

Irish Summer Colleges COVID-19 Guidance

For the purposes of this guidance document, all reference to **College** is intended to mean **all aspects of College activity and management** to include the student or staff experiences including travel, accommodation, learning and any other activity (organised or unorganised).

Overall organisational management and control should be agreed for each college setting with college specific risk assessments.

*Drafted by Slua Event Safety Consultancy under contract to the
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This document has been produced based on current best practice, legislation and guidance by the Government, HSE and HSA in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the advice issued continues to evolve, this protocol and the measures employers and staff need to address may also change. Therefore, it should be noted that the attached details are non-exhaustive and are also subject to change. This is a general document applicable to Irish Colleges. It is not designed to prohibit the introduction of further specific measures in particular sectors or workplaces, as long as they enhance the measures set out in this document. In addition, further supports for employers and workers will be developed and provided where appropriate. This is a living draft document and will be updated as necessary.

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Acronyms

DAFM	Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
ECDC	European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control
EU	European Union
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GP	General Practitioner
HPSC	Health Protection Surveillance Centre
HSA	Health and Safety Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning
IPC	Infection Prevention and Control
LWR	Lead Worker Representative
OSH	Occupational Safety & Health
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RA	Risk Assessment

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Covid-19 Response Charter

Below is a summary of the areas that need to be addressed in order to actively promote and ensure safety in Irish Colleges for staff, students, the local community and all those affected by the operations of the college. This charter outlines that the necessary steps have been undertaken in line with The Government's [COVID-19 Resilience & Recovery 2021 The Path Ahead](#), [Work Safely Protocol](#), [the Stay Safe Guidelines](#) and industry best practice. Further details on these steps are discussed in detail in this document. This list can be used as a checklist to aid planning.

Detail	Tick
Covid-19 Response Plan developed and communicated to all staff, students, contractors and service providers	
Appointment of a <u>COVID-19 Compliance Manager</u> and <u>Lead Worker Representative(s)</u> (LWR)	
Carry out a specific COVID-19 Risk Assessment	
All staff & students to complete 'Pre-return to Work Form' and "Pre-attendance check" respectively before attending college.	
Update your occupational Health and Safety Statement and safety risk assessments including fire risk assessment, child protection and non-COVID-19 risk	
Technical and Maintenance Services (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) legionella, pest control	
Update relevant HR policies and procedures	
Provide appropriate training and induction for staff and students	
Revised emergency procedures for all settings	
Communication Plan to students, staff, contractors, service providers incl. accommodation, transport, activities, catering and local community	
COVID-19 safe operating procedures and Infection Prevention Control (IPC) measures for all college settings and operations as identified in your risk assessment and checklists including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning regime • COVID-19 school, venue or accommodation capacity for each area to consider activity type, ventilation, available space and social distancing requirements • Respiratory hygiene to include safe use, storage and disposal of face masks • Hand hygiene through information on hand washing procedures and facilities • Isolation room(s) identified • Signage, social distancing floor markers • Identifying and planning for areas where social distancing cannot be maintained - physical barriers, screens, PPE, Fixed team and pod arrangement • First aid and provision of isolation area • Controls in place for movement of people entering/exiting and moving around • Entry conditions and access control • Encourage Staff, students, contractors and service providers to download the HSE Covid tracker App • Provision of PPE 	
Continuous review of physical layout of locations to ensure social distancing is maintained.	
A response plan for responding to suspect case(s)/outbreak of COVID-19	
A robust contact log covering all aspects of college operations to assist HSE with contact tracing (in line with GDPR)	
Provide appropriate training and induction for staff and students	
Calculate the safe occupancy of the operations and activities of the college (based on Department of Education Guidelines)	
Accommodation considerations in the college (safe occupancy capacity of bedrooms/dormitories/catering area/dining hall/toilet and shower/extra circular activities).	
Staff accommodation and work considerations the eliminate the risk of becoming a close contact if a co-worker develops symptoms.	
Peripatetic staff protocol (e.g., visiting teachers or inspectors)	
Arrangements for visiting families/friends of students and staff	
Mental Health and welfare for staff and students	
Consider needs of specific groups that attend/work including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • People with disabilities • Vulnerable and high-risk groups. 	

On signing below, I confirm that all the above COVID-19 control measures are in place, recommended safety and cleaning guidelines are being adhered to and that staff members have completed essential Infection Prevention control training.

Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name _____ Position _____

Note

This is a living guidance document, as Government restrictions and Public Health Guidelines evolve school operators and providers must follow updated Government advice and changes operation accordingly.

