

Protocol for College Safety under COVID-19



MCAST

Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology

As of 10th September 2020

Protocol for College Safety under COVID-19

UPDATE: 10.09.2020

Arriving at MCAST:

- If you have any COVID-related symptoms, stay home
- Temperature control is obligatory upon arrival on campus
- Clean hands with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water regularly
- Wear a mask/visor
- Cough or sneeze into your tissue or if not in your elbow
- Adequate social distancing is required (minimum 1.5m)



Teaching and Learning at MCAST:



- As many lectures as possible will be held on campus
- Online or face-to-face lectures, where needed use available platforms, primarily MS teams or as directed
- Priority for face-to-face lectures must be given to first year students and those in courses at MQF Level 1 to 4
- Maximum of 15 persons per class and according to size of physical space
- Wear a mask/visor during all in-house lectures, laboratory, workshop sessions, in the library, and on entering the canteen and any other building unless otherwise instructed

Working at MCAST:

- A maximum of 15 persons in a staff room, including board rooms, depending on size of rooms
- Use a roster basis when working in large groups
- Perspex shields are installed as necessary
- Meetings should be held online, where possible
- All measures directed by the Public Health Authorities apply



Source • MCAST PROTOCOL COVID-19 – 10.09.2020

NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL/CEO

10th September 2020

Dear All,

COVID-19 has indeed disrupted our lives in no small measure. Nevertheless today, we are all conscious of the fact that in order to avoid the spread of this dangerous virus, social distancing is crucial together with other measures, which the Health Authorities have been drumming on, daily.

Living in a work environment with the threat of the virus will not be easy. However, we are aware of what needs to be done to avert the danger of infection.

This protocol has been reviewed by our Line Ministry and the Health Authorities.

What is important to highlight is that no matter how many measures you write and plan to do, implementation, supervision, and surveillance is what will prevent the spreading of this virus on campus. However, one must keep in mind that even if mitigation conditions are adhered to religiously there is still a risk of transmission. Thus, mitigation conditions decrease risks but do not eliminate them.

Management is responsible for implementing the measures in the protocol to the letter. Centrally, the college will provide the support that one needs to organise face-to-face lectures, online lecturing and other smaller activities that one deems fit. The principle of social distancing should be kept in mind at all times. Wearing masks and the regular use of hand rub is mandatory on campus.

I urge you all, including MCAST visitors, to embark on the application of this Protocol with a strong commitment. There will be no half measures; one is either compliant or not. Disciplinary measures will be taken for those who infringe the rules and regulations of this Protocol.

I am confident that working together will enable us to have another successful academic year at the College.

The Principal/CEO

COVID-19 COLLEGE SAFETY PROTOCOL 10.09.2020

Basic Safety Measures

Temperature Screening

Temperature screening on campus allows the college to know immediately if someone has a fever. Persons with a temperature above 37.2°C will be denied access to the campus. As with all other absences, college staff/student is responsible for informing their line manager/institute staff. Anyone with symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, headaches, tiredness, muscle pain, loss of taste, loss of smell, vomiting and diarrhoea) must not attend for in-person lessons and must self-isolate until the testing results are back. If the results are negative and the person is completely free of symptoms, the person may return to campus without any formal clearance. All persons conducting temperature screening will be trained in advance and will be required to wear protective gear. In order to ensure compliance with privacy laws, records of temperature screenings or symptom assessments should not be maintained by departments.

Anyone that develops symptoms compatible with coronavirus (COVID-19) during a class, the person should return home and notify Director/ Deputy Principal administration electronically. Contact with anyone should be avoided - *see point 13, in case of an outbreak.*

Physical Distancing

Maintaining space between you and others is required at MCAST to avoid exposure to the COVID-19 virus and slow its spread. Because people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay away from others whenever possible, even if you have no symptoms. Individuals on campus should follow these physical distancing practices:

- Stay at adequate physical distance from other people (minimum 1.5m)
- Stay out of crowded places and avoid mass gatherings (, mass gatherings/ student assemblies or student association meetings should not take place in-person. Where necessary, virtual meetings should be held)

Face Mask/Coverings

Face masks/coverings (e.g., surgical masks, cloth face coverings, visors) must be worn by all individuals working on campus (e.g., common workspaces, public spaces, hallways, stairwells, elevators, meeting rooms, classrooms, break-rooms, campus outdoor spaces, restrooms, etc.). In general, masks or visors should be worn in indoor public places at all times.

