

COVID-19 PROVISION AND USE OF PPE AND FACE COVERINGS GUIDANCE

1. Purpose

The Scottish Government recommends that people should wear a face covering in enclosed public spaces, where social distancing is not possible. In response, the University of Strathclyde will provide 3, washable, re-usable face coverings to all staff members and students at the start of the new academic year. Staff and students may also wish to provide their own face covering.

The purpose of this is to support mandatory use on public transport (effective from 22nd June 2020) and in shops (effective from the 10th July 2020), other certain indoor spaces (7th August 2020, amended 19th October to include communal areas in indoor workplaces), and guidance for higher and further education institutions and student accommodation providers (1st Sept 2020) on wearing face coverings indoors whenever 2 metre distancing cannot be guaranteed. In addition, the University's Executive Team (20th November 2020) has decided to further enhance measures and decided that staff and students will wear face coverings in all classroom settings on campus with the exception of those who are exempt from wearing face coverings and teaching settings where PPE is to be worn.

For staff and students returning to campus, social distancing is a key aspect of preventing transmission of the virus and should be used in combination with good hand and respiratory hygiene. Face coverings are a precautionary measure and are not a replacement for more effective means of maintaining social distancing in enclosed spaces. Examples would include minimising close contact with others, using fixed teams and partnering, keeping to normal work areas and agreed routes in buildings and increasing hand washing and surface cleaning. There is evidence that face coverings have some additional value, especially in crowded and less well-ventilated spaces, and where 2 metre distancing is not possible.

You need to wear a face covering even if you have been vaccinated. Face coverings remain an important public health mitigation even as the vaccine is rolled out, as we are yet to understand how effective the vaccines are at preventing transmission of current and new variants.

This guidance document provides information on the provision and use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and face coverings at the University of Strathclyde.

2. Definitions

It is important to appreciate the correct terminology and level of protection offered by a face covering. Face coverings **are not** PPE as they do not protect the wearer from work-related hazardous substances. They are also not medical masks e.g. surgical masks.

A face covering is generally designed to cover the mouth and nose and can be made from different combinations of fabric, layering sequences and is available in a variety of shapes. It is recommended that it be made of cloth or other textiles and should be two, and preferably three layers thick, and through which you can

breathe. The different combination of fabrics and materials results in variable filtration and breathability.

Guidance on standards for face coverings has been published by the [British Retail Consortium](#), [WHO](#) and [BSI](#).

Face shields may be used, but only if they are worn in addition to a face covering underneath, as the evidence shows that they do not provide adequate protection.

If people are unable to wear a face covering, a face visor or face shield can be worn as it does provide a limited level of protection.

Face coverings may be marginally beneficial as a precautionary measure against coronavirus. The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect the wearer, but it may protect others if the wearer is infected and asymptomatic.

3. COVID-19 and Personal Protective Equipment

COVID-19 is a different type of risk to those normally faced in the workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene measures and fixed teams or partnering, not solely through the use of PPE. However, where an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 is identified, PPE should be identified as a mandatory requirement through risk assessment and by following specific [Government guidance](#).

4. Wearing of Face Coverings

4.1 General Use

The wearing of a face covering is mandatory on public transport and in public transport premises (i.e. railway, bus and subway stations and airports) and also in shops and certain other [indoor public places](#) as specified by the Scottish Government.

In line with Scottish Government guidance, there is an expectation for people to wear face coverings in indoor places where physical distancing is difficult and where there is a risk of contact within 2 metres with people who are not members of your household. The University aims to minimise the risk of virus transmission through social distancing, managing the number of people on campus, operating queuing and one-way systems where possible (to minimise face-to-face contact) and 'one in/ one out systems' etc. The Scottish government also advise there is no evidence to suggest there might be a benefit outdoors from wearing a face covering unless in a crowded situation.

Staff and students attending campus should come prepared with a face covering to wear when on campus.

You need to wear a face covering even if you have been vaccinated.

4.2 Indoors on Campus

While staff and students can continue to wear face coverings if they wish, face coverings will be required in all classroom settings on campus.

Face coverings should be worn indoors wherever 2 metres distance cannot be guaranteed. This includes where people are interacting face-to-face at less than 2 metres for a sustained period (an accumulated period of 15 minutes or more over

a single working day) or for any amount of time where there is close contact within 1 metre.

