**Health and Safety Services**

**Working and Studying Safely during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

**University Policy - Use of Face Coverings**

This Health and Safety Services (HSS) Policy has been produced outlining the University’s arrangements and is intended to provide Heads of Departments (HoDs), Line Managers and end users with easy reference to the subject matter outlined above, and is supplementary to [University Policy and Management Procedure - COVID-19 Secure.](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FbPEvCMYM6lkU_6Soi98F96hctai3EnWQG7PSN8eNA8/edit?usp=sharing) This policy covers all areas of the University campus, including Kings Manor and the University-occupied areas of the Science Park.

**As a general policy, the expectation is that face coverings are worn when inside University buildings aside from the exceptions set out below. Clear signage across campus will remind students and staff of this expectation as will other forms of communication.**

This Policy does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities and it is important that individuals continue to comply with existing University Policies and relevant obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics. The health, safety and wellbeing of all is paramount and all staff and students are reminded of their ‘Duty of Care and Individual Responsibilities’ under [Health and Safety Legislation.](https://www.hse.gov.uk/workers/responsibilities.htm)

An Equality Impact Assessment Form [(EQIA)](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://docs.google.com/document/d/1n-a5TNshBio7XgYuY_RrpJPbssRqSgPoCCOmHs1dxbw/edit%23&sa=D&ust=1595436478714000&usg=AFQjCNFK3lzJe932fJCV9FUT3ySHvYZuiQ) has been undertaken to supplement this policy.

This Policy takes into consideration and follows the latest [Government Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), Public Health England (PHE) [Guidance,](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering) Face Coverings: [When to wear one and how to make your own,](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own) Face Coverings: [General Use,](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/staying-safe-outside-your-home/staying-safe-outside-your-home#face-coverings) [Exemptions to wearing a face covering where they are mandated](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#exemptions-to-wearing-a-face-covering-where-they-are-mandated) and the [Health and Safety Executive](https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/first-aid-certificate-coronavirus.htm) (HSE). In some cases the University Policy on face coverings, as set out in this document, goes above the bare minimum requirements set out in government guidance. This is done in order to provide a simple, clear policy across the campus and so minimise confusion.

The University has adopted Government guidance and associated advice, keeping under review our arrangements in matching the pace of change and spread of the virus. A high level [COVID-19 Secure Risk Assessment](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AYMLLw8jhC6LVfoYEaDuKjEkkPSeK6u25E2iapw5vu4/edit?usp=sharing) setting out the hazards, themes/topics and mitigations to be used by the wider University, Faculties, Departments and Business Units in the consideration and planning of our approach to local arrangements, including departmental and individual specific risk assessments for their undertakings. The aforementioned assessment is a live document and will be revised and updated on a regular and on-going basis. This document itself will be reviewed by the Professional Services Contingency Group (or if this is disbanded, Operations Group) either at the end of Autumn term 2020, or when there is a material shift in government policy, whichever is sooner.

**1. Background Information**

**What is a face covering?**

In the context of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, a face covering is something which safely covers the nose and mouth. There are currently two types available, reusable (washable) or single-use face coverings (disposable). Improvised face coverings may include e.g. use of a scarf, bandana, religious garment or hand-made cloth covering but these must securely fit round the side of the face.

Face coverings are not classified as [Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe) which is used in a limited number of settings to protect wearers against hazards and risks, such as surgical masks or respirators used in research, medical and industrial settings.

Face coverings are instead largely intended to protect others, not the wearer, against the spread of infection because they cover the nose and mouth, which are the main confirmed sources of transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19.

The best available scientific evidence is that, when used correctly, wearing a face covering may reduce the spread of coronavirus droplets in certain circumstances, helping to protect others.

More information and guidance about the differences between surgical face masks, PPE face masks, and face coverings is [available here](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-status-of-equipment-being-used-to-help-prevent-coronavirus-covid-19?utm_source=Gov&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=MHRA_COVID-19_updates&utm_content=HCP7#face-masks-and-face-coverings) (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA)) regulatory status of equipment being used to help prevent COVID-19.

1. **How to Wear a Face Covering**

In addition to the guidance below the [HSE provides guidance](https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/ppe-face-masks/face-coverings-and-face-masks.htm) on wearing face coverings.