Appropriate use of face masks/coverings is important in minimizing risks to the wearers and those around them according to the local health authority. This applies to both off-site as well as on the MCAST campus, both indoors and outdoors.

For guidance on the appropriate use of masks please refer to the following link: <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Guidance-on-the-Use-of-Face-Masks-for-decreasing-COVID-19-Transmission.pdf>

Hand Washing

Local health authority recommends that community members should wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after they have been in a public place or used the restroom; after blowing their nose, coughing or sneezing; and before and after eating. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 70% alcohol. Individuals should cover all surfaces of their hands and rub them together until they feel dry ensuring all surfaces have been covered. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

Further guidance on handwashing can be found here: covid19.gov.mt

Coughing/Sneezing Hygiene

If you are in a private setting and not wearing your face mask/covering, local health authority recommends to always cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow. Throw used tissues in a closed and lined bin. Immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 70% alcohol.

Should you feel any of the following symptoms (fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, headaches, tiredness, muscle pain, loss of taste, loss of smell, vomiting and diarrhoea), call the helpline 111 immediately and be guided by the public health authorities.

Measures for Common Campus Areas

In general, we must all ensure that crowding of persons on entrance and exit is avoided by also abiding to floor markings available to encourage adequate distancing. Where possible, the college will be promoting multiple entrances to disperse people. One-way directional flow will be implemented to control the flow of persons in the hallways.

1. Using restrooms

Restrooms usage should ensure physical distancing is achieved. Wait outside the restroom in a socially distanced line until physical distancing inside the restroom can be achieved. Keeping a distance from others must be adhered to at all times. Avoid touching your face after touching door handles. Wash with soap or sanitize your hands after using the restroom. The college will ensure that where sinks may be adjacent to one another and physical distancing cannot be maintained, either one sink will be cordoned off or Perspex barriers will be installed.

2. Using Campus elevators

Elevator usage should ensure physical distancing is achieved. Using stairs whenever possible will assist vertical circulation given that elevator capacities may be challenged. If you are using the elevator, wear your face mask/covering and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer with 70% alcohol upon departing the elevator. Cleaners will be wiping down elevator buttons more frequently during the day. There shall be a limit of 2 persons in an elevator.

3. Meetings

An important aspect of education is the physical gathering of students in class. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic important safeguards must be taken. An adequate distance between students in class (minimum 1.5m) should be applied at all times. Departments will remove or rearrange chairs and tables or add visual cue marks in meeting rooms to support physical distancing practices between attendees.

Online learning is also an important educational component. Some meetings could be held in whole or in part using online collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams).

During your time on-site, you are encouraged to communicate with your colleagues and supervisors as needed by email, Skype messenger, telephone or other technology. You can also use a range of available collaboration tools (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft teams, Skype).

4. Canteen

If obtaining food from dining sites on campus, you should wear your face mask/covering when picking up food. Individuals should not sit facing one another.

Observe occupancy limits and avoid crowding of break rooms. Wipe down the table and chair before use and once you are done. Common break room food and beverage items should not be used (e.g., shared coffee pots, shared water pitchers, etc.).

Apply alcohol hand rub upon entering the catering premises. An appropriate 70% alcohol hand-rub should be provided at the entrance. Respect signage and floor markings for social distancing.

For contacting tracing purposes, for those entering the canteen, contact details will be registered.