Introduction

This guidance document is in line with the [Work Safely Protocols](#) and have been developed to assist Irish Colleges to apply COVID-19 guidance carry out risk assessments to their specific colleges/venues and activities for the safe re-opening Irish Colleges.

The College as the organising body are responsible for the health and safety of staff, students and others associated with the working of the college (including house accommodation, travel and other service providers) under **Safety Health and Welfare at Work 2005 Act**. The responsibility to ensure a safe place of work and study is that of senior management and these overall responsibilities cannot be passed on to individual staff roles. Staff consultation and an inclusive approach is integral to the successful operation of the College. Creating and maintaining a safe space for all requires strong communication and a shared collaborative approach between employers and staff and is essential to achieve success and maximum buy-in.

Underpinning all Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures is that the BEST way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a workplace or any setting is to practice physical distancing, adopt proper hand hygiene and follow respiratory etiquette.

The Government's [Work Safely Protocol](#) sets out the minimum COVID-19 control measures needed in every workplace including:

- Developing/updating a COVID-19 Response Plan including a COVID-19 risk assessment.
- Developing procedures for prompt identification and isolation of staff who may have symptoms of COVID-19.
- Implementing COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures to minimise risk
- Help people to work from home where practical.
- Manage transmission risk where social distancing is not possible.
- Protect people who are at higher risk.

College Response/Action Plan Monitoring & Supporting

A COVID-19 Response Plan must be prepared detailing the policies and practices necessary for the College to meet the Government's 'Work Safely Protocol' and to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the College as a workplace. This response plan should feed into the colleges existing Health and Safety documentation. In keeping the COVID-19 response plan up to date, the college will be required to:

- develop and/or update their COVID-19 Response Plan.
- develop plans and communicate in consultation with staff and service providers.
- facilitate the appointment of at least one Lead Worker Representative for the workplace, which shall be done in consultation with the staff and/or representatives.
- review and update their occupational health and safety (OSH) risk assessments and safety statement.
- address the level(s) of risk associated with college, activities, accommodation settings in their COVID-19 plans and OSH risk assessments. For example, where, how and from what

sources might staff or students be exposed to COVID-19? Consider exposure to/from the students, co-workers etc. In this regard, particular locations (canteens, homes, washroom facilities, access/egress points), where staff and students congregate can be particular hotspots for transmission.

- ensure that where College practices have been changed or modified to prevent the spread of COVID-19, staff are not inadvertently exposed to additional occupational health and safety hazards and risks.
- take into account staff' individual risk factors (e.g., older staff, whether a staff is considered very high risk or high risk due to the presence of underlying medical conditions).
- include measures to deal with a suspected case of COVID-19 in the workplace.
- include the controls necessary to address the risks identified.
- include contingency measures to address increased rates of staff absenteeism, implementation of the measures necessary to reduce the spread of COVID-19, changing work patterns, etc.
- include in the plan any specific communication measures that are required for staff whose first language may not be English. In such workplaces, employers should identify leads who can act as communicators to particular groups. Such leads may also be nominated as the lead worker representative. The HSE have provided [translations](#) of their COVID-19 Resources.
- include in the plan any specific measures or response for dealing with an outbreak of COVID-19.
- Review and revise existing sick leave policies and provide details on illness benefits supports [Government COVID-19 illness](#)
- Provide Mental Health Supports [Mental health supports and services during COVID-19](#)

The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) provide a template for a [COVID-19 Response Plan](#) which gives an overview of key areas that employers must assess to ensure compliance with current protocol and to minimise the risk to workers and others.

The COVID-19 Response Plan should be regularly tested and discussed with staff, service provider and contractors.

- Plan testing and exercising allow the plan and organisational procedures to be improved and shows that the COVID-19 Response Plan is fit-for-purpose.
- The benefit of frequent revision and testing is to ensure that the college can maintain its resilience to the COVID-19 threat and keep critical functions operational.
- Exercises should be formally planned, based on a realistic scenario, and involve all relevant staff members, and progressively test all aspects of the plan.
- The exercise goal should be to identify likely sources of breakdown/failure that could impede or negate the response plan and allow revision to be made where potential points of breakdown or failure are identified.
- A report should issue afterwards, identifying the revisions required, and indicate the continuing the regular testing and adapting of the plan as a live document.