**A face covering should:**

* Cover your nose and mouth while allowing you to breathe comfortably.
* Fit comfortably but securely against the side of the face.
* Be secured to the head with ties or ear loops.
* Be made of a material that you find to be comfortable and breathable, such as cotton.
* Ideally include at least two layers of fabric (the World Health Organisation recommends three depending on the fabric used).
* Unless disposable, it should be able to be washed with other items of laundry according to fabric washing instructions and dried without causing the face covering to be damaged.

**When wearing a face covering you should:**

* Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on.
* Avoid wearing it on your neck or forehead.
* Avoid touching the part of the face covering in contact with your mouth and nose, as it could be contaminated with the virus.
* Change the face covering if it becomes damp or if you’ve touched it.

**When removing a face covering:**

* Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before removing.
* Only handle the straps, ties or clips.
* Do not share with someone else to use.
* If single-use, dispose of it carefully in a residual waste bin and do not recycle.
* If reusable, wash it in line with manufacturer’s instructions at the highest temperature appropriate for the fabric.
* Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser once removed.

**When to wear a face covering:**

In England, you must by law wear a face covering in the following settings:

* Public Transport.
* Shops and Supermarkets as of [24 July 2020.](https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/face-coverings-to-be-mandatory-in-shops-and-supermarkets-from-24-july#:~:text=Under%20the%20new%20rules%2C%20people,covering%20lies%20with%20the%20individual.)
* Other specified locations as of [08 August 2020.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#when-to-wear-a-face-covering)

**It also is strongly expected that all individuals will wear a face covering**:

* In other enclosed public spaces where social distancing may be difficult and where you come into contact with people you do not normally meet
* Where Social Distancing at 2m can not be achieved.
* Face to face interactions including teaching/lectures and tutorials where 2m social distancing cannot be achieved.

**When on University Campus, you will be required to wear a face covering:**

* In all teaching and learning spaces (this includes the [Library buildings and facilities](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#when-to-wear-a-face-covering)).
* In all labs and research facilities including workshops (unless a specific risk assessment for a particular workspace (lab) demonstrates this causes additional risks to individuals).
* In all enclosed social spaces (entertainment venues with the exception of bars and catering outlets - see below).
* Enclosed social spaces (e.g. York Sports communal areas) where you may interact with people.
* Meeting rooms.
* Any other spaces where Social Distancing cannot be achieved at 2 metres e.g. at 1m+ as part of the risk assessment process with additional mitigations and controls.

Please be mindful that the wearing of a face covering may inhibit communication with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound. The University will provide a range of face bandanas type coverings with a clear window and face shields on request.

1. **Exemptions to wearing a face covering**

In settings where face coverings are mandated in England, there are some circumstances, for health, age or equality reasons, whereby people are not expected to wear face coverings in these settings. Please be mindful and respectful of such circumstances noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings.

It is not compulsory under government guidelines for shop or supermarket staff to wear face coverings however, the University will ask staff to wear/use face coverings in our Commercial Retail Outlets. The University will continue to follow [COVID-19 secure guidelines](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19) to reduce the proximity and duration of contact between staff, students and others.

You do not need to wear a face covering if you have a legitimate reason not to as described below as part of [current Government Guidance.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#exemptions-to-wearing-a-face-covering-where-they-are-mandated) This includes:

* Young children under the age of 11.
* Not being able to put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability.
* If putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause you severe distress.
* If you are travelling with or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading to communicate.
* To avoid harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others.
* To eat or drink.
* To take medication.
* If a police officer or other official requests you remove your face covering.

There are also scenarios when individuals are permitted to remove a face covering when requested:

* If asked to do so by shop staff for the purpose of age identification.
* If asked to do so by University staff and members of Security Services in support of their undertakings.
* If speaking with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions and clear sound. Some may ask you, either verbally or in writing, to remove a face covering to help with communication. Individuals should move away to a safe social distance of at least 2m before removing their face covering to then commence in conversation etc.

**In addition, when on Campus you are not required to wear a face covering when:**

* In residential accommodation (Student Study Bedrooms, kitchens, communal areas).
* Bars and catering outlets (for the purposes of consuming food and drink, it is expected that - in line with the policy on wearing face coverings in social spaces - that face coverings will be worn in bars and catering outlets when individuals are not directly eating or drinking)).
* Single use/occupancy office space.
* During sports related activities including the use of the gym, pool and cycle track etc.