Canteen Operators will be following the detailed safety guidelines as stipulated by the Public Health Authorities COVID guidelines.

https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Standards-for-Restaurants,-Pools-and-Hotel-Accommodation_Aug20.pdf

5. Offices and work environments

The Public Health Authorities COVID 'Guidance for offices and workspaces' should be adhered to. Refer to the following link : https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Guidance-for-Offices-and-Workspaces_12Jun20.pdf

6. Lecture Rooms/Workshops/Computer Labs

Following basic principles in lecture rooms, workshops and computer labs, can help keep students, teachers, and other staff be safe at the college grounds and help stop the spread of this disease. The following are recommendations for a healthy college:

- Classrooms should be all marked with maximum capacity.
- Sick students, teachers and all staff should not attend lectures or workshops
- The college should enforce regular hand washing with safe water and soap, alcohol rub/hand sanitizer or chlorine solution and, at a minimum, daily disinfection and cleaning of surfaces
- College should provide water, sanitation and waste management facilities and follow environmental cleaning and decontamination procedures
- In general, promote an adequate physical distance between persons at all times.
- One must ensure that a maximum capacity of students and staff inside the practical room at any one time respects the 1.5m social distancing.
- A maximum of 15 persons (which is subject to revision) may attend one class at one given time, according to the size of the room
- All persons present should sanitise their hands regularly and especially when entering the practical session.

- All face-to-face sessions including assessments will be organised in small clusters or bubbles of a maximum of 15 persons at one time.
- All face-to-face sessions including assessments will be organised in small clusters or bubbles. Clusters will be discouraged from meeting other clusters at all times.
- Whenever possible, online learning will be encouraged.

7. Practical Sessions

In general, during a practical session, the following measures will be observed by students and staff:

- One must ensure that a maximum capacity of students and staff inside the practical room at any one time respects the 1.5m social distancing.
- **A maximum of 15 persons** (which is subject to revision) may attend one class at one given time.
- In general, promote social distancing and the minimum distance established by the World Health Organisation must be adhered to at all times.
- All persons present should sanitise their hands regularly and especially when entering the practical session.
- Washing of hands and wearing of gloves is mandatory before any applied treatment to another person (if applicable).
- **Wearing a mask or a visor is mandatory** at all times covering mouth, nose and chin unless instructed otherwise by the staff present due to a safety practical process.

For guidelines on specific practical professions (e.g. hairdressers, beauticians, nail technicians, dance studio, gyms, filming, childcare, etc.), kindly refer to the mandatory standards for mitigation measures for the COVID-19 transition phase issued under the Public Health Act chapter 465.

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances.aspx>

8. Apprenticeships and Placements

Students will be obliged to respect the protocols at their work of place. The Apprenticeship & Work Based Learning department will be monitoring places of work that COVID-19 guidelines are being followed.

9. Visiting the MCAST Library

MCAST Library will be re-opening its doors to students under the following conditions:

- Circulation of the books and reference services (for e.g.: referring to dissertation, reference books etc.) will be available.
- ONLY Individual study is allowed.
- Entry will be refused if any visitors are visibly unwell or have respiratory issues or not wearing masks/ visors.

- Every person should keep a minimum distance of 1.5 metres from others.
- Anyone entering the library premises should wear a visor/ mask covering, mouth, nose and chin.
- Users will be asked to sanitize their hands on entering the library and upon leaving the premises.
- Lockers are not available. Students are allowed to bring the bags in the library but not allowed to leave them unattended and are solely responsible for their belongings.
- Study areas, desks and workstations are available for individual study up to a maximum of 50 students at the main campus Library Paola - 15 individual study areas on the Ground floor and the Second Floor; 5 individual study areas on the First floor; 15 computer workstations on the Third Floor.
- Users are requested to provide their name and contact details at the reception upon entering the library in order to facilitate contact tracing.
- Users are requested to bring their own laptops.
- Group study is not allowed.
- Users are not allowed to move the chairs from the designated places to maintain the 2m distance.
- Users will be requested to sanitize the surface before and after the use.
- Borrowing Books: The users are requested to contact LLRC (<https://www.mcast.edu.mt/library-contact-points/>) with the details of the books (title, author and class no. taken from the library online catalogue) if they wish to borrow any Library items. Browsing through the shelves for books is not allowed.
- Book Returns: The returned books will be quarantined for 72 hours and cannot be borrowed or viewed before the lapse of this period.
- Renewal: Renewal of borrowed books can be made online through My Library Account and the renewal limit can be extended by contacting the Library by phone or by email.
- Printing and photocopying services should be used only if necessary. Minimum amount of 2 euro should be deposited on the students' papercut accounts to avail the printing services. Users are requested to contact the Librarian- in- charge for the arrangement.
- Use of e- resources is highly recommended.
- Food and drinks are not allowed.
- Users who refuse these procedures will not be allowed in.

