

COVID-19 Transitioning – Obligatory Conditions and Guidelines for Examinations

These procedures have been formulated for Examinations to ensure rigid compliance in the fields of social distancing, enhanced hygienic practices and the minimisation of COVID-19 infection risks during the examination process.

The following obligatory conditions are issued under the Public Health Act Chapter 465 of the Laws of Malta and require strict adherence. Failure to adhere to these conditions will result in enforcement procedures as provided by the Act.

As COVID-19 restrictions are gradually relaxed, examiners, invigilators and the general public (namely exam candidates) must work together to adapt and promote safe practices consistent with advice from public health authorities and to ensure that premises are ready for the social distancing and correct hygiene measures that are critical to the success of the transition.

Examiners, invigilators and the general public (namely exam candidates) must prevent the transmission of COVID-19 during the examination process, consistent with updated advice from the public health authorities.

Examiners, invigilators and the general public (namely exam candidates) must prepare for the possibility that there will be cases of COVID-19 in the community and therefore also during an examination and be ready to respond immediately, appropriately, effectively and efficiently, and consistent with specific recommendations from public health authorities.

Understanding how COVID-19 spreads & the implications

Current research however suggests that the SARSCoV-2 virus (the virus that causes COVID-19) is transmitted from person to person:

- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks loudly.
- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 2 metres).
There is also a possibility that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the COVID-19 virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, and eyes.

Most persons infected with COVID-19 experience mild symptoms and recover. However, some people develop more serious complications and may require hospital care. Risk of serious illness increases with age, for people with weakened immune systems and people with conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and lung disease.

Mandatory conditions to be observed by Examiners and Invigilators

- a) exercise the right of refusal of entry onto the premises of exam candidates if they are visibly unwell or have uncertified respiratory symptoms
- b) subject exam candidates to temperature checks at the entrance for the presence of fever (persons with a temperature of 37.2°Celsius or higher will be denied entrance)
- c) provide adequate and easily accessible hand sanitisers with an appropriate 70% alcohol hand-rub at the entrance to the examination venue, the examination room and other common areas and ensure that all persons sanitise their hands prior to entrance
- d) regulate entrance into and exit from the premises adopting crowd management techniques as necessary
- e) invigilators, other members of staff and exam candidates are to wear face masks (covering mouth, nose and chin) or visor when entering and exiting the exam venue. Invigilators and other members of staff are to continue wearing the face masks and/or visors at all times. The wearing of the face mask or visor is optional for the exam candidates during the course of the examination. The number of invigilators needs to be kept to the minimum possible
- f) all candidates should wait outside the venue until it is time to enter the examination hall. There should not be an indoor waiting area, if possible. Ensure management of waiting areas to ensure social distancing.
- g) ensure that persons are social distancing and maintaining at least two (2) meters between each other individuals at all times. Indicate with visible markings outside and inside the premises two (2) metre distances that persons shall respect whilst queuing, including queuing for the rest rooms
- h) during written examinations place exam candidates on desks and chairs that are two (2) metres apart
- i) affix visible signage at the entrance of the premises indicating the maximum capacity that the premises can hold at any one time
- j) before the first session and between one exam session and another, all common areas are to be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly. These include the exam room as well as bathrooms and any public spaces used by the candidates
- k) all “high-touch” surfaces, including but not limited to desktops, chairs, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, etc, need to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before the first session and between each session
- l) exams should be scheduled with sufficient time between each session to allow for cleaning and disinfection of the areas and items mentioned in (i) and (j) above between one session and another
- m) keep records of the contact information (name and a phone number) of the exam candidates, invigilators and other members of staff and the date and time when they were on the premises for up to 28 days. This information will be used if contact tracing will be required

Materials

- Test papers:
 - masks/visors and gloves must be worn when the test papers are being unpacked. Gloves should be safely disposed of at the end of the process – they should not be re-used
 - Staff should have disinfectant (liquid or wipes) readily available to clean the external surface of the boxes, paper bags and shrink wrap (as applicable) before handling them
 - Staff should sanitize their hands with sanitizing gel or liquid once they have finished handling the test papers, initially upon handing them out and at the end of the session on collecting them from the candidates
- Stationery - Candidates are to bring their own pens, pencils, and any other stationery or personal equipment that may be required for the test.
- Candidates can bring their own sanitizing gel into the examination room provided that they follow the “water bottles rules” (transparent container, transparent gel or liquid, no labels etc.).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs)

- Invigilators should wear PPE such as masks and/or visors as well as latex gloves during each examination sitting.
- bins should be provided so that any PPEs can be disposed of appropriately.

Procedure

- Since the procedures to enter the examination room may take some time it is advised to ask candidates to start to enter the venue earlier/in a staggered manner to ensure that all procedures are in place in good time prior to the start of the examination.
- Candidates are to maintain social distancing at all time.
- Candidates are to enter the room one by one to allow for the previous candidate to enter the room, use hand sanitizer and find her/his seat.
- If candidates are required to show their identification document, they should be the only ones to handle their own identification document/s.
- Candidates may be required to remove their mask on entering the examination hall until their identification is confirmed.
- Candidates are to exit the room one by one and in an orderly manner to respect physical distancing between persons, using hand sanitizer on the way out. They are to be encouraged not to congregate at the exit of the examination venue but leave the venue immediately.

Any invigilator, other staff member or candidate who exhibits any symptoms or feels unwell must not be allowed to enter the examination venue at any point.

How to stay informed: www.covid19health.gov.mt