**COVID guidance for medical students.**

October2022

Dear medical student,

COVID is part of the landscape now, but ‘learning to live with it’ means we still have to take those familiar low impact common sense measures that reduce the risks of infection, spread and serious illness amongst ourselves and others. Another wave of a new variant is always possible.

Students’ behaviour is an important part of maintaining safety for all. We know that you endeavour to be diligent in keeping patients, your peers, tutors, healthcare workers and all their relatives and contacts safe: **thank you**.

**Years 1, 2 & all teaching on the QUB site**

For years 1&2, most teaching is face to face. I know all the staff have gone to enormous lengths to make the teaching experience as safe as possible for students and staff.

The latest guidance from QUB about being on campus can be found here: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/home/coronavirus-faqs/information-for-students/>.

Please read it.

In summary, things you can do:

* QUB encourage social distancing. It is not mandatory, and you can sit wherever you like in teaching rooms. Sometimes social distancing will be impossible, but we strongly encourage you to consider it when in a group. For example when entering or leaving a room, try not to bunch together at the door all entering or leaving at the same time
* QUB also encourages wearing of face coverings on the QUB campus, including corridors, teaching, learning and study spaces like the library. Face coverings are not mandatory in QUB, but worth doing. You will not know whether others have relatives for example who are clinically vulnerable, or are clinically vulnerable themselves. Mask wearing in crowded areas will set an example, and encourage others
* Hand sanitisers should be available in teaching rooms: please use them
* Of course, cover coughs and sneezes
* Ventilation is important: open windows if possible
* Vaccination is the best way to reduce the risk of serious illness if you get COVID, and help to reduce spread: please register and get up to date vaccinations if you haven’t already
* Download the Stop COVID NI app

**Years 3-5, Clinical Attachments**

We ***strongly urge*** all students on clinical placement to do the following:

* If you have **ANY SYMPTOMS** that could relate to COVID – **DO NOT ATTEND YOUR ATTACHMENT.** See below for guidance
* Ensure you are **fully vaccinated.** Some General Practices have communicated that they will only take students who are fully vaccinated. Any student who is not fully vaccinated and is in clinical placement *MUST* inform Prof N Kennedy if you have not already done so, to perform a risk assessment
* Students on placement should follow the asymptomatic testing practices of the clinical team to which they are attached. Routine asymptomatic testing is presently not needed: <https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2022-10/Letter%20from%20Prof%20Sir%20Michael%20McBride%20-%20PAUSE%20OF%20ASYMPTOMATIC%20TESTING%20FOR%20HEALTH%20AND%20SOCIAL%20CARE%20WORKERS%20AND%20FOR%20HOSPITAL%20VISITORS.pdf>
* Please note that exceptions exist, for example your local clinical area may require regular asymptomatic testing if there are extremely vulnerable patients, such as transplant recipients or haematology patients, or if a suspected or confirmed outbreak occurs.
* Wear the same PPE as medics in your clinical area are wearing

**Clinical attachments in General Practice:**

We want to highlight the particular responsibilities of students goingto **General Practice attachments, whether on Family Attachment, or in 4th and 5th year.** The visible impact on service deliveryif General Practice staff have to isolate due to contact with a student who has COVID is very high, **i.e. many patients** are affected. **In the first week of 2021 semester 1, two Practices had to have large proportions of their team isolate which had significant impact on a service already under great pressure.** News of such events quickly spreads among the GP community, and potentially erodes GPs’ ongoing willingness to host students. Please help with the efforts to keep the clinical attachments going while keeping everyone safe.

Its important to remember that support is always available, from the CME pastoral support team (see below), or from QUB at student wellbeing.

Your mental wellbeing is important. Personally, I believe that mental wellbeing is best served by striving for perspective, cultivating company, protecting regular exercise (like a long walk) and even respecting the basics like healthy eating and sleeping. None of this will happen without your planning.

Best wishes,

Dr Michael Williams Professor Neil Kennedy,

CME COVID Coordinator CME Director

With thanks to Prof. Nigel Hart.

**Q1 What do I do if I have symptoms of COVID?**

If you develop any symptoms of COVID (e.g. high temperature, coughing a lot for more than an hour, or having three coughing episodes in 24h or loss of taste or smell), then:

1. **self isolate right away**. Put on a face covering, return to your accommodation immediately, avoiding public transport if possible.
	1. Where required on campus, the University can assist you in booking a special COVID-secure taxi to transport you home: call: 90975098 or 90975099. There will be a cost to you for this
	2. If you are staying in Trust accommodation anywhere in NI, return to your Belfast accommodation / home if at all possible. If you need to arrange a taxi, please contact Dr M Williams (m.williams@qub.ac.uk), or Prof N Kennedy (n.kennedy@qub.ac.uk) or the CME Manager, Mrs B McKevitt (B.McKevitt@qub.ac.uk). There will *not* necessarily be a cost to you for this taxi.
2. **do a lateral flow test**

Lateral flow tests are no longer available from QUB, but can be obtained:

* + from some Pharmacies
	+ by ordering online:
		- see the nidrect website for details: <https://www.gov.uk/order-coronavirus-rapid-lateral-flow-tests>
		- or here: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing/>
	+ by dialling 119

If the result is negative, then you can return to placement if you haven't had a fever for over 48 hours.

