



June 2022

## COVID-19 Transitioning

Guidelines for:

Summer Schools

Revision Classes

Lessons and instruction classes

Klabb 3-16



## Contents

Preamble .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
General Information on COVID-19 .....	5
Principles for Risk Mitigation .....	6
General hygiene recommendations .....	8
Daily Operation .....	10
Cleaning of premises .....	12
Health Procedures .....	14
Plan if someone is or becomes sick .....	15
Sports Activities .....	16
Students with disabilities .....	17
SEC Revision Classes / Classroom-based Summer Learning .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Transport .....	18
Annex 1 .....	19



## Preamble

These guidelines are applicable to summer schools, Klabb 3-16, SEC Revision Classes and any other instruction lessons or classes to be held in summer 2022 and are being referred to in the document as 'School/s'. Each institution should adapt these guidelines according to its specific setup and in line with other guidelines as issued from time to time by the Public Health authorities.

**These guidelines are meant to mitigate, as much as possible, against the transmission of COVID-19. Although the risk of infection is reduced, it can never be completely eliminated. Parents/guardians and students need to understand that a risk of transmission will still exist even if these guidelines are rigorously followed and implemented.**



## Executive Summary

1. The smaller the cohort size for in-person learning, the lower the risk to students, staff, and their families. Schools are advised to keep the size of each bubble or cohort as small as is feasible.
2. Mixing of students of different clusters should be avoided, where this is feasible.
3. Persons should try to maintain an adequate physical distance from one another when interacting, where this is feasible.
4. It is no longer mandatory to wear a mask in schools. However, individuals are free to make their own assessment of risk for themselves and for their children given that evidence to date still shows that wearing a mask is an effective means of preventing viral spread to others in conjunction with maintaining an adequate physical distance from others. As yet, there is no evidence that face shields are effective as source control or protection from respiratory droplets as masks thus, masks should be used.
5. It is recommended that, if possible, staff attend the staff room at staggered times to avoid crowding together. Taking one's break outdoors is better than indoors, a ventilated indoor room is better than one which has no air circulation. If a system of 'hot desking' is in operation, each person should be responsible to clean the surfaces and shared electronics with suitable agents before and after use.
6. Having a room with adequate ventilation at all times is vital and important. Windows should be kept open where possible.
7. Recommend shorter duration of lessons to reduce accumulating exposure between students.
8. Enforce the policy of staying home if unwell for both students and staff members.
9. All medical, educational and other activities should take place keeping basic mitigation measures in mind - physical distancing and using outdoors where possible/ensure adequate ventilation.



## General Information on COVID-19

The virus which causes COVID-19 disease can be spread through droplets from a sick person or on contact (by touch). Viral particles may also remain suspended in the air (aerosols). COVID-19 disease often presents with coughing or sneezing which release droplets of infected fluid. Most of these droplets can fall on nearby surfaces and objects - such as desks, tables, machinery, equipment, floors, walls, clothes, or telephones. People can contract COVID-19 by touching contaminated surfaces or objects – and then touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. By being less than two meters away from a person with COVID-19, one can contract the disease by breathing in droplets coughed out or exhaled by them. One can also inhale aerosolized viral particles if one occupies the same room as a person with COVID-19 for a period of time, even if a distance of more than two meters is maintained at all times.

The most common symptoms of coronavirus include cough, fever, shortness of breath, tiredness, sore throat, runny / blocked nose, headache, muscle pain, diarrhea, or vomiting. Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some go on to experience more serious illness and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness increases with age. People with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease are also more vulnerable to serious illness.

Persons who develop any of these symptoms, even if mild, are to stay at home and book a swab test. Tests can be booked online through <https://covidtest.gov.mt/> or by calling the Covid-19 Helpline on 111 or (+356) 21324086 or through the private sector. For more information, seek guidance on [www.covid19health.gov.mt](http://www.covid19health.gov.mt). Should symptoms persist or worsen, they should contact their doctor.



