

## Teaching – some FAQs

Prior to the start of Michaelmas Term, members of the Covid Response Group responded to several queries about the pandemic and teaching arrangements. Responses to these queries are consolidated below in the form of a FAQ document.

If you have any additional queries or suggestions to add to the FAQs, please do email these to [covid@bnc.ox.ac.uk](mailto:covid@bnc.ox.ac.uk)

Updated FAQs will be issued as appropriate.

### 1. What is the College's policy on in-person teaching?

The policy is to offer in-person teaching where possible and to optimise the learning experience. The College is aligned with the University's position, which is to offer:

*as much in-person contact and teaching as we reasonably can. However, we also remain committed to supporting staff in undertaking their own personal risk assessments, and considering on an individual basis how their personal circumstances need to be taken into account in assessing whether, and how much, in-person teaching may be appropriate.*

In addition, academic considerations also need to be taken into consideration as it is not practical in all cases to teach small groups of students wearing masks.

### 2. How should I deal with a student who turns up to a tutorial not wearing a mask?

Forgetfulness is very likely to be the reason although it is also possible the student has an exemption. Establish whether the student is aware of the College's policy on wearing face masks. One suggested way is to broach the subject by asking: 'Have you forgotten to bring your mask?'

If the student indicates that forgetfulness is not the reason, explain that the student does not have to give a reason for appearing without a mask but invite them to do disclose one, if possible in private and in a way that avoids any suggestion of shaming the individual or breaching his/her privacy.

If the student declines to give a reason, make an assessment of whether this particular Tutorial can continue safely with the individual present. If the answer is yes, continue. If the answer is no, give the student the option of going to the Porter's Lodge to obtain a mask or leaving the Tutorial.

Report the incident to the DB/ST for follow up.

### 3. I am not comfortable with the maximum occupancy figure for my office since other similar rooms appear to have a lower total.

Since the office occupancy figures are maximum values, the issue would be if a Tutor breached the total. Teaching fewer students in a room is not a problem. Subject to

availability, larger groups can be moved to bookable teaching rooms or otherwise moved online on grounds of capacity issues.

**4. I cannot wear a face mask for extended periods when conversing for personal health reasons. I've experimented with a visor and that is fine but am concerned a visor will not provide others with the same level of protection.**

There is more air-flow around a visor, so in principle it is less safe than a mask or other cloth covering in both directions (i.e., for the tutor and for the students). Nevertheless, visors have been recommended for hairdressers and in other situations where there may be fairly close contact between people. If a tutor or student cannot wear a cloth covering or mask, then a visor ought to be more reassuring than no covering at all and so should be considered as an option. The same mitigations should be put in place as for face coverings, viz.

- (i) social distancing (minimum of 2 metres);
- (ii) adequate ventilation with through air-flow in the teaching room if possible, and ventilation of the room in between teaching sessions;
- (iii) limiting the time of exposure (an hour for a typical tutorial should be safe, with adequate social distancing);
- (iv) hand hygiene.

Current evidence suggests that adequate ventilation of the teaching room is likely to be particularly important in this situation, so please try to ensure that there is a flow of fresh air through the room if you can.

**5. Should I avoid handling paperwork of any kind and manage all marking and notes electronically?**

The risk from paper is known to be very low. Ultraviolet light probably reduces the viability of the virus and so leaving papers out in daylight would lower the risk still further. In reality, though, the risk is so small that there is really no need for concern. Nevertheless, if it is practical to operate on the basis of electronic marking and

transmission of notes, then this option certainly can be taken and has the advantage of being environmentally friendlier.

**6. Should I avoid handling plastic covers of books or papers?**

Plastic covers may be a potential vector, but again the risk is low and likely to be negligible if covers are wiped or simply left alone for 24 hours. For comparison, note that there is no evidence of transmission from handling plastic food containers in supermarkets, for instance, even though they are often handled by multiple people between shelf-stacking and purchase.

**7. Should I use a hand sanitizer in preference to soap and water?**

For removing virus particles, hand washing with soap under running water is much more effective than a hand sanitizer. However, a hand sanitizer is much better than nothing. So, if you are close to a tap with some soap, use the running water and wash for 20 seconds. If you are not close to a tap, please use the hand sanitizer to keep your hands clean until you can wash them.

**8. My student insists that he can protect himself adequately by lifting a t-shirt to cover his face during tutorials: can we accept this as an adequate face-covering?**

No. A face-covering must include at least two layers of cloth and must fit fairly closely over the nose and mouth. A raised t-shirt is better than nothing for a casual meeting of just a few seconds, but for any prolonged exposure it is not adequate protection. It might also be worth pointing out to your student that the face covering is not designed to protect the wearer: its function is to protect other people in the room from virus particles exhaled by the wearer. Hence your student's argument that he feels adequately protected would miss the point.

**9. My student wears a mask over the mouth but does not cover their nose. Should I gently ask the student to use the mask properly?**

Definitely, yes. Virus particles are expelled in saliva on talking, coughing or sneezing; but are also exhaled in very small moisture droplets through the nose, and these small droplets can float in the air for quite long periods. Most people breathe through the nose for most of the time, so it is important that the nose is covered; and for the protection of other people in the room you should find a gentle way to ask the student to adjust his mask. If you have to ask more than once in a tutorial, it might be worth a longer discussion about the individual's responsibilities to the community in college.

**10. If a student on a staircase where my teaching office is located tests positive for covid-19, will I need to self-isolate?**

Not necessary if you have genuinely not shared student facilities (including toilets and handwashing facilities) nor been in contact with residents of the "household"

You may also be able to continue using your office for non-teaching purposes, provided that the usual guidelines are strictly observed, with special attention to the wearing of face coverings while on staircases or landings, and to hand hygiene when moving from the staircase into your own room or into another environment (i.e., when leaving the staircase). Contact with members of the household, and sharing of communal facilities on the staircase (again, particularly toilets and handwashing facilities) must be completely avoided.

In general, if there is a positive case on your staircase you should cease using your office for teaching although this will be assessed on a case-by-case, because it will depend on whether the students can access the room safely and without contact with the "household". At a minimum, "visiting" students must wear face-coverings on the stairs and landings and must clean their hands when entering the teaching room and again when leaving the staircase to return to their own environment. Again, no contact with "residents" and no use of shared facilities on the staircase.

**11. If a student member of a group I am teaching tests positive for covid-19, will I need to self-isolate?**

No, this is not required under the system of test and trace if you have remained at least 2m away from tutees and are wearing a face covering.

**12. Can I have a white board in my teaching room and do I need to bring my own marker pens?**

If your room does not already have a white board, the workshop can supply one. Shared items, including whiteboard pens, should be wiped with the sanitising wipes provided in each teaching room before and after use.

**13. How much cleaning is required by Tutors themselves between groups, especially in shared teaching rooms?**

For guidance, teaching room bookings are having a 30 minute break built in between bookings to enable time for scouts/buttery staff to sanitise and ventilate the rooms. If academics are sharing their own study's then they should use the wipes provided on flat surfaces between sessions and ventilate the room well during and between sessions.