

Oxford Brookes University
Face Covering / Mask wearing Policy - updated 28th September 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 The Covid-19 virus is primarily a respiratory disease. The World Health Organization (WHO) 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.

1.2 Oxford Brookes University continues to follow the latest Government and scientific advice. The best available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering or mask may reduce the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus) droplets, helping to protect others. Research has highlighted how it is possible for the virus to be increasingly carried in what are called aerosols - drifting and accumulating in the air. Taking account of this increased transmissibility of the new COVID-19 mutation/s, the University has reviewed and updated the Face Coverings Policy.

1.3 Breaking the chain of infection is key to minimising the spread of this virus. Wearing a face covering or mask is just one method to help stop the spread of Covid-19. 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). These actions are also essential for stopping the spread of COVID-19.

1.4 In addition to adopting these principles the University has also undertaken risk assessments of the work environment and team activities. COVID-19 Secure measures are in place to ensure employees, students and visitors to the University are kept safe from transmission of the virus.

Policy

2.1 Students, staff and visitors to campus will be expected to wear face coverings or masks while indoors on campus, in teaching rooms and spaces, except where there is a valid reason for exemption. Please note, you are not required to wear face coverings when you are seated while eating or drinking, taking part in physical activities indoors at Brookes Sport, or while outdoors.

2.1.2 The university has invested in high quality 9-ply masks (Chemport) for staff and is providing these to anybody who needs to be on campus. There are also 3 ply masks available to anyone who hasn't yet collected their Chemport masks. See **Table 1** for Summary of face covering / mask requirements.

Individuals do not need to wear a face covering or if they have a legitimate reason not to. This includes:

- if someone has a physical or mental illness or impairment, or a disability, that means they cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering
- if putting on, wearing or removing a face covering would cause someone severe distress

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2.1.3 If students, staff or visitors forget to bring a face covering or mask they are available from all our campus reception points or stores, they are also available to purchase through the vending services on campus (with contactless payment). Campus Monitors will also have masks available to issue.

2.2 Exemptions

2.2.1 Exemptions to the Brookes policy on face coverings will follow the [government guidelines on exemptions](#). These guidelines explain that there are some circumstances, for health, age or equality reasons, where people are not expected to wear face coverings or a mask. Please be mindful and respectful of such circumstances, noting that the reasons for this may not be visible to others. See FAQs.

2.3 Students

This policy will not apply to student flats or private student residences. Once outside your flat or household, if entering a communal space such as a shared corridor, laundry or reception area you will be required to wear a face covering or mask. They will be optional in outdoor areas on campus. Students are strongly advised to follow Public Health Guidance.

2.4 Teaching Staff

All staff who are working on campus to be issued with **2** of the Covid V-100 masks which have 9 layers and a special coating that kills the virus. In pooled teaching rooms staff **MUST** wear either Covid-V masks or if wearing their own mask it must be a **3** layer face covering or a transparent face mask when they are teaching. Unless by exception they have been given specific Occupational Health advice on what they should be wearing.

We will provide a visor/face shield for staff members who are unable to wear a mask for medical reasons and these should be worn instead. Members of staff must also wear a sunflower lanyard.

See **Appendix 1** for **FAQs**.

2.5 Types of mask

2.5.1 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.

2.5.2 Non-Medical Masks (Face Coverings)

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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.

2.5.3 Mask management is **essential**. The key questions are:

- How do I wear a face mask correctly?
- How long do I have to wear each mask before changing to a new one?
- How do I dispose of my mask?

See **Appendix 2** for Mask Management

Table 1 Covid Secure: Summary of Face Masks Requirements

Situations / settings	Population	Type of mask to wear on site at Brookes	Comments
All sites - indoors	All Staff, Students Visitors	Minimum non-medical Mask (3 Layers recommended as advised by WHO) Visors or Face Shields + lanyards for those medical exemptions	See Appendix 2 for Mask Management
Teaching in pooled rooms	Staff / Students	Covid V-100 mask are strongly recommended by the University	2 masks are provided for staff Reusable - up to 50 washes Care: Wash up to 60 degrees FAQ on Covid V-100 Mask

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		<p>or</p> <p>Non-medical mask 3 layers</p> <p>or</p> <p>Transparent ClearMask See section below</p>	<p>Tests conducted by PHE to trap particles down to 23nm, inactivate virus and considered more effective than standard medical -grade masks</p> <p>Single use only Type II face masks (EN14683) are medical face masks made up of a protective 3-ply construction that prevents large particles from reaching the patient or working surfaces.</p> <p>The ClearMask face mask provides splash protection for the wearer in the same way that a type IIR surgical face mask does.</p>
Teaching	Communicating with colleagues (staff and students) with a hearing impairment or who have English as a second language		<p>Single use only mask FDA Approved Transparent Mask FAQ</p> <p>The ClearMask face mask provides splash protection for the wearer in the same way that a type IIR surgical face mask does.</p> <p>The transparent face coverings are mainly for use by teaching colleagues, and may also be helpful to other staff whose work requires them to have face-to-face conversations with students or colleagues. To request a transparent face covering, please email studentcentral@brookes.ac.uk with details of your campus delivery address. The masks will then be sent in the internal post, using Covid-safe procedures.</p> <p>When emailing to request the coverings, please ensure that the words "Request for clear face covering" are included in the subject line, so that the team can pick out these requests and respond to them as promptly as possible.</p> <p>See Appendix 2 for Mask Management</p>

