

Oxford Brookes University
Face Covering / Mask wearing Policy - updated 20th April 2022

1. Introduction

1.1 The Covid-19 virus is primarily a respiratory disease and is still present in the community. The United Kingdom Health Security Agency (UKHSA) states that SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) is transmitted by: direct contact, indirect contact of contaminated surfaces and through inhalation of droplets from sneezing and coughing. It is known that viral aerosols are also generated during breathing, talking, singing and coughing. These particles can: travel great distances, remain suspended in air, and can be inhaled into the lungs. This can be said for other respiratory diseases such as Flu.

1.2 The best available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering or mask may reduce the spread of respiratory disease droplets, helping to protect others. Research has highlighted how it is possible for a virus to be increasingly carried in what are called aerosols - drifting and accumulating in the air.

1.3 Breaking the chain of any infection is key to minimising onward transmission of a virus and wearing a face covering or mask is just one method to help stop the spread. Face coverings or masks are **not** a replacement for limiting contact with those that you don't live with, regular hand washing and cough etiquette (eg covering your mouth when you cough, using a tissue when you sneeze and throwing it away, washing your hands after blowing your nose).

Policy

2.1 Students, staff and visitors to campus are **to make a personal choice** to wear face covering or mask.

2.1.2 The university has invested in high quality 9-ply masks (Chemport) for staff and has provided these to anybody who needed to be on campus. Limited stocks of these remain available from Store or Heads of Departments.

2.1.3 If students, staff or visitors wish to wear a face covering or mask, 3 ply non-medical versions will be available from all our campus reception points or stores, they are also available to purchase through the vending services on campus (with contactless payment).

2.1.4 Please be considerate and respectful of those wearing a face covering in any such circumstances, noting that the reasons for this may not be visible to others, **about 10% of our university community are at greater health risk in relation to Covid-19.**

2.2 Accommodation

This policy will not apply to student flats or private student residences where they are advised to follow the latest Public Health guidance.

2.3 Types of mask

2.3.1 Medical Masks

Are certified according to international or national standards to ensure they offer predictable performance when used (typically by health care workers) according to the risk.

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2.3.2 Non-Medical Masks (Face Coverings)

These are made from a variety of woven and non-woven fabrics. Non-medical masks may be made of different combinations of fabrics, layered in sequences and available in diverse shapes. A non-medical mask standard has been developed to define minimum performance in relation to filtration and breathability. WHO recommends a minimum of 3 layers.

Source:

Infection Prevention and Control

[UKHSA: COVID-19 Response: Living with COVID-19](#)

[UKHSA: Chapter 2: infection prevention and control](#)

[DfE: Emergency planning and response for education, childcare, and children's social care settings](#)

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Date: 20th April 2022

Proposed Date of Next Review: September 2022 or if Public Health teams advise as part of an outbreak management plan

Appendix 1
FAQs

What is the difference between a face covering and a face mask?

Face coverings are mainly made of cloth and intended to protect others and not the wearer. When used correctly they cover the nose and mouth, which are the main sources of transmitting respiratory infections.

The university has invested in high quality 9-ply masks (Chemport) for staff and provided these to anybody who needs to be on campus, 3-ply non-medical masks are available to anyone from main reception points

Some professional services staff and in some first aid scenarios staff will be instructed to wear a medical grade mask.

Medical Masks

Are certified according to international or national standards to ensure they offer predictable performance when used (typically by health care workers) according to the risk.

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Non-Medical Masks are made from a variety of woven and non-woven fabrics. Non-medical masks may be made of different combinations of fabrics, layered in sequences and available in diverse shapes. A non-medical masks standard has been developed to define minimum performance in relation to filtration and breathability. WHO recommends a minimum of 3 layers.

How do I wear a face covering correctly if I choose to?

- Wash or sanitise your hands before putting it on
- Ensure the mask goes up to the bridge of your nose and all the way down under your chin
- Tighten the loops or ties so it's snug around your face
- Avoid touching your face, or the parts of the mask that cover your nose and mouth
- Wash or sanitise your hands before taking it off
- Use the ear loops to take the mask off
- Wash or sanitise your hands afterwards.

Do I need to wear a face covering if I am working in a private workspace on my own?

No, this is your personal choice however please be respectful if others are wearing a facing covering and join you in that workspace.

Do I need to wear a face covering if I am working in a shared office or lab space?

No, this is your personal choice however please be respectful if others are wearing a facing covering and join you in that workspace. Adhere to the laboratory activity risk assessment and any requirement to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

Do I need to wear a face covering if I am in a teaching room or teaching space?

No, this is your personal choice however please be respectful if others are wearing a facing covering and join you in that workspace. It is also important for the space to be well ventilated so remember to open windows and doors often and use the Co2, if the room has one, to monitor the quality of the air.

I have a health condition and don't want to wear a face covering. What do I need to do?

In most cases face coverings are safe for anyone to wear, regardless of health conditions, you can wear a visor or face shield instead of a face covering. Staff and Students may continue to wear a Sunflower lanyard to indicate that they have a hidden disability, they are available from our [Online Shop](#).

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Appendix 2
Mask Management

Q: How do I wear a face mask correctly?

- Wash or sanitise your hands before putting it on
- Ensure the mask goes up to the bridge of your nose and all the way down under your chin
- Tighten the loops or ties so it's snug around your face
- Avoid touching your face, or the parts of the mask that cover your nose and mouth
- Wash or sanitise your hands before taking it off
- Use the ear loops to take the mask off and wash or sanitise your hands afterwards.

Q: How long do I have to wear each mask before changing to a new one?

- There is no set time, nor recommended number of masks you should use each day. It all depends on what you are doing.
- If your mask gets **dirty, wet or damaged**, or if you **touch the inside** of it, then you should change to a new one
- When you **take it off to eat or drink**, you should **dispose of the old mask**, wash or sanitise your hands, and **replace** it with a **new one** once you have finished eating.

Q: How do I dispose of my mask?

Medical Masks - single use. Dispose following local protocols

Non-Medical Masks

Change and wash daily at up to 60 degrees C

Summary Guidance and practical considerations for non-medical mask production and management

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| Fabric Selection |
| Choose materials that capture particles and droplets, but remain easy to breathe through |
| Avoid stretchy material for making masks as they provide lower filtration efficiency during use and are sensitive to washing at high temperatures |
| Fabrics that can support high temperatures (60 degrees or more) are preferable |
| Construction |

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A minimum of THREE layers is required, depending on the fabric used: an inner layer touching the mouth and an outlier that is exposed the the environment

Choose water-absorbing (hydrophilic) materials or fabrics for the internal layers, to readily absorb droplets, combined with an external synthetic material that does not easily absorb liquid (hydrophobic)

MASK MANAGEMENT

Masks should only be used by ONE person

All masks should be changed if soiled or wet; a soiled or wet mask should not be worn for an extended period of time

Non-medical masks should be washed frequently and handled carefully, so as not to contaminate other items

Clothing fabrics used to make masks should be checked for the highest permitted washing temperatures, which is indicated on the clothing label

Non-woven polypropylene spun-bond may be washed at high temperature, up to 40 degrees C

The combination of non-woven polypropylene spun-bond and cotton can tolerate high temperatures; masks made of these combinations may be steamed or boiled

Where hot water is not available, wash mask with soap/detergent at room temperature water, followed by either a) boiling mask for one minute OR b) soak mask in 0.1% chlorine for one minute then thoroughly rinse mask with room temperature water, to avoid any toxic residue