we take all practical steps to ensure that students don't congregate together (with less than 2m physical distancing) on or off campus to minimise risk of COVID-19 transmission. We can all help by reiterating the message that observing physical distancing of 2m by all students on or off-campus is one of the central measures to reduce COVID-19 risk.



### ***Alcohol-gel hand sanitization units***

Students should only arrive for class 5 minutes before scheduled start time. Queuing for a class in corridors will not be permitted.

A minimum 15-minute gap should be provided between classes to allow students to leave their classroom safely while maintaining social distancing. Students are advised to move promptly to their next assigned destination and not to socialise in common areas.

If one-way systems have been implemented, floor signage will be in place to clearly guide the student to the correct direction of travel.

## **9. Face coverings and personal protective equipment (PPE)**

The wearing of face coverings (face mask or face visor) on campus is required in all indoor public areas where physical distancing is difficult to maintain such as classrooms/lecture rooms, laboratories, corridors, common areas and before entering toilet facilities. Students will be required to wear coverings while attending in-person classes unless you have an illness, or impairment that would make wearing or removing a face covering upsetting or uncomfortable.

The basis for this advice is that the covering is expected to minimise the scattering of droplets from the mouth and nose. Therefore, if an infected person is present it is expected that mask use will reduce direct droplet transmission (to anyone standing close by) and reduce contamination of the surfaces in the vicinity of the infected person. A similar rationale may be applied to the use of full-face visors in settings where mask use is not acceptable or not appropriate. Other than cloth face coverings (or visors where appropriate) in indoor settings,

there is no requirement for other personal protective equipment related to COVID-19 risk for teaching, learning and research activities. (Note however that personal protective equipment may be required for other reasons in particular in certain laboratory settings).

Face coverings should be worn in laboratories, in instances where physical distancing is difficult to maintain, where they do not contribute to any additional risk by the nature of the materials being used e.g. low volatility materials, laboratory session design etc. Face visors are an alternative in such circumstances. Masks or face shields must not be worn when using an open flame, however social distancing requirements should be complied with.

Face covering should ideally be made of **three layers** of materials with the two inner layers made from a cotton material and the outer layer a water resistant polyester or similar material. At a minimum, face coverings should be composed of two layers of cotton material.

Unacceptable face coverings include:

- ❖ scarves, bandanas or snoods
- ❖ face coverings with “direct exhaust valves”
- ❖ face coverings that are disrespectful and inappropriate for a campus environment or contain an offensive message or image

Acceptable face coverings are available to students from the Students Union in GLA and SPC campuses.

Advice on how to wear, wash and dispose of a face covering is available from the [HSE](#).

Wearing a face covering is one part of a package of measures along with hand hygiene, physical distancing and other measures that are all necessary and all reinforce each other. Information on how to use face coverings safely is available in the FAQ section of the [Return to Campus webpage](#).

For staff in shared office space - it is fully acceptable for a face covering to be removed when they are seated at their desk and there is a minimum of 2m distance from their nearest colleagues.

Students who are exempt from wearing a face covering due to medical grounds or other will be provided with a badge indicating that they are not required to wear a face covering.



## **10. Cleaning and Disinfection**

DCU has put in place comprehensive cleaning and disinfection protocols for all our facilities. Our Facilities staff will clean and sanitize classrooms and common areas daily. Common touch areas, including door handles, railings, lift buttons, and bathroom fixtures will be cleaned multiple times per day.

Students and staff will be expected to clean their own personal work areas before and after each use with disinfection solutions/wipes provided by the University. In classrooms, disinfection wipes (large buckets) will be located inside the door - to allow students to take a wipe as they proceed to their seat. Wipes can also be used to clean keyboards before use in Computing rooms.

All members of the community will be required to wear face coverings while indoors, abide by the hygiene requirements including hand washing and sanitization, and self-monitor for potential symptoms of COVID-19. Informational Signage is placed throughout the University to remind the community of hygiene protocols.