## Principles for Risk Mitigation

### ***Physical distancing***

This is considered the main measure which mitigates against viral transmission. Maintaining adequate spacing between persons is one of the main mitigating measures. Methods for implementing this measure include adequate distance between desks, students and staff, placing the least number of students possible in each classroom to create more space in a classroom, staggering class times, breaks and lunch times, and spending more time outdoors where feasible.

### ***Cohorting / Social bubbles***

Keeping the same group of children and educators together for the duration of the school activity including lessons, mealtimes and activity breaks constitutes cohorting.

Risk is cumulative and proportional to the number of students in the 'social bubble'. A higher number of interactions is considered to have an increased risk of contagion. Students at a decreased physical distance also pose an increased risk. The length of time in a closed indoor setting is considered to pose a higher risk compared to an outdoor activity.

Keeping students from different cohorts from mixing is critical since otherwise the concept of social 'bubbles' would be defeated, and the risk of contagion increases proportionately to the size of the cohorts which have mixed. For this measure to be effective, the composition of the 'bubbles' or 'clusters' need to remain as constant as possible throughout the day. Wherever possible and feasible, students and staff must remain within the same classroom/cluster/group, which composition should remain constant.

### ***Wearing of Masks***

It is not mandatory to wear a mask in schools. However, individuals are free to make their own assessment of risk for themselves and for their children given that evidence to date still shows that wearing a mask is an effective means of preventing viral spread to others in conjunction with maintaining an adequate physical distance from others. As yet, there is no evidence that face shields are effective as source control or protection from respiratory droplets as masks thus, masks should be used.

***Ventilation:***

Proper indoor ventilation is essential. In order to ensure adequate circulation of air, and to reduce the level of pathogens in the air, windows and/or doors should be kept open throughout the day to allow for cross ventilation.

***Air-conditioning:***

If air-conditioning is to be used, this should be used in accordance with the guidelines issued by the relevant authorities<sup>1</sup>. Filters should always be cleaned well and maintained properly. Frequency of cleaning depends on necessity. In case extractors are used, these must be thoroughly cleaned at least weekly.

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<sup>1</sup> Guidance on Air conditioning: <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/Air%20conditioning%20and%20ventilation%20systems%20-V2%2002%20May%202020.pdf>



## General hygiene recommendations

- ✓ Personal sanitising products for students are to be supplied by parents/guardians and are to be brought to school daily.
- ✓ Avoid unnecessary touching, hugging, or shaking hands between members of the staff and students
- ✓ Avoid, as much as possible and depending on the case, unnecessary physical contact with children
- ✓ Hand hygiene: wash hands with soap and water regularly and carefully for at least 20 seconds (posters of correct handwashing with visuals should be attached in kitchens and bathrooms). Where water and soap are not immediately available, use hand sanitizer. Washing of hands and use of sanitisers at the School shall be rigorously monitored and performed at regular intervals.
- ✓ Care should be taken to ensure that use of sanitiser is supervised particularly when this involves younger children.
- ✓ If possible, do not touch the face, especially the mucous membranes, with your hands, i.e. do not touch the mouth, eyes, and nose
- ✓ If possible, do not touch publicly accessible objects such as door handles or elevator buttons with your full hand or fingers,
- ✓ It is recommended that, if possible, staff attend the staff room at staggered times. It is important that the cumulative time a staff member spends in the staff room in the presence of other persons is reduced to the barest minimum (ideally less than two hour per day), whilst always maintaining an adequate physical distance from others at all times.
- ✓ Sneezing/coughing should be in disposable tissues, which are then disposed of immediately in a closed and lined bin or one which is regularly cleaned. If a tissue is not available sneeze/cough into flexed elbow. Keep the greatest possible distance when coughing or sneezing; it is best to turn away.



- ✓ Frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and sneezing or coughing in sleeves, by staff, are strongly recommended in order to guide students under their care to get used to these practices also by modelling good practices.



