



2021/2022 Academic Year

**COVID-19 Health & Safety
Staff Guide**

Revision History

Revised	Version	Section	Description	Approved by
07/09/21	1.0	-	Issued	P Kierans
10/09/21	1.1	2.0	Updated guidance in relation to longer teaching activities	P Kierans
		5.0	Student contact tracing requirements updated.	
		13.0	Date of exams corrected	

Introduction

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 2021/2022 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. 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 2021–2022 academic year will commence for continuing students on Monday, September 20th and for first year students on September 27th.

For programmes which are normally campus-based, in line with our ambition to maximise your university experience and with government policy, students will be back on campus as much as is possible. Advice from the Department of Health is that it is reasonable to proceed on this basis, while everyone acknowledges that we may have to adapt at short notice should circumstances change during the year.

Students will have access to the full-range of campus support services, and the University will adhere to public health guidelines in an effort to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all members of our community.

Primary COVID-19 Health and Safety Measures

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.

The following primary measures should be followed by all staff:

- **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 common symptoms of COVID-19, which are:**
 - a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above)
 - a new 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

If you experience any of the above symptoms you should get a PCR test. Please note that a walk in HSE COVID-19 PCR Test Centre will be located on the DCU Glasnevin campus from September 21st, 2021.

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

The DCU student experience for 2021/2022 will, based on advice from the Department of Health return in as much as possible to near normal. Due to the level of vaccination within the country, the threat posed to public health by the coronavirus pandemic has led to easing of restrictions in universities which will allow for face to face teaching to resume.

DCU recognise that the threat from COVID has not gone away, therefore the importance of staff and students following health and safety protocols, exercising their own judgement and taking personal responsibility in protecting themselves and others cannot be overstated.

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

- Ventilation in each space has been assessed to ensure full compliance with The Federation of European Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (REHVA) COVID guidance.
- In naturally ventilated spaces signage will be in place to remind staff and students of the importance of checking that windows are open before class commences and left open for the duration of the day. This may result in rooms being slightly colder than normal but health and safety is being prioritised over comfort at this time.
- Physical distancing is not a requirement for students within a teaching space, with limited exceptions for physical or choral activity.
- Students and staff will be required to wear face coverings in indoor settings.
- Alcohol hand sanitizer units will remain in place across all campuses - at every building entrance and in highly trafficked areas.
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols will be retained to ensure frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, handrails, lift buttons etc. are cleaned throughout the day.
- The Estates Office will continue to provide cleaning and disinfection materials.

In lecture rooms/classrooms, the space around the lecturer at the top of the room has been retained 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, due to difficulty in projecting your voice or absence of a podium microphone. In those instances, the mask may be removed. Staff should wear masks if moving around the laboratory or teaching space.

2. Timetabling

Lectures and tutorial times will be limited to 45 minutes allowing for a 15-minute change over period (lectures will run from 5 minutes past the hour to 10 minutes before).

Laboratories, workshops and other longer teaching activities can proceed for greater than 60 minutes without a break however please note 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.

Staff who are teaching are asked to ensure that they start and finish on time. This will help reduce congestion at changeover times.

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.

3. Staff Pre-arrival Health & Safety Training

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

4. Staff Health Declarations

The vast majority of staff have completed health declarations. The requirement to complete Health Declarations will end on September 20th.

5. 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

It will not be necessary to take attendance at lectures however; staff are expected to provide assistance to the HSE in sourcing class lists for their programme if requested by contact tracers.

In order to facilitate broader contact tracing in the community, DCU will encourage all our students to download the HSE [COVID-19 Tracker App](#) and to use the symptom checker on the App on a daily basis.

6. Physical Distancing

The guidance for Higher Education no longer includes a requirement for physical distancing during teaching.

Lecturers should however try to maintain 2m distance from all students and colleagues wherever possible.

Where demonstrators need to be within less than 1m distance to a student they should be wearing face coverings, and this should be limited to short periods of time only, < 15 minutes.

Where students must work in collaborative groups, try to position the students where they can still talk and see each other. If they need to remove their masks it should be for short duration < 15 minutes while maintaining 1m distancing.

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

7. Logistics & Movement

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

A sign outlining the maximum occupancy will be displayed on the door of each teaching space.

Clear signage will remain in place to indicate entry and exit points to buildings. One way systems are not a requirement.

“Walk on the Right” will be the strategy for general circulation in corridors and stairwells.

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

Occupancy limits will remain in place for lifts, but will be removed for toilets.