## **11. Cleaning (decontamination) of surfaces, tools, and equipment**

Audio visual or electrical equipment in a shared teaching space should be cleaned by using wipes before and after use. Wipes are available for staff by placing an order on the Estates helpdesk. COVID Coordinators should consolidate orders into bulk orders rather than individual.

Students are encouraged to clean equipment before and after use. Surfaces can be cleaned with soapy water or the disinfectant solution provided.

IT or electrical equipment should be cleaned by using wipes. If sensitive equipment cannot be cleaned with soapy water or wipes, it can be isolated for a 72-hour period before the next use.

## **12. Ventilation**

An important approach to lowering the concentrations of indoor air pollutants or contaminants including any viruses that may be in the air is to increase ventilation – the amount of outdoor air coming indoors. Ensuring proper ventilation with outside air can help reduce the concentration of airborne contaminants.

In general, the greater the number of people in an indoor environment, the greater the need for ventilation with outdoor air. One way to achieve this is to ensure that windows are open before class commences and left open for the duration of the day.

External doors may be used to increase ventilation as long as care is taken over security. Propping open internal doors may be appropriate where it delivers a significant increase in air movement and ventilation rate. It is important to note that fire doors should not be propped open unless fitted with approved automatic closers so that they function as fire doors in the event of an alarm or fire.

Many of our teaching spaces and offices have mechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems with filters on them. These systems are maintained by the DCU Estates team. Estates have modified all the settings on the HVACs to ensure there is no re-circulating air and only fresh air intake is in place.

Good ventilation can help reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus, therefore, the University has focused on improving general ventilation, through fresh air or mechanical systems.

As the weather gets colder all of the above measures may make the temperature in buildings less comfortable than normal but it is more important to maintain good ventilation than to maintain temperature.

## **13. Toilet Management**

Maximum occupancy rates are displayed on the outside of each toilet facility. Face coverings should be worn before entering. Queuing will not be permitted inside toilets. If upon entering the facility it is clear that max occupancy has been reached, leave and form a queue outside while waiting on the next person to exit or identify another facility which has capacity.

All cubicles will remain open for use and in order to ensure social distancing every second urinal and hand basin will remain open.

## **14. Good personal hygiene and hand washing**

Good hygiene and washing your hands properly and often will help to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Follow this advice as strictly as possible and encourage others to do this too.

## Do

Wash your hands properly and often.

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when you cough and sneeze.

Put used tissues into a bin and wash your hands.

Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

## Don't

Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.

Do not share objects that touch your mouth – for example, bottles, cups.

## When to wash your hands

You should wash your hands:

- after coughing or sneezing
- before and after eating
- before and after preparing food
- if you were in contact with someone who has a fever or respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing)
- before and after being on public transport, if you must use it
- before and after being in a crowd (especially an indoor crowd)
- when you arrive and leave buildings including your home or anyone else's home
- if you have handled animals or animal waste
- before having a cigarette or vaping
- if your hands are dirty
- after toilet use

Keep your hands in good condition. Moisturise them often. Any basic product that is not perfumed or coloured is OK.

[Read advice on how to wash your hands properly.](#)



## 15. Responding to a suspect COVID-19 case

When responding to a suspect case, there are a number of actions that may need to be taken.

1) If a staff member or student becomes unwell on campus with symptoms such as cough, fever, difficulty breathing, keep at least 2 metres away from the person at all times.

2) The staff member should initially assess whether the student or staff member can immediately be directed to go home, call their doctor and continue self-isolation at home.

The staff member should if they do not have this information already, request details from the student/staff member including name and staff or student i.d. number.

3) Where the staff member / student needs or requests an ambulance, isolate the area, call the ambulance advising of a suspect COVID-19 case, stay with the patient (or call for First Aid Response on 7005999) (at least 2m away) and comfort them until the ambulance attends.

