

Protocol for College Safety under COVID-19



MCAST

Malta College of Arts, Science & Technology

As of 18th September 2020

NOTE FROM THE PRINCIPAL/CEO

18th 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 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, the Health Authorities and MCAST Student Council.

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

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UPDATE: 18.09.2020

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 must be given to face-to-face lectures
- Maximum efforts to be made to the retention of small groups/classes
- 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:

- Depending on the size of the room, staff rooms should be reduced to a minimum number of educators, also considering a 2m distance, where possible.
- 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 - 18.09.2020

COVID-19 COLLEGE SAFETY PROTOCOL 18.09.2020

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. 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:

- Students must maintain adequate physical distance from each other (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)
- Staff are to maintain a distance of at least 2m between themselves and with students.

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, it is recommended that students wear masks and/or visors at all times, including in their class, besides in common areas and while on campus.

Appropriate use of face masks/coverings is important in minimising 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 sanitiser 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 sanitiser 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 by 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 sanitise 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 sanitiser 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.

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 voluntarily.

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 sanitiser 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 the maximum capacity of students and staff inside the practical room at any one time respects the 1.5m social distancing;
- Staff and teachers/instructors must keep 2 metres between themselves (between staff) and between staff and students.
- Maximum efforts to be made to the retention of small groups/classes where applicable.

- 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 groups/classes where applicable.
- All face-to-face sessions, including assessments, will be organised in small clusters of 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 the maximum capacity of students and staff inside the practical room at any one time respects the 1.5m social distancing;
- Staff and teachers/instructors must keep 2 metres between themselves (between staff) and between staff and students.
- Maximum efforts to be made to the retention of small groups/classes where applicable.
- 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 workplace. 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 (e.g., referring to the 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 sanitise 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 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 1.5m distance;
- Users will be requested to sanitise 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. The 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 handwashing facilities, or if not possible, alcohol-based hand sanitiser, 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 a 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. College Gatherings, Activities and Events

As per Health Authorities guidelines for post-secondary institutions:

- There are to be no large gatherings or assemblies.
- No special events such as festivals, holiday events, special performances, open Days and visits by guests that do not form part of the service provision should be held.
- All sports/games activities carried out during school are to be guided by the guidelines activities regulating sports¹.
- The use of gymnasiums is also permissible and guidelines should be followed.

12. High-Risk 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 high-risk 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 high-risk, 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 high-risk 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, the staff is encouraged to use alternative teaching methods and learning platforms.

¹ https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/mitigationconditions-and-guidances/Obligatory_Conditions_And_Guidelines_For_The_Return_To_Sport_In_Malta.pdf

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 to 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, countertops, 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.

As per health authorities' post-secondary guidelines, students will be encouraged to wipe down their desks and equipment before and after use.

This guidance document will be updated as necessary.