1. **as soon as possible, inform ALL of groups a, b and c below that you are self isolating while arranging a test:**
	1. If you are on Clinical Placement, you must inform your Clinical Supervisor AND the Trust's Undergraduate Office / GP Practice about your result as soon as possible
	2. Follow the usual CME procedures for reporting absences - see the QUB Medical Education portal for details, specifically under the ‘Professionalism’ tab. You can self-certify for up to five days’ absence.
	3. Please let Dr Williams (m.williams@qub.ac.uk) and Ms Lewis (p.lewis@qub.ac.uk) in the CME know

**Q2 What do I do if I test positive for COVID 19?**

As soon as possible, inform ALL of groups a, b and c below:

1. If you are on Clinical Placement, you must inform your Clinical Supervisor AND the Trust's Undergraduate Office / GP Practice about your result as soon as possible
2. Follow the usual CME procedures for reporting absences - see the QUB Medical Education portal for details, specifically under the ‘Professionalism’ tab. You can self-certify for up to five days’ absence.
3. Please let Dr Williams (m.williams@qub.ac.uk) and Ms Lewis (p.lewis@qub.ac.uk) in the CME know

If required, contact Ms. Perpetua Lewis in the CME (p.lewis@qub.ac.uk) to avail of CME-based pastoral support.

**For those on campus, and not on clinical placement**, the NIDirect website advises: (<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-testing-and-stay-home-advice>) that if you test positive:

* stay at home and avoid contact with other people **for five days after the day of the test, or from the day symptoms started** (whichever was earlier)
* as a precautionary measure, you should avoid contact with people you know [to be at higher risk from COVID-19](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/treatments-coronavirus-covid-19) for 10 days especially those with a weakened immune system to make sure you are no longer infectious
* do not visit others in a health or social care setting for a 10 day period
* let everyone in your household know about your positive COVID-19 test result as COVID-19 is infectious for up to two days before you begin to feel unwell, or the date of your test, and it can take up to 10 days for infection to develop in close contacts
* tell anyone you had close contact to be aware of signs or symptoms during this time
* testing to end self-isolation following a positive COVID-19 test is no longer advised.

**For those on clinical placement**, following the advice of the Department of Health in NI, here: [https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/questions-and-answers#if-i-am-pregnant-can-i-continue-to-work-16-09-2020](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/questions-and-answers%23if-i-am-pregnant-can-i-continue-to-work-16-09-2020)

* you will be able to leave self-isolation and return to placement, if you test negative on days 5 and 6 after the date that symptoms started or the date of their initial test, whichever is the sooner, provided you do not have a temperature and are medically fit.
* you should continue to undertake daily LFD Tests until day 10.
	+ If any of the LFD tests are positive you should isolate and wait 24 hours before taking the next LFD test and only return to placement after testing negative on two separate occasions up to Day 10.

* If you test positive at day 10, you should take a daily LFD test on days 11 – 14 until you get a single negative result.
	+ After day 10 you can return to placement immediately following a single negative result.

**Q3 Does contact tracing occur?**

Contact tracing of close community contact ceased in April 2022.

**Q4 What do I do if I am a household or overnight contact of someone who is confirmed COVID positive?**

See here for details: [https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/questions-and-answers#if-i-am-pregnant-can-i-continue-to-work-16-09-2020](https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/covid-19-coronavirus/guidance-hsc-staff-healthcare-workers-and-care-providers/questions-and-answers%23if-i-am-pregnant-can-i-continue-to-work-16-09-2020)

**If you are a household or overnight contact of a case** you should:

* take a lateral flow test as soon as possible after being identified as a contact
	+ if this is negative and you do not have any symptoms
		- you can return to campus
		- you should avoid contact with people you know to be at higher risk of severe disease should they contract COVID-19 despite vaccination. You should not visit others in a hospital, care home or other health and care setting.
		- **if on clinical placemen**t:
			* speak to your clinical supervisor as soon as possible for advice on returning
			* re-commence twice weekly regular testing 48 hours after the negative result: this means you should take a total of three lateral flow tests in the 7 day period following identification as a household or overnight contact

This guidance applies to both vaccinated and unvaccinated staff.

If you develop symptoms, follow the guidance in Q1 above.

‘Contacts of contacts’ don't have to self isolate, including household members.

**Q5. What is the correct PPE?**

**Note that when in any clinical area, whether there are known COVID positive patients or not, you must wear the same PPE as doctors are wearing in that clinical area. You should follow the practices of the medical and other healthcare staff in that area.**

**As a QUB medical student you may meet patients undergoing aerosol generating procedures (AGP). In these settings you must wear a ‘face-fit-tested’ FFP3 masks. Trusts will arrange testing for available masks. If you have not been fit tested, you must not be present when an AGP is taking place.**

**For more detail on donning and doffing PPE see:**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-use-for-non-aerosol-generating-procedures>

**Q6. Who should I contact for pastoral support in relation to COVID?**

Professor Mark Harbinson, Lead for Student Support: m.harbinson@qub.ac.uk

Perpetua Lewis, Student Support & Guidance Officer: p.lewis@qub.ac.uk

**Year Pastoral Leads:**

Year 1: Dr Mairead Corrigan m.corrigan@qub.ac.uk

Year 2: Dr David Bell d.bell@qub.ac.uk

Year 3: Dr Ciaran Mulholland c.c.mulholland@qub.ac.uk

Year 4: Dr Aidan Turkington aidan.turkington@belfasttrust.hscni.net

Year 5: Dr Janitha Costa j.costa@qub.ac.uk

**Q7. Who should I contact if I am still unsure what to do?**

If you are not sure whether you need a COVID test or not, phone the NHS advice line: 111

If needed, please email Dr Michael Williams (m.williams@qub.ac.uk) with any queries.

For the latest guidance, again, please look at:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/home/coronavirus-faqs/information-for-students/>

Take care.

END.