Face coverings FAQs

Why have you changed your position on face-coverings?

Our change in position from simply encouraging their use, to making it mandatory in most areas on our campuses, reflects the updated public health advice.

We have updated our position for the following key reasons:

- Increased risk mitigation – particularly for indoor places where physical distancing is difficult and where there is a risk of contact within 2m with people who are not members of the same household
- Reassurance – for staff and students moving about our campuses in areas where physical distancing is more difficult
- Clarity and consistency – people must already, by law, wear a face covering in shops, on public transport and public transport premises such as railway and bus stations and airports, and in certain other indoor public places, such as libraries and reading rooms. Having a position where face-coverings are mandatory in libraries, but not other areas of the campus might become confusing and lead to concern or conflict. The Scottish Government has recently announced the mandatory wearing of face-coverings in secondary schools from the end of August, when moving about in communal areas, but not during teaching while 2m physical distancing is being observed. The position we are adopting will help provide consistency of messaging
- Symbolic – even with all the signage on campus, we expect the wearing of face-coverings to serve as a vivid reminder of the ongoing risks of COVID 19 and the need to adopt all the critical measures that people may otherwise forget, including hand sanitising and physical distancing

Is a face covering a substitute for physical distancing or sanitising?

No. It is important to note that physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene are the most important and effective things we can all do to prevent the spread of coronavirus. The wearing of face coverings must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions.

When do I have to wear face-coverings from?

Face-coverings become mandatory on our campuses from the 31st August 2020. Please keep checking Health & Safety Guidance, as it is being continually updated in line with government guidance.

Where do I have to wear a face-covering on campus?

If you are able to do so, you must wear face-coverings in all our campus buildings, accommodation and off-site venues (including EICC, Murrayfield, 7 Hills etc) as you enter, exit and move about in all communal areas, including libraries, and anywhere else you are unable to maintain physical distancing of 2m.
Face-coverings or PPE may be required in labs or specialist classes (e.g. clinical skills) – this will be subject to local risk assessment.

Do I have to remove my face covering if advised it is safe to do so?

No. You are welcome to keep your face-covering on if you wish to do so.

Are there legitimate reasons for someone not wearing a face covering in an area they are supposed to?

Yes. Some staff will not need to wear face-coverings as other mitigations are in place to keep you and them safe (e.g. perspex screens at iPoints, libraries and catering outlets). Some people will not be wearing a face-covering if they are exempt due to health or other factors – please be respectful. For more information on exemptions please click here.

Is there anywhere I do not have to wear a face covering on campus?

Yes. We are advising some instances where face coverings need not be worn and/or can be removed. The recommendations are also in line with similar government guidelines (e.g. restaurants) and where we have assessed that the risk mitigation measures already in place minimise the need for face coverings e.g. 2m physical distancing, ventilation, perspex screens. They also reflect settings that, in the event of a Test & Protect scenario, individuals would not be considered as close contacts.

The areas in which face-coverings can be removed are as follows, but please remember to put face coverings on again before leaving the room or if you need to move around the room:

- Office spaces - provided you are on your own or are seated at least 2m apart from any other occupants who are also stationary
- Restaurant areas - when you are seated to eat and drink - 2m social distancing must continue to be strictly observed
- Classrooms configured for 2m physical distancing, once everyone is seated. NB If you are moving around the room while teaching you should wear a face covering and ask students to put theirs on too. When moving around, please minimise face to face positioning, where less than 2m distanced, and avoid close contact (<2m distancing) with any student for more than a total of 15 minutes
- Specific areas where other mitigations are in place such as a perspex screen

What should I do if I see someone not wearing a face-covering in an area they are supposed to?

Some people will have legitimate reasons, potentially of a sensitive nature, for not feeling able to wear face-coverings and could be considered exempt. It is important that people with genuine exemptions do not feel persecuted, while those that are simply not adhering can be challenged in a proportionate fashion. This is clearly a wider issue in terms of compliance in public spaces/services.

The starting point should be presumption of adherence if able, particularly given the exemptions that apply, and we would encourage people to be kind and respectful to each other.

If appropriate the role of personal responsibility can be gently promoted, as outlined for example in our revised student charter and our H&S guidelines for staff. However, if people are blatantly ignoring University policy and Government guidelines for no legitimate reason, then it may be necessary to follow more formal routes to address non-compliance after all appropriate informal routes have been exhausted.

Will I get given a face covering or do I have to provide my own?

People should use their own face coverings, however all staff will be able to access face-coverings from collection points on each campus, if required. Front-facing staff have the option of collecting a starter pack of washable face-coverings if they would like to use these.

Spare face coverings will be available for staff and students who have forgotten to bring their own.

What constitutes a face covering and what is the current legislation around their use?

For more information on what constitutes a face-covering and what the current Scottish Government legislation is please see here.