**Next steps for living with COVID-19**

On 29 March 2022, the Government set out its next steps for living with COVID-19 and, the following day, outlined planned changes to COVID-19 testing in England from 1 April 2022. A tranche of new guidance has been published, these are:

1. Health Protection in Education and Childcare Settings (1 April)
2. People with Symptoms of a Respiratory Infection, Including COVID-19 (1 April)
3. Living Safely with Respiratory Infections, Including COVID-19 (1 April)
4. Guidance for People Previously Considered Clinically Extremely Vulnerable from COVID-19 (1 April)
5. Reducing the spread of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, in the workplace (1 April, updated 4 April)
6. COVID-19 guidance for people whose immune systems means they are at higher risk (4 April)

Liverpool’s Health Protection Board, met on 8 April and issued the following key advice:

* Get vaccinated and get your booster. Everyone aged 5 and over can now get vaccinated against COVID.
* The risk of catching COVID is highest in crowded, enclosed and poorly ventilated spaces, so let fresh air in if meeting indoors, or meet outdoors.
* Wash your hands frequently and cover your nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing.
* Wear a face covering in crowded or enclosed spaces – and when visiting primary care settings like the GP, dentist or pharmacy, and when you are in close contact with someone at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell from COVID.
* Stay away from others if you have symptoms of a respiratory illness, and a high temperature or do not feel well. Try to stay at home and avoid contact with others.
* If you get a positive COVID test result, try to stay at home and avoid contact with other people for 5 days following the day of your positive test result. Avoid contact with people at higher risk of serious illness for 10 days.
* Children and young people with a positive test result tend to be infectious to other people for less time than adults and should isolate for 3 days following a positive test result.

**Updated university-based**

Following a thorough review of the new guidance and noting the advice issued by Liverpool’s Health Protection Board the following recommendations were made to the Executive Leadership Team by the Business Continuity Operational Group. These were approved by ELT on 19 April 2022.

1. That the university continues with its institutional COVID risk assessment, consulting on it with the Health & Safety /Estate & Facilities Management Work Stream and University Health & Safety Committee. The institutional COVID risk assessment will reference ex-Clinically Extremely Vulnerable, the immunosuppressed, and pregnant staff and students. COVID-19 will also be considered under general local risk assessments with separate COVID-19 risk assessments no longer required
2. That the university continues with safeguards around fresh air, good hygiene, and vaccinations. That the use of Co² monitors and air purifiers continues.
3. That, in addition to hand hygiene measures such as soap and paper towels, the university should continue to provide alcohol-based hand sanitiser bottles and antiviral wipes in key building locations. Enhanced cleaning should continue, using products approved to combat the COVID-19 enveloped virus, and the Zoono Z-71 microbe shield on frequently touched surfaces, and increased frequency of cleaning should continue in heavily used areas. Additional cleaning of relevant spaces should be completed in the event of an outbreak, including the fogging of surfaces using antiviral products approved for combatting the COVID-19 enveloped virus.
4. That the university continues to recommend the wearing of face coverings. Though it remains the case that the university cannot mandate the wearing of face coverings, they help to prevent spread and also provide a measure of reassurance.
5. Staff and students should be encouraged to test regularly if they have access to tests. However, as the HEI Testing Programme has ended, the stock of lateral flow test kits on reception areas in buildings should be removed. It is proposed that this occurs from Friday 6 May 2022, the final day of the examination/assessment period.
6. In line with Government guidance, those who test positive should not come on campus for five days, following the day of the positive test result, avoiding contact with people at higher risk of serious illness for 10 days.
7. Those with any symptoms of respiratory illness and a high temperature who do not feel well, should not come on campus for five days. The university will not require evidence of a positive test result.
8. The new guidance applies to all respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. Currently, only sickness absence due to COVID-19 has been discounted from short-term sickness absence triggers. It is proposed that sickness absence/reporting around respiratory illnesses including COVID-19 should be as follows:
9. Respiratory illness symptoms, high temperature and too unwell to work – absence to be recorded as sickness absence, managed in line with the usual sickness absence process and absence will count towards short term sickness absence trigger points.
10. Respiratory illness symptoms and high temperature but well enough to work - absence should be recorded as self-isolation and would not count towards sickness absence in terms of both sick pay or short term sickness absence trigger points.

This approach will enable the university to manage sickness absence without penalising those staff self-isolating. Those who are normally unable to work from home would be advised to work from home but should discuss with their line manager whether there is different work that can be undertaken from home.

1. Individuals with mild respiratory illness symptoms, but no high temperature would be allowed to come onto campus. Measures such as social distancing and the wearing of face coverings would be encouraged in these circumstances.
2. The Government has withdrawn its COVID-19 specific guidance for pregnant people. The university’s COVID-19 Institutional Risk Assessment will be maintained and local (non-COVID) risk assessments used to establish if the workplace is safe (this has always been the case). Based on the outcomes of the risk assessment, it may be appropriate for the pregnant person to work from home depending their role and the workplace risks.
3. That COVID-19 dashboard reporting should be maintained.
4. That the relationship with local HEIs and local public health officials be maintained.
5. That the COVID-19 Support Team should remain in place until the end of the examination/assessment period (Friday 6 May 2022).
6. That the university continues its messaging around the importance of COVID-19 vaccinations, ventilation, hygiene and the wearing of face coverings, and that updated advice be placed on the relevant website pages.
7. That the university’s response will be kept under review, with regular updates from BCOG to ELT.