4) Where the person does not require an ambulance and cannot return home independently or without using public transport (while maintaining 2 metre distance), the unwell individual should be directed to the campus designated isolation area (see below).

**If possible telephone the Student Health Centre at the numbers below to give advance notice of arrival. Staff should add this phone number to their phone contact list.**

On route, advice should be given to the unwell individual to cover their mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or surgical mask if available.

The following spaces are designated isolation rooms for staff and students:

- **Glasnevin Campus** - Student Health Centre, Henry Grattan Building 01 **700 5143 / 5766**

- **St Patrick's Campus** - Student Health Centre, Block A 01 **700 9215**

- **All Hallows Campus** - PG08, Purcell House - as there is no student Health Centre in AHC, please contact the telephone number above for assistance.

Please add these numbers to your contacts list.

The Health Centre will facilitate contact to the individual's GP and/or the HSE and assist with subsequent directives.

### **Notifications Channels**

- a. In the case of a **Staff member** with COVID-19 symptoms, they should immediately notify their line manager who should subsequently notify the Office of the Chief Operations Officer (OCCO) at either:
  - the COVID Helpline on **01-7007019** and provide details such as student/staff name and if available and Student Number and Course Code.
  - or by email to [dcucovid.helpline@dcu.ie](mailto:dcucovid.helpline@dcu.ie)
- b. In the case of a **student** with COVID-19 symptoms, they should immediately notify their Programme Chair who should subsequently notify the Office of the Chief Operations Officer (OCCO) at either:

- the COVID Helpline on **01-7007019** and provide details such as student/staff name and if available and Student Number and Course Code.
- or by email to [dcucovid.helpline@dcu.ie](mailto:dcucovid.helpline@dcu.ie)

If COVID-19 positive is confirmed, the HSE will advise direct contacts of any actions or precautions that should be taken.

### **Response to a staff member or student who informs me that they have been asked to self-isolate or indeed, have been diagnosed with Covid-19**

Any staff or student, who is asked to self-isolate should contact their Head of Department or nominee to inform them of their self-isolation situation, including the date of commencement, the number of days advised to self-isolate, and from whom the advice was received.

If a student informs a staff member that they have been diagnosed with Covid-19, let the Head of Department or nominee know immediately.

If you are a Head of Department or nominee and are informed that a student or employee has been diagnosed with Covid-19, please contact the Office of the Chief Operations Officer (OCCO) office immediately on COVID Helpline 01-7007019 or send an email to DCUCOVID\_HELPLINE @DCU.ie

If a confirmed case is identified, students or colleagues who have had close contact will be asked to follow HSE directions and stay at home for 14 days from the last time they had contact with the confirmed case and follow the restricted movements guidance on the HSE website. All close contacts will be actively followed up by the OCCO's office and/or by the HSE.

## **16. Support for Staff**

The Human Resource department has staff dedicated to working with staff that have concerns regarding COVID-19 and in particular feel they may fall with the high or very high risk groups as defined by the HSE. More details are available in the Return to Working on Campus policy that is available on the HR website.

The Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a confidential support service for all DCU employees and their immediate families (18+) who are experiencing personal and work related issues, now provided by Spectrum Life. Further information on the EAP and how to access the service is available on the CU HR webpage. We encourage you to avail of it, it is a free confidential service for both staff and their families.



## **17. DCU Winter Flu vaccination support scheme**

Getting a Winter Flu vaccine this year could be vital to both help protect the health system cope with any additional strain caused by Covid-19 and also help protect individuals themselves from contracting the flu at time of increased personal risk with COVID-19.

DCU for the first time is putting in place a scheme that will make available free of charge the flu vaccination to all full-time members of staff including full-time members of staff in the DCU campus companies and all full-time postgraduate research students.

Further information on this years flu vaccine is available from the HSE: <https://www.hse.ie/eng/health/immunisation/pubinfo/flu-vaccination/about-the-vaccine/>

DCU Human Resources will email details on how the Winter Flu vaccine can be accessed by staff.