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Working in a shared office or laboratory space	Staff / Students	Covid V-100 mask or Non-medical mask 3 layers or - see below Transparent mask See section below	In any indoor environment shared with other people, it is advisable to wear a facemask unless it is not practically feasible. See Appendix 2 for Mask Management
Working in dedicated laboratory space	Staff / Students	Covid V-100 mask or Non-medical mask 3 layers or Transparent mask See section below	In any indoor environment shared with other people, it is advisable to wear a facemask unless it is not practically feasible. See Appendix 2 for Mask Management
Health/social care professional skills training activities less than 1 metre	Staff / Students	Level 1 PPE	Level 1 PPE - see Guidance COVID-19: Guidance for maintaining services within health and care settings See Appendix 2 for Mask Management
First Aiders and Life Savers Professional Services Staff in ECS			Refer to: Covid-19 PPE Template for ECS Staff ACRO Donning and Doffing a Face Mask How to fit FFP3 Masks Videos With/out Valves Without Valve https://youtu.be/MCM9uMMok1M Refer to: First Aider Guidance Document FFP3 See Appendix 2 for Mask Management

Source:

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Infection Prevention and Control

[WHO June 2020 Advice on the Use of Masks in the Context of Covid-19: Interim Guidance](#)

[COVID-19: Guidance for the remobilisation of services within health and care settings Infection prevention and control recommendations](#)

[Face Coverings: When to Wear One and How to Make Your Own](#)

Covid Secure

[Gov. UK HE Operational Guidance September 2021](#)

[PHE Actions For Colleges and Providers During the Coronavirus Outbreak](#)

[HSE Making Your Workplace Covid Secure During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

[MIND Mask Anxiety, Face Coverings and Mental Health](#)

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Appendix 1
FAQs

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

Our policy at Brookes is that we expect you to wear a face covering. Face coverings are mainly intended to protect others and not the wearer. When used correctly they cover the nose and mouth, which are the main sources of transmitting coronavirus (COVID-19).

The university has invested in high quality 9-ply masks (Chemport) for staff and is providing these to anybody who needs to be on campus. There are also 3 ply non-medical masks available to anyone who hasn't yet collected their Chemport masks.

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?

- 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, if you are working alone you will not be expected to wear a face covering - but when you leave the private work area, for example on an errand or to get some lunch - you must put it back on.

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

For office spaces, it is still important to maintain distance between desks, avoid standing close or leaning over people working at their desks and avoid overcrowding narrow spaces e.g. a kitchen area. Face masks should be worn while moving around but can be removed while sitting at a desk if no one else is nearby and there is either mechanical ventilation or the windows are open (or both). Adhere to the laboratory activity risk assessment and any requirement to wear a face mask.

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

Yes, In the absence of social distancing it is imperative that face coverings are worn. The latest government advice says this "SAGE evidence states that face coverings (if worn correctly and of suitable quality) are likely to be the most effective (at least in the short to medium term) in reducing transmission indoors where measures such as social distancing and ventilation are not feasible or are inadequate".

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, and all staff working on hospital sites are now expected under national guidance to wear face masks in our hospital buildings unless they are in a COVID-secure area (see above). You can wear a visor or face shield instead of a face covering. You will also need to wear a sunflower lanyard. The University will not require staff or

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students to provide any personal information in order to order this lanyard. If someone is wearing a sunflower/exemption lanyard, we will respect this and we will not challenge the wearer.

In corridors, lifts, on staircases and in any other communal areas staff and students are expected to wear face coverings. For those not used to wearing face coverings, they can initially feel restrictive, hot and uncomfortable, but for most, these feelings will improve in the short-term.

What happens if I refuse to wear a face covering / mask?

In the absence of social distancing it is imperative that face coverings are worn. The latest government advice says this “SAGE evidence states that face coverings (if worn correctly and of suitable quality) are likely to be the most effective (at least in the short to medium term) in reducing transmission indoors where measures such as social distancing and ventilation are not feasible or are inadequate”.

The university has invested in high quality 9-ply face masks (Chemport) for staff and is providing these to anybody who needs to be on campus. There are also 3-ply face masks available to anyone who hasn't yet collected their Chemport masks. As a member of staff if you have concerns, please speak to your line manager.

Students will be reminded and asked by teaching staff and Campus Monitors to wear a face covering, this is an important mitigation measure and will help us maintain face-to-face teaching. The [Brookes Behaviour Policy](#) sets out in more detail the University's expectations for the behaviour of staff and students, and provides links to useful resources to support you. The University takes issues of student behaviour seriously and there are processes in place for addressing poor student behaviour. How the University will deal with breaches of conduct is detailed in the [Student Conduct Procedures](#), to which all students agree to adhere as part of their enrolment.

What do I do if I am exempt under the government criteria?

We would encourage those that are medically exempt to order a sunflower lanyard from the [Online Shop](#). If you are wearing this lanyard we will not challenge why you are not wearing a face covering.

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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

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

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

Source: World Health Organisation (June 2020) Advice on the use of masks in the context of Covid-19: Interim Guidance