## Daily Operation

- ✓ Wherever possible, students and staff are recommended to remain within the same classroom/cluster/group, which composition is recommended to remain constant and social distance be observed. In particular, there should be no unnecessary close contact between students, or between students and staff members.
- ✓ Parents/guardians of students under legal age or students over legal age who have been classified as vulnerable should discuss attendance at the School with their doctor and also with the Management of the School, in order to assess the level of risk for the child to attend the School. The decision to attend rests with the parents/guardians of the student or with the student if of legal age.
- ✓ Parents/Students should assess for any signs of illness every morning before attending School. All persons who are unwell (students/staff) should not attend school
- ✓ Staff who feel unwell or are sick are not to go to work.
- ✓ Hand hygiene stations should be set up at the entrance of the School, so that staff and students can clean their hands before they enter. If a sink with soap and water is not available, provide hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol at reception and in each classroom.
- ✓ Keep hand sanitizer out of the young children's reach and supervise appropriate use.
- ✓ Crowding of persons should be avoided and can be mitigated by staggering entrance and dismissal and encouraging orderly flow of students/staff in common areas.
- ✓ All food items are to be carried and presented in containers which can be cleaned and wiped down before handling by staff, otherwise these should be handled by the student ensuring proper hand hygiene before and after eating meals.
- ✓ Shared food is still discouraged in light of the continued viral spread. Any food provided in school should be individually portioned.
- ✓ In case of water dispensers these are to be used only with personalized bottles or cups. Students are to bring their own labelled water bottle.



- ✓ If common functional rooms are going to be used by different groups of students at different times in the day, the room must be cleaned and disinfected, including furniture, between each new group using the room and facilities for specific activities.
- ✓ Wherever possible, the use of outdoors is encouraged. Staggered play times can prevent too many students using the outdoor area at the same time. Games should be carried out only within the same cluster/group of students.
- ✓ Partners, collaborators, and contractors who provide agreed services to the School are to abide by these same guidelines when providing a service to the school.
- ✓ Parents failing to abide by the Schools' policies and procedures in these guidelines may forfeit their right for service.



## Cleaning of premises

- ✓ In general, the infectivity of coronaviruses on inanimate surfaces (such as wood, metal, fabrics, and plastic) decreases rapidly depending on the material and environmental conditions such as temperature, humidity, and UV radiation. The cleaning of surfaces remains an important measure to ensure hygienic conditions.
- ✓ Premises and resources will be cleaned daily using approved products. A combination of cleaning with soap and water and disinfection will be most effective in removing the COVID-19 virus. Both cleaning and disinfection is most effective, using a combination of household detergents and disinfectants. A detergent is designed to break up oil and grease with the use of water. Anything labelled as a detergent will work. Cleaning should start with the cleanest surface first, progressively moving towards the dirtiest surface. Change water regularly. When surfaces are cleaned, they should be left as dry as possible to reduce the risk of slips and falls, as well as spreading of viruses and bacteria through droplets. Disinfecting means using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. It is important to clean before disinfecting because dirt and grime can reduce the ability of disinfectants to kill germs. Disinfectants containing  $\geq 70\%$  alcohol, ammonium compounds, chlorine bleach or oxygen bleach are suitable for use on hard surfaces (surfaces where liquids pool, and do not soak in). The packaging or manufacturer's instructions will outline the correct way to use disinfectant. Disinfectants require time to be effective at killing viruses. If no time is specified, the disinfectant should be left for ten minutes before removing.
- ✓ Toilets must be cleaned regularly. Toilet seats, fittings, washbasins, and floors must be cleaned. In case of contamination with faeces, blood or vomit, disinfectant wipes should be used after removal of the contamination with a disposable cloth soaked in disinfectant. Protective gloves and mouth and nose protection must be worn by members of staff.
- ✓ A log detailing the time when the toilet facility has been cleaned and by whom should be filled in for each toilet facility.
- ✓ Disposable towels, rather than reusable towels, should be used.
- ✓ Common resources used by students must be cleaned with soap and water between



one use and another and at the beginning and at the end of the day.