There are some types of face coverings available that offer a clear and transparent panel as part of the face coverings to facilitate individuals communicating with people who rely on lip reading, facial expressions. Some of these types of face coverings allow for the formation of respiritial droplets through exhalation/breath increasing moisture and potential higher risk of transmission and spread/transfer of the virus. The University will provide a selective range of face bandanas type coverings with a clear window and face shields on request.

1. **Provision of face coverings**

The University will provide all staff and students with at least two washable/reusable face covering and appropriate care/washing instructions.

The arrangements for distribution of face coverings will be circulated shortly to HoDs and colleagues, including the Student Body.

1. **Maintaining and disposing of face coverings**

Do not touch the front of the face covering, or the part of the face covering that has been in contact with your mouth and nose.

Once removed, store reusable face coverings in a plastic bag until you have an opportunity to wash them. If the face covering is single use, dispose of it in a residual waste bin. Do not put them in a recycling bin.

Make sure you clean any surfaces the face covering has touched using normal household/domestic cleaning products. If eating in a commercial catering outlet it is important that you do not place the face covering on the table.

Wash your face covering regularly (at least daily) and follow the washing instructions for the fabric[**[[1]](#footnote-1)].** You can use your normal detergent. You can wash and dry it with other laundry. You must throw away your face covering if it is damaged.

1. **Government Sanctions for non-compliance**

Under the Government’s new rules, individuals who do not wear a face covering (e.g. public transport, supermarkets and shops etc) will face a fine of up to £100, in line with the sanction on public transport and just as with public transport, children under 11 and those with certain disabilities will be exempt.

The liability for wearing a face covering lies with the individual.

1. **University Sanctions for non-compliance**

While on University premises all staff and students (including authorised contractors and visitors) are mandated to comply with Government guidance and University Policy with respect to being COVID-19 Secure and the wearing face coverings as outlined above, noting that if an individual wishes to wear a face coverings at their discretion, they are welcomed to do so and will be supported to do so by the University.

We anticipate that compliance will be driven by a shared desire among staff and students to protect the safety of our community and that non-compliance will be inhibited through peer pressure and informal challenge within the community. However, if severe or repeated non-compliance occurs it will be treated as a disciplinary matter, and will be handled through existing disciplinary routes for [staff](https://www.york.ac.uk/admin/hr/policies/hr-procedures/disciplinary/procedure/) and [students](https://www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/governance-documents/ordinances-and-regulations/regulation-7/).

Example Scenarios

1. An individual (staff or student) intending to enter the Library facilities without a face covering will be politely reminded by approved signage or by a member of staff and offered a face covering in the event they do not have a face covering with them. If in accordance with [Government guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#exemptions-to-wearing-a-face-covering-where-they-are-mandated) the individual is exempt from wearing a face covering, the individual will be permitted entry.

In the event the individual is/remains non-compliant to a reasonable request, then they will be denied access to the facility however, if the individual’s request (reason for entry in the first place - to deposit or collect books etc) can be supported by staff in the facility this service will be provided without the need for entry to the facility. However, in the event of unreasonable or offensive behaviour the University reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary action.

B. An individual (staff or student) seeking entry to a lecture or tutorial intends to attend the session without wearing a face covering will be politely reminded by approved signage or by a member of staff and offered a face covering in the event they do not have a face covering with them. If in accordance with [Government guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own#exemptions-to-wearing-a-face-covering-where-they-are-mandated) the individual is exempt from wearing a face covering, the individual will be permitted entry.

In the event the individual is/remains non-compliant to a reasonable request by the Lecture or Tutor, then they will be denied access. In the event of unreasonable or offensive behaviour the University reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary action.

See [Flowchart](https://docs.google.com/drawings/d/1w3itRUss-XgZ0V0uStTruoYZkRwpSvLvs9fAsByjnWo/edit?usp=sharing) for details and reference.

1. The [care instructions](https://dochub.com/denis-fowler/dbnaAMqK9Y02GP6KGNXJm0/facemasks-jpg?dt=1RxFzSRvc2jh5B5o94U7) for the University provided face coverings state they should be washed before wearing, hand wash only, , soaking in warm water with gentle detergent for 30 mins. Hang dry only. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)