8. Face coverings and personal protective equipment (PPE)

The wearing of face coverings on campus is required in all indoor public areas. 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.

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](#).

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.



9. Cleaning and Disinfection

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

Wipes will be made available in all teaching spaces to allow students and staff to wipe down their work space before and after use.

10. Cleaning (decontamination) of surfaces, tools, and equipment

Where students are using or sharing equipment, they should sanitise their hands in advance, either at entry to the teaching space or at their workspace.

Audio visual in a teaching space may be cleaned using wipes provided inside each teaching space.

There is no longer a requirement to isolate equipment which cannot be cleaned before the next use.

11. Ventilation

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.

One way to achieve this in areas which are naturally ventilated is to ensure that windows are open before class commences and left open for the duration of the day. Signage will be in place in each naturally ventilated teaching space to remind staff and students of the importance.

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.

In buildings with mechanical ventilation systems, scheduling adjustments have been put in place to extend operating times and to maximise fresh air intake- this provides the highest level of fresh air ventilation as possible for lectures rooms, offices and laboratories. These systems are maintained by the DCU Estates team.

DCU will be monitoring air quality/ventilation through the Building Management System (remote monitoring) and where there are not CO₂ sensors in the BMS - we are installing CO₂ data loggers in a range of rooms that represent equivalent rooms in that building. Estates Engineers will also have handheld CO₂ sensors for sampling of spaces as required. CO₂ monitoring is only a proxy from air quality and one of a range of measures the University will have in place to keep the campus environment safe for staff and students.

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.

12. Responding to a suspected COVID-19 case

When responding to a suspected 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 student or member of staff, prior to departing may be directed to the HSE COVID-19 PCR test centre on the DCU Glasnevin campus to avail of a free PCR test.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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 (OCOO) 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
- 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 (OCOO) 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

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 has been instructed 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 (OCOO) office immediately on COVID Helpline 01-7007019 or send an email to DCUCOVID_HELPLINE @DCU.ie

13. Staff Frequently asked questions

What if students do not wear masks?

Staff are not expected to “police” mask wearing, but we do ask that all staff encourage wearing of masks in indoor settings. We know that some students are unable to wear masks for medical reasons. As described above a system is in place to identify those students.

It is reasonable to remind students that it is DCU policy that masks are worn in indoor spaces. If a student is uncooperative, please get their name and student i.d. number and contact the DCU COVID Helpline with the details.

Are staff expected to wear a mask?

Yes, you should wear a mask in indoor spaces except when seated at your desk. You are not expected to wear a mask while teaching lectures or tutorials, as a “lecturer space” is designed separated by 2 metres from the nearest student.

Are staff required to be vaccinated?

This is a personal medical decision, and the university will not require staff to be vaccinated, or prevent unvaccinated staff from attending. Vaccination is a sensible public health measure and it seems wise for all staff to get vaccinated unless advised against vaccination by their doctor.

Can I meet students in my office?

Yes, you can meet individual students in your office. You should leave the door or window open as much as practical to increase ventilation, and wear a mask during the meeting.

If you feel uncomfortable meeting students in person, you can arrange to meet them via Zoom.

Do students need to be separated by 2 metre in teaching spaces?

No. The guidance for Higher Education no longer includes a requirement for 2 metre spacing. This reflects the high levels of vaccination in society. Nevertheless, students are asked to take care, and to maintain as much distance as possible.

What arrangements are in place for staff and students who are medically vulnerable?

Any staff member or student who is medically vulnerable should ensure that they are fully vaccinated before coming on campus, unless advised otherwise by their doctor.

If a staff member is medically vulnerable, they should contact their line manager, who will in turn refer the staff member Occupational Health via Human Resources.

If there are students who are particularly vulnerable, they should contact Student Services, who will guide them through the necessary medical and risk assessments.

Can I plan a field trip for students?

Field trips may be permitted provided they are arranged in compliance with Public Health Guidelines and in compliance with DCU Field Trip Policy

Will exams be held on campus or remotely?

We anticipate that we will be able to hold exams on campus in December 2021.

What if a staff member has some symptoms and is scheduled to teach?

Just as for students, staff who have symptoms that might be COVID or have been told to self-isolate, should not come onto the campus. If you are ill, you can cancel the class, as normal in cases of illness.

If you are not ill, but required to self-isolate, you can switch to remote teaching. If you switch to remote teaching, please record the class to make it available to students who were unable to participate at the right time.

Will there be conferring's?

The University has committed to having on-campus Graduation Ceremonies for all students when the public health guidelines allow this to proceed as normal.