Face coverings must also be worn in the following circumstances (except where someone is exempt from wearing a covering):

- while in the University library;
- while in the Strathclyde Sport Centre in common areas such as reception, walkways and changing areas;
- when moving about the University in building entrances, corridors, lifts and stairs;
- when gathering or remaining in other indoor communal areas including: toilets, changing rooms, staff rooms, canteens (except where seated), classrooms;
- other areas of campus where 2 metre physical distancing cannot be guaranteed.

4.3 Student Accommodation

Face coverings should be worn in some parts of student accommodation where 2 metre distance from people from another household cannot be guaranteed. This includes corridors and some shared facilities such as laundries and common rooms. It does not include kitchens and bathrooms shared by multiple households, where other mitigations including 2 metre physical distancing and enhanced cleaning and personal hygiene measures should be in place. Face coverings should not generally be required when people are interacting face-to face with others within their household, for example in a cluster, flats or other private space. Subject to 2 metre physical distancing between people of different households, enhanced cleaning and other mitigations such as rota systems being in place, face coverings do not need to be worn in kitchens and bathrooms shared by multiple households.

In the event of outbreaks in the community, Public Health Incident Management Team may advise that the use of coverings is extended.

When using face coverings, the following guidance should be followed:

4.4 Applying and removing your face covering

When applying or removing the covering, it is important that you first wash your hands with soap and water for 20 seconds and avoid touching your face, or use hand sanitiser if hand washing facilities are not available.

When wearing your face covering:

- Ensure it is clean and functional;
- Ensure the face covering fits well and covers your mouth, nose and chin;
- Do not share your face covering with anyone else;
- Be mindful of those who have different communication, health and disability needs (see Section 4.6);
- Replace it with PPE, if this has been identified by risk assessment.

Watch the Scottish Government [video on best practice](#) on use of face coverings.

4.5 Caring for your face covering

When temporarily storing a face covering, such as in a pocket when moving between spaces, it should be placed in a washable bag or container and you should avoid placing it on surfaces, due to the possibility of contamination.

If a face covering becomes wet or soiled when you are using it, it should be replaced immediately with a clean one. Reusable face coverings should be washed after use, for example after a day on campus or a trip to the supermarket.

If your face covering is reusable, after each use machine wash it according to the manufacturer's recommendations, usually on the highest setting suitable for the fabric, preferably 60 degrees centigrade. Face coverings should only be hand washed if a washing machine is unavailable. For hand washing, lather face coverings for at least 20 seconds using warm to hot water before drying ideally putting in a dryer. The University will not provide washing facilities for face coverings. Iron face coverings on the cotton or linen setting to kill any remaining germs. Regularly check your reusable face covering as any damaged or worn sections may interfere with its ability to prevent transmission of the virus. Staff and students are responsible for purchasing replacement face coverings.

If your face covering is not reusable, you should dispose of it safely in the general waste bin. Disposable face coverings cannot be recycled.

4.6 Health, disability and communication

The [Scottish Government](#) recognises that it may not be possible for some people to wear a face covering as it may cause difficulties, pain, distress or anxiety. The University understands that there are situations where some people are unable to, or it would be inappropriate for them, to wear a face covering.

If you are unable to wear a face covering, a face visor or face shield can be worn as it does provide a limited level of protection. The University will provide face shields to any staff member or student who requires one, or in circumstances where a member of staff/student is being supported and where a face shield would be beneficial (e.g. for communication needs, or where facial expression may be an indicator of seizure onset).

Some people may feel more comfortable showing something that says they are exempt from wearing a face covering. This could be in the form of an exemption card, lanyard or badge. You can now request a Healthier Scotland face covering exemption card online using the [request form](#).

The University of Strathclyde has also joined the [Hidden Disabilities Sunflower scheme](#) to support its staff and students. Strathclyde branded sunflower lanyards, badges or cards are available for any staff, student or visitor who requires one.

4.7 Religious face coverings

Religious face coverings that cover the mouth and nose are classed as face coverings. Where a religious face covering is worn, it is an individual preference whether or not to use the University supplied face covering.

5. References

Scottish Government:

Safeguarding and Compliance Workstream

- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/>
- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-phase-3-staying-safe-and-protecting-others/pages/face-coverings/>
- <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-universities-colleges-and-student-accommodation-providers/>

UK Government:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/labs-and-research-facilities>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

HSE:

- <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/ppe-face-masks/face-coverings-and-face-masks.htm>