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## **Guidelines and Mandatory Standards for Mitigating COVID-19 at STC Higher Education**

This policy defines, for the scholastic year 2021/22, the practices implemented to prevent the spread of COVID 19 and the protocols that apply should a student be infected or in quarantine.

STC Policy Document - OEP Last updated September 2021



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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	2
2. Regulations.....	2
2.1 Physical distancing.....	2
2.2 Social bubbles.....	2
2.3 Use of masks and visors.....	2
2.4 Guidance when feeling sick.....	2
2.5 Qualifying to follow face-to-face lessons from home.....	3
2.6 Procedure that needs to be followed by students having face-to-face lessons. ....	3
3. Environmental Control Measures .....	4
3.1 Ventilation .....	4
3.2 Keeping the premises clean .....	4
3.3 Use of Prayer Room and Students Room .....	4
3.4 Use of Library.....	4
3.5 Use of Classrooms for Studying Purposes .....	4
3.6 Liaison Person at STC.....	4
4. Further Information .....	4
APPENDIX A: Students Protocols.....	5

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the way that STC Higher Education shall be operating at the beginning of the scholastic year 2021/2022, in view of the current COVID-19 situation. It is important that everyone in the community takes all the necessary steps to minimise the risk of transmitting the virus.

These guidelines, which are consistent with health guidelines issued by the Public Health authorities, are therefore to be seen as requirements and not merely as recommendations. These guidelines may be revised from time to time as deemed necessary for the safety of students and staff members. Should a student fail to adhere to these regulations, a warning will be issued by STC, and that student might lose the right to attend lectures or be suspended if putting in risk the safety of the other students and staff members.

**Our plan for the beginning of the 2021/2022 scholastic year is to have face-to-face lessons with the possibility of students following lessons online when necessary.**

## 2. REGULATIONS

The following regulations are being enforced at STC at present:

### 2.1 Physical distancing

Maximum effort is being made to ensure that an adequate physical distance of **1 metre** is maintained between students in all directions whilst sitting at their desk. Staff members must keep a distance of at least **2 metres** between themselves and students.

### 2.2 Social bubbles

Keeping the same group of students across the different modules is fundamental. Students are asked not to interact with students from other groups. This is essential to minimise the risk of transmission of the virus and to make contact tracing easier and more reliable in case a student tests positive.

### 2.3 Use of masks and visors

The use of masks or visors is mandatory, whenever using common spaces (including corridors, classrooms and in the area just outside the STC building) as per indications of the Health Authorities. Students who are fully vaccinated are allowed to remove their masks outside.

### 2.4 Guidance when feeling sick

If a student or staff member has any of the following symptoms, he/she should not attend face-to-face classes:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle aches or pains
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting or diarrhoea

## 2.5 Qualifying to follow face-to-face lessons from home

The following list outlines who is eligible to follow face-to-face lessons from home:

- Students placed in mandatory quarantine - this includes COVID-19 positive persons or others who have been considered a close contact of a positive case by the Public Health authorities. Students are to follow strictly the guidelines from the Health Authorities and keep STC informed of their situation. If a student suspects having been in contact with a positive case, but is not approached by contact tracing, he/she is advised to schedule a COVID test five days after the last contact with the positive case.
- Students who return from abroad must present evidence of a negative PCR or Rapid Test 5 days after their return to Malta or present a Vaccine Certificate. Students are eligible to follow lessons from home while they wait for the result or for the duration of quarantine if this is imposed by the Health Authorities (whichever applies). Students are required to advise the Administration Department ahead of classes for them to be able to join lessons online.

A flowchart, with the specific protocols for students in the referred situations, shall be consulted in Appendix A.

Lectures for a specific module will be transferred to online, should a lecturer be in quarantine or test positive for Covid 19 but be in a good health condition. Lecturers and staff members will receive a separate document with the protocols for these cases.