Risk Assessment

Each Irish College as an organisation must undertake its own specific risk assessment, to identify risks and implement sensible measures to protect the health and safety of all staff, students, service providers, visitors and contractors. This will enable them to consider the additional risks and control measures to put in place for a safe operational environment considering the implications of COVID-

19. These will be influenced by site-specific factors and should build on the learning to date and the practices that have already been developed. A COVID-19 specific safety risk assessment should consider and include:

- Review of existing and normal work arrangements to include fire safety and child protection.
- Area assessment -including classrooms, accommodation, welfare and activity areas, transport etc- as regards layout, space and ventilation.
- How might individuals come into contact with other people while attending the college, how frequently and for how long?
- Assessing activities where there is close proximity for either staff, students or visitors.
- How do staff and students travel to and from schools, accommodation activities and any other considerations
- Identifying which staff are in the higher risk groups.
- Considering minimum safe level of staffing: how would absenteeism affect operations?
- Putting arrangements in place for if someone becomes unwell, including designating an isolation area and facilitating the provision of first aid.
- The need for regular reviews of the risk assessment.

In addition, colleges should adapt current government policy on the safe opening of schools and the general advice and focus will be the health and well-being of the whole “Irish College” community, with due consideration to their own individual circumstances, this may include

- the overall number of pupils/students
- the individual needs of all pupils/students, including those with specific needs
- staffing levels
- residential staff and avoiding [close contact](#) settings (incl. college, accommodation) or work arrangements.
- the capacity of each residential house/hostel including arrangements for the provision of meals
- the mix of shared bedrooms/dormitories and bathrooms/toilets
- individual bedroom facilities
- shared communal facilities
- cleaning schedules, particularly for kitchens and bathrooms
- catering arrangements for students and staff
- extra-curricular activities
- travel arrangements for pupils/students both from other counties in Ireland and internationally
- visitors to the setting
- temporary leave from the setting
- contingency provision for symptomatic pupils/students or staff
- the use of school and public transport.

These preparations will assist in determining whether boarding houses/hostels/residence halls can be considered discrete ‘household’ units, definition [here](#).

In keeping the COVID-19 plan up to date the College should ensure that where work practices have been changed or modified, that staff are not inadvertently exposed to additional occupational health and safety hazards and risks.

For the welfare and safety of those working from home, current information is available here from [Citizens Information](#). The NSAI [‘Workplace Protection and Improvement Guide’](#) HSA offers guidance on how to complete a COVID-19 Risk Assessment.

[Personal Risk Assessment to determine appropriateness to participate.](#)

Staff and students should be aware of all signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and should aim to reduce risk of infection as much as possible within the community and college settings as far as reasonably practicable, there are incidences and environments with increased risk and these should be a consideration with a decision to participate in the college, these includes

- Large gatherings and high numbers within a confined space are likely to increase the risk of infection. Smaller groups will reduce the infection risk.
- Working indoors has a significantly higher risk than outdoors. Outdoor work is likely to reduce the infection risk due to the reduction in the virus’ ability to travel in that environment through aerosol spread.
- Individuals suffering from other underlying illnesses may have a higher risk of severe illness from than others, if exposed to COVID-19. A full HSE list of those who are considered to be in the high-risk categories can be found [here](#).
- Governments and health authorities around the world have instigated social distancing requirements, restrictions on public gatherings, quarantine measures and limited travel to and from other countries to slow the spread of the disease and to enable health care systems to cope with the potential increased demands associated with managing the disease. The College staff and students has a responsibility to support these efforts.

[Service Provider guidance](#)

Service providers including activity providers, accommodation and transportation should comply with Fáilte Ireland COVID-19 operational guidelines. The guidelines are regularly updated in line with Government public health advice and protocols, as and when this advice evolves.

[Failte Ireland, Covid-19 Support Hub](#).

COVID-19 Resilience and Recover 2021: The Path Ahead -

Framework

The practical operations of the Irish Summer College would only allow for the opening of the Irish College from Level 2 of the Government's [COVID-19 Resilience & Recovery 2021 The Path Ahead](#) .