- ✓ Due to its heavy use as a play and exercise area for summer schools/Klabb 3-16, floor cleaning should be carried out more regularly and frequently throughout the day, and as necessary and as required in the case of spillages. It is recommended that where possible soft flooring should be wiped down by detergents and washed properly at the end of each day.
- ✓ The following areas should be cleaned particularly thoroughly and, if possible, several times a day in heavily frequented areas:
  - Door handles and any other handles on drawers, windows, etc.
  - Stairs and handrails,
  - Light switches,
  - Tables, phones,
  - and all other grip areas.
- ✓ All areas to be cleaned will be checked by assigned personnel and will be documented and signed by means of a check list.



## Health Procedures

Procedures in accordance with health authorities have to be implemented if:

*Case A: Any member of staff, parents / guardians and students are found to have fever or other symptoms when trying to attend school.*

- ✓ In this case the staff member, parent and student would be refused entry to the premises and advised to return home/isolated until picked up by parents/guardians. If symptoms are suggestive of COVID-19, then they are strongly advised to call 111 to book a swab.

*Case B: Any member of staff or students develop fever or other symptoms during the service*

- ✓ The person who develops any symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 would need to isolate themselves and leave the premises as quickly as possible. Staff are to call 111 to book a swab. Parents/guardians of students who have symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 are strongly advised to call 111 to get their child tested.
- ✓ In any circumstance, staff and parents of students and students of legal age are to provide a doctor's certificate, attesting that the staff member or student are no longer sick and fit to return to school, before returning to the School<sup>2</sup>.



## Plan if someone is or becomes sick

- The parent/s will be immediately contacted to pick up the child/student.
- Plan to have an isolation room such as an office, classroom, or an outdoor area, (weather-permitting), that can be used to isolate a sick student.
- If a sick student has been isolated in your facility, clean and disinfect surfaces in your isolation room or area after the sick child has gone home<sup>3</sup>.



## Sports/Other Activities

All activities which used to take place pre- COVID-19 pandemic should take place keeping basic mitigation measures in mind. Those activities which involve increased physical contact eg. sports, or where one would have an increased exchange of inhaled and exhaled air and the possibility of more respiratory droplets forming and being dispersed in the air or dropping onto contact surfaces, such as loud speech, singing and choir practice, may be additionally mitigated by increasing distances between students and taking place outdoors or in well ventilated rooms.



## Students with disabilities

### ***Changing of nappies***

When changing the nappy of a student with disabilities, the staff member must start by washing/ sanitizing their hands and those of the student. Disposable gloves must also be worn during this time. Safe, diaper changing procedures should be followed.

Steps should include:

- Preparation (includes putting on gloves, mask)
- Cleaning of the student
- Removal and discarding of trash (soiled diaper and wipes)
- Putting a clean diaper on the student
- Washing of student's hands
- Cleaning up and disinfection of the changing station
- Washing of hands

After changing nappies, the child support worker/carer must wash their hands again (even if gloves were used) and the nappy changing area should be disinfected with a fragrance-free bleach as a sanitizing or disinfecting solution. If other products are used for sanitizing or disinfecting, they should also be fragrance-free. If the surface is dirty, it should be cleaned with detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

### ***Feeding, or Holding a Student with Disabilities***

- Staff should wash their hands, face, neck, and any exposed areas touched by a student's secretions.
- Staff should change the student's clothes if these are soiled. The overshirt or clothing of staff should be replaced if they have been soiled by secretions. Hands are to be washed again.
- Parents are to send a change or two of clothes every day.
- Contaminated clothes should be placed in a plastic bag.



## Transport

The following recommendations should be considered for school transport:

1. Increase the frequency of transport services
2. Keep journeys as short as possible
3. Retaining the same cohort/cluster of students on every journey where possible.
4. Maintain safe physical distancing between students to decrease the number of occupants in the vehicle where possible
5. Masks are not mandatory on transport however it is recommended for students and staff especially when community levels of covid-19 are high
6. Proper cleaning of the vehicle between journeys
  - If there are signs of illness, the students should not go to school.
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## Annex 1

For further information on how the virus is transmitted, the symptoms of the illness and what to do if sick or have symptoms, refer to:

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/symptoms.aspx>

<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Pages/resources.aspx>

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