## 2.6 Procedure that needs to be followed by students having face-to-face lessons.

- All students need to have their temperature checked before entering a classroom. If a student has a temperature of more than 37.2oC or appears sick, the student will not be admitted into the classroom.
- Upon entering a classroom each student needs to sanitise his/her hands with the sanitiser provided and sit down according to the seating plan (this is clearly indicated on all desks). The students should all face the lecturer (with the exception of the network lab) and all physical contact should be avoided. This includes sharing stuff such as stationery.
- Each time a student or staff member touches a publicly accessible object, such a door handler, sanitiser should be applied.
- For the time being the water dispenser will not be available to students.
- Sneezing/coughing should be in disposable tissues, which are then disposed of immediately in a closed and lined bin. If a tissue is not available sneeze/cough into flexed elbow.
- When entering or exiting a room the students are expected to make sure that there is adequate space between them and that this is done in an orderly manner to avoid congestion.
- Unnecessary loitering needs to be avoided and under no circumstances can students hang out together in groups that exceed six persons.

### 3. ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL MEASURES

#### 3.1 Ventilation

- Proper indoor ventilation is essential. To ensure adequate circulation of air, and to reduce the level of pathogens in the air, windows and/or doors should be kept open throughout the day to allow for cross ventilation. Air conditioning system flaps are to be directed towards the ceiling.
- For that reason, during Wintertime, we advise the students/lecturers to dress warm.
- If air-conditioning needs to be used, at least one window should still be kept open.

#### 3.2 Keeping the premises clean

The cleaning of surfaces remains an important measure to ensure hygienic conditions. Each time a classroom is used, it will be disinfected before it is used again. Toilets will be cleaned regularly with a log of the cleaning time kept. It is essential that everyone on premises does his/her utmost to keep the place as clean as possible to reduce the risk of transmitting viruses.

#### 3.3 Use of Prayer Room and Students Room

- Student room - The students in the gathering should be seated in small groups of a maximum of 6 persons, still maintaining an adequate interpersonal distance and at least 2.5 metres from other groups. These gatherings should not last longer than 30 minutes. Orderly entrance/exit from the gathering is expected to avoid mixing between students.
- Prayer room – The use is restricted to one student at a time, due to the size of the room.

#### 3.4 Use of Library

Students are encouraged to use the online library and to request any hard copies via the form available online. The books can be picked up from the reception once they receive a notification. If students want to visit the library, the opening hours are between 08:30 – 18:00. Only 5 students are allowed to be in the library at the same time.

#### 3.5 Use of Classrooms for Studying Purposes

Students may ask for a key to a classroom from the administration for studying purposes. The number of students in a classroom needs to abide by the maximum number of students that can fit in that room, while maintaining social distance. Only students from one bubble can share the same classroom.

#### 3.6 Liaison Person at STC

The COVID-19 contact person designated by STC is Mr Adel Mizzi – (adelm@stcmalta.edu.mt). If you or anyone in your household or close contacts tests positive to COVID-19, please contact STC on 21453200.

### 4. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information on how the virus is transmitted, the symptoms of the illness and what to do if sick or have symptoms, refer to: [www.covidtest.gov.mt/](http://www.covidtest.gov.mt/)

## APPENDIX A: Students Protocols

STUDENTS STC COVID-19 Protocols To quality for online streaming of face-to-face lessons		
The Student feels <b>sick</b>	One day	The Student needs to advise Administration Team. The Student can follow the lessons online.
	More than one day	The Student needs to present medical certificate or appointment for PCR test/Rapid Test. The Student can follow the lessons
The Student is on <b>quarantine</b>	The Student must present a screenshot of email received from the health authorities. The Student can follow the lessons online.	
The Student <b>tested positive for COVID 19</b> but is in good health	The Student must present positive COVID test proof. The Student can follow the lessons online.	
The Student has <b>travelled abroad</b>	Before travelling	The Student needs to send screenshot of the flight tickets to the Administration Team 10 days before the flight.
	After Travelling	The Student needs to follow lessons online for 14 days, unless: - a vaccine certificate can be presented <i>or</i> - a PCR or a Rapid Test negative

Private documentation, related to COVID 19, should be emailed exclusively to [paulinag@stcmalta.edu.mt](mailto:paulinag@stcmalta.edu.mt).  
If a student is COVID positive, Mr. Adel Mizzi (Director) and Paulina Gomez (Administration Manager) need to be contacted.  
If you are not sure, call STC and discuss your personal situation.