Detail	Level 1	Level 2
Organised Indoor Events <i>(Controlled Environment with a named event organiser, owner, manager)</i>	Up to 100 patrons permitted in most venues. Up to 200 patrons permitted in larger venues with strict 2m seated physical distancing and one-way controls for entry/exit can be implemented. Business/Work related meetings should take place in line with the Work Safely Protocol .	Up to 50 patrons permitted in pods of max. 6 people. Up to 100 patrons permitted in larger venues with strict 2m seated physical distancing and one-way controls for entry/exit can be implemented. Business/Work related meetings should take place in line with the Work Safely Protocol .
Organised Outdoor Events <i>(Controlled Environment with a named event organiser, owner, manager)</i>	Up to 200 patrons permitted in most venues. Up to 500 patrons permitted in outdoor stadia/venues with minimum accredited capacity of 5,000 with robust protective measures in place.	Up to 100 patrons permitted in most venues. Up to 200 patrons permitted in outdoor stadia/venues with minimum accredited capacity of 5,000 with robust protective measures in place.
Attractions	Open with protective measures (max capacity to allow 2m distancing, one-way traffic within the venue). Maximum numbers linked to the capacity, taking account of Public Health Advice .	Open with protective measures (max capacity to allow 2m distancing, one-way traffic within the venue). Maximum numbers linked to the capacity, taking account of Public Health Advice .
Activities	Open with protective measures (a max capacity to allow 2m distancing, one-way traffic) Maximum numbers linked to the capacity, taking account of Public Health Advice.	Open with protective measures (a max capacity to allow 2m distancing, one-way traffic) Maximum numbers linked to the capacity, taking account of Public Health Advice.
Discos, Nightclubs, Casinos	Closed	Closed
Work	Work from home if possible. Attendance at work for specific business requirements and on a staggered attendance basis.	Work from home if possible. Attendance at work for essential on-site meetings, inductions, training.
Training	Normal Training Sessions and Games indoors and outdoors with protective measures	Outdoors – Training can take place in pods of up to 15 Indoors – Training, exercise and dance classes can take place in pods of 6 inside
Household	Up to 10 visitors from up to 3 households	Visitors from one other household only OR Own household only (to be determined by prevailing public health advice for the county or other geographical area)
Guest Houses, B&Bs Hostels	Open with protective measures (for example, staff face coverings, signage, hand sanitiser regular cleaning of hard surfaces, customer details recorded for contact tracing)	Open with protective measures (for example, staff face coverings, signage, hand sanitiser regular cleaning of hard surfaces, customer details recorded for contact tracing)

<p>Other Settings – outside private homes/garden</p>	<p>Members of different households can continue to meet socially in other settings with strict adherence to the sectoral guidance for those settings. There should be no more than 50 attendees where there is no specific guidance for the setting</p>	<p>Members of different households can continue to meet socially in other settings up to 6 people indoors, 15 outdoors from 1,2 or 3 other household. (to be determined by prevailing public health advice for the county or other defined geographical area)</p>
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Irish Colleges Accommodation and group restrictions

Accommodation arrangements must be in line with the household requirements outlined below. For example, to allow a maximum of 6 students per household, the 6 students must be from no more than 3 homes (e.g., 3 pairs of siblings).

**Operational at Level 1 Level 2 of the COVID-19 Recovery and Resilience 2021 – The Path Ahead
Level 1 – 5 Framework**

Detail	Private Homes/Gardens Bean an Tí home	Option 1 Non-household relationship <i>Based on household definition</i>	Option 2 Household relationship <i>Based on household definition</i>
Level 1	Up to 10 visitors from up to 3 different households.	3 students from 3 separate households' homes	Max 10 students from 3 different households (siblings)
Level 2	<p>Visitors from one other household only.</p> <p>Or Up to 6 visitors from 2 other households</p> <p>Or 3 households</p> <p>To be determined by prevailing public health advice for the county or defined geographical area.</p>	<p>1 student</p> <p>2 students (from 2 separate households' homes)</p> <p>3 students (3 separate households' homes)</p> <p>To be determined by prevailing public health advice for the county or defined geographical area.</p>	<p>Household relationship sibling's dependant on number of bedrooms.</p> <p>Up to 6 students' siblings from 2 separate households' homes.</p> <p>Up to 6 students' siblings from 3 separate households' homes.</p> <p>To be determined by prevailing public health advice for the county or defined geographical area.</p>

The Symptoms of COVID-19 and How it spreads

Infection from COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. It can take up to 14 days for symptoms to show. They can be similar to symptoms of cold and flu.

Common symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- [a fever \(high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above\)](#)
- [a new cough](#) - this can be any kind of cough, not just dry
- [shortness of breath](#) or breathing difficulties
- [loss or change to your sense of smell or taste](#) – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

If you have any common symptoms of COVID-19 (coronavirus), self-isolate (stay in your room) and phone a doctor straight away to see if you need a COVID-19 test. Other people in your household will need to restrict their movements (stay at home). An early diagnosis from your GP means you can get the help you need and avoid spreading the virus, if you have it.

Infected people can transmit the virus both when they are symptomatic (showing symptoms) and asymptomatic (showing no symptoms). This is why it is essential that anyone who is showing symptoms suggestive of COVID-19, or anyone who has been in close contact with a confirmed case, should be tested.