In general, libraries should also refer to the guidelines issued by the health authorities:

https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigation-conditions-and-guidances/Obligatory_Conditions_And_Guidelines_On_Libraries.pdf

10. Visitors to Campus

Visitors and guests are to abide by the health obligations set above and to wear face mask/shield in and around campus buildings during this time. Invited guests (e.g., contractors) are allowed only with explicit permission and are expected to abide by all campus wide and building-specific protocols:

- Non-essential visits to the office are not allowed. Family members of staff, particularly children, should not be allowed inside the office.
- Only a limited number of workers attending to clients, deliveries and contractors are allowed.
- Clients, contractors and other visitors should wear a mask or visor.
- Contractors are to abide by the health instructions given by the college while they are in the office.
- Ensure hand washing facilities, or if not possible, alcohol-based hand sanitizer, are readily available for workers, particularly after socially interacting with clients or handling deliveries.
- Clients, delivery persons and contractors should use electronic paperwork where possible, to minimise social interaction.
- If a pen or other utensil is required for signature, the pen or utensil should be cleaned or sanitised before use or use your own
- Temperature will be taken on entrance to MCAST as per health authorities regulations
- The three entry points to MCAST will be secured at all times and no one will be allowed in if basis health measures as detailed above are not strictly adhered to.

11. Standards for Mass Gatherings and Events (as at 19th August 2020)

New restrictions were implemented from 19 Aug 2020 which state that gatherings of more than 15 people will no longer be allowed in public places. Additionally, masks are mandatory in closed public spaces. This regulation supersedes the standards that were issued for Mass Gatherings and Events on the 31st July 2020.

<https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/Press%20Releases/Pages/2020/August/17/pr201562.aspx>

12. Vulnerable Persons

As indicated above, all persons attending the College should take all possible measures to reduce the risk of a COVID-19 transmission. The clinically vulnerable population should also take particular care to practise frequent thorough hand washing, wearing masks and retaining distance from others.

The College is aware of the potential concerns of pupils, parents and households who may be reluctant or anxious about returning to the College in September. This may include pupils who have themselves been shielded previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is clinically vulnerable, or those who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If parents of pupils with significant risk factors are concerned, MCAST recommends these pupils to discuss their concerns with Institute Directors discuss the possibility of online learning options or plan out a remote education schedule with the respective institute.

Clinically vulnerable academic staff/lecturers can return to the College in September and follow the College measures in this document to minimise the risks of transmission. This includes taking particular care to observe good hand and respiratory hygiene, minimising contact and maintaining social distancing. This provides that ideally, adults should maintain 1.5 metre distance from others, and where this is not possible avoid close face-to-face contact and minimise time spent in close contact with others. In the case, where such distancing is not possible, staff is encouraged to use alternative teaching methods and learning platforms.

13. Contingency plans for outbreaks at the College

In the event of a local outbreak, the respective line manager needs to be informed immediately who in turn alerts the Deputy Principal administration and the Principal/CEO of MCAST concurrently.

The Principal of the College will immediately alert and consult with both the Health Authorities and the Education and Employment Ministry.

The DP Administration will take the following possible actions, in consultation with the Principal:

- Depending on where the outbreak is, close the unit/institute/college temporarily to help control transmission.
- Schedule rigorous sanitisation of the premises
- In coordination with the institute/unit, reorganise staff/student attendance on a roster basis, as necessary
- As necessary, the College would offer remote education options for learners or a specific cluster of students
- The Civil Protection Department will be contacted to carry out decontamination of affected premises.

This is all subject to Public Health guidance which will provide advice based upon the risk assessment carried out on a case by case basis and executive management clearance.

14. Cleaning Protocol

Particular care will be made in frequently touched areas such as door handles, elevator buttons, counter tops, shared computers, telephones. These will be disinfected with appropriate agents, multiple times a day.

During practical sessions, where there are tools/ equipment used, these will be well cleaned and disinfected using appropriate agents between one group and the next.

This guidance document will be updated as necessary.

COVID-19 - Specific Guidelines for Institute Directors

Version: 10.09.2020

In general, institute directors are to follow the COVID-19 College protocol. However, below are additional guidelines on the operations of timetabling and implementation. One must ensure that, as much as possible, lectures should be held on campus. Online lectures are to be organised, where needed, by using available platforms, primarily with MS teams.

Lectures

- Preferably lectures are held face-to-face;
- Online lectures are a possible option and should be timetabled by Director;
- Online lectures can be carried out from the respective classrooms or from other venues (not staff rooms) as per timetable and approved by Institute Director;
- Lecturers should attend college to deliver lectures whether its face-to-face
- When scheduling timetables, contact hours per unit are not be increased.

Lecturers

- Staffrooms should not exceed more than 15 individuals, also considering a 1.5 metres distance, where possible.
- Where needed, perspex shields are to be installed;
- Alternative spaces can be organised to mitigate over-populated staffrooms;
- Due to the current exceptional circumstances, lecturers are allowed to be off-campus when not delivering lectures.
- If lecturers are on quarantine because they or a member of their family has been diagnosed with COVID-19 may continue working from home until such period ends.
- Lecturers should, in general, limit the time in staffrooms.
- If lecturers are under quarantine, sick leave will not be deducted

Students

- Students at Level 1-3 and other first year students are to attend face-to-face classes as per timetable, where possible;
- Directors are to ensure that classrooms do not exceed 15 individuals (14 students + 1 lecturer), also considering the 1.5 metres distance, where possible.

Institute

- Institute directors should ensure that the maximum number of people within the building of the institute, as well as individual classrooms (1.5 metres per individual), is not to be exceeded;
- Keep a list of any visitors accessing the premises of the institute (name and contact number) for 28 days;
- Use signs to designate single-direction entry and exit points, where possible;
- An adequate number of sanitisers are to be strategically placed around the institute.

Sanitisation

- Vending machines will be available to purchase masks and alcoholic wipes;
- Sanitisers and hand rubs will be available across the institute;
- Every room and every entrance point of buildings will have a sanitiser;
- Posters on appropriate handwashing, respecting physical distances and respiratory hygiene should be placed in public areas.

Guidelines if a student or a staff member develop COVID-19 symptoms during a class

If a student/ staff member develops any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 whilst on the premises, they should immediately return home independently if they feel up to it.

If they need to be accompanied home, they should wait in a designated isolation room until a relative collect them. This room should be well ventilated and if a staff member is supervising them until collection he/she should wear appropriate protective equipment in accordance with situation (e. g. mask and visor, plastic apron, disposable gloves) and maintain a physical distance from the sick person.

The isolation room should be deep cleaned after a period of ventilation. Cleaning staff should have appropriate equipment and protective gear to do this safely. *(See covid19.gov.mt for more detail)*. The Civil Protection Department will also be contacted to carry out decontamination of affected premises.

Institute Director/ Deputy Principal should be notified of this event however this should not be done in person.

Sick student/ staff should be guided to call the Public Health Helpline for assistance and to book swab test. In the event of a negative test the individual can only return when completely free of symptoms

In the event of a positive result, Public Health authorities will be in touch with the mitigation officer of the Institute in order to collect details regarding the contacts of the index person and provide guidance regarding further measures to be adopted.

It is critical that records are kept of class attendances and contact details of the students.

Communications

Each institute must have a designated individual to serve as a **COVID-19 mitigation officer** to ensure that the mitigation plans outlined are implemented. The mitigation officer will be chosen by the Directors. Directors cannot be the mitigation officer. A circular will be sent to inform all MCAST staff who the designated mitigation officers are for every institute.

The mitigation officer's remit is to ensure and keep contact tracing records pertaining to the particular institute and to be the contact point for communications with Public Health Authorities in the case of a positive case.