How COVID-19 Spreads

The most common way you can get COVID-19 (coronavirus) is by coming into close contact with someone who has the virus. You can spread the virus even if you do not have symptoms.

Close Contact

COVID-19 is mainly spread through close contact and droplets that come from your nose and mouth. For example, from someone who is talking loudly, shouting, coughing or sneezing. This happens most when people are less than 2 metres from each other. It is why keeping a 2-metre distance from other people is so effective in reducing the spread of the virus.

Surface Contact

You can also get the virus from surfaces. For example, when someone who has the virus sneezes or coughs, droplets with the virus can fall onto surfaces around them. If you touch that surface and then touch your eyes, nose or mouth, you could become infected too.

COVID-19 (coronavirus) can survive:

- up to 72 hours on plastic and stainless steel
- less than 4 hours on copper
- less than 24 hours on cardboard

Airborne Transmission

Airborne transmission is the spread of a virus in very tiny respiratory particles. This can happen over a longer distance and persist for a longer time than droplets, such as within a room. To minimise this risk, keep indoor spaces well ventilated (aired out) by opening windows and doors if possible.

Key principles of Infection Prevention Controls

The [Work Safely Protocol](#) lists Infection Prevention and Control measures that should be implemented in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the **college or all other settings** giving consideration to a college day and the student journey from the home to their return home after the college course in complete and everything in between.

These IPC measures are addressed in the document:

1. Hand hygiene
2. Respiratory hygiene
3. Physical distancing
4. Pre-return to work measures
5. Dealing with a suspect case of COVID-19 within the workplace
6. At-risk workers
7. Working from home
8. Business travel
9. Contractors and visitors
10. Cleaning
11. Use of PPE
12. People facing roles

Personal Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Correct hand hygiene practices are vital to help minimise the spread of infections including COVID-19. Colleges need to ensure that adequate sanitary facilities are provided and that staff and students thoroughly and frequently wash their hands. This involves hand washing with soap and water, for a minimum of 20 seconds, or the use of hand sanitiser (if hands are visibly clean), as required and frequently. Soap and hand sanitiser dispensers, disposable tissue dispensers, and other similar devices must be regularly checked. Defective units must be rapidly repaired or replaced and, where possible, be operated touchless.

Hands must be washed as often as necessary and always:

- after blowing nose, sneezing or coughing
- before starting work / task /activity
- before and after eating
- before and after handling or preparing food
- before and after removing their face covering
- after handling waste
- after cleaning duties
- after using the toilet
- before and after smoking or vaping
- after handling money
- if in contact with someone who is displaying covid-19 symptoms
- when hands are dirty
- before and after being on public transport

This list is not exhaustive.

Individuals should avoid touching their eyes, mouth or nose and should not share objects that touch their mouth e.g., bottles or cups or share other items such as pens. For additional COVID-19 hand hygiene measures, hands must be washed before putting on or after removing PPE. Please see [HERE](#) for more information from the HSE.

Hand Sanitisers

Units should be installed to dispense hand sanitiser as required throughout the college (and associated activities), paying particular attention to public/student areas, staff areas and locker rooms etc. Please ensure that these are readily available and accessible to all, at each access point. Hand sanitisers for use against COVID-19 must contain a minimum of 60% alcohol. Non-alcohol-based hand sanitiser may also be used. However, in choosing a hand sanitiser, it is important to ensure that it is effective against Coronavirus. Hand sanitising gels are biocides and fall under the Biocidal Products Regulation (BPR) – Regulation (EU) 528/2012. Only biocidal products listed on the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) biocide product register are legal to market and use in Ireland. For further information see [DAFM](#) website.

Respiratory Hygiene

Staff and students should adopt good respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette. When sneezing or coughing, the mouth and nose should be covered with a tissue or sleeve. Used tissues should be put in a waste bin and hands should be washed. Colleges should provide tissues, sufficient waste bins and ensure bins are emptied regularly.

Face Masks

Wearing a face covering/mask helps to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It is strongly recommended to wear a face covering/mask indoors and in outdoor settings where physical distancing is difficult. A face covering should cover your nose and mouth, go under your chin, fit snugly against the side of the face with no visible gaps and be secured with ties or ear loops. For more information on the safe use, storage and disposal of face coverings/masks, click [here](#). Face coverings are always in addition to, and never a substitute for, other Public Health measures including physical distancing, hand hygiene and practising appropriate respiratory etiquette.

Following the HPSC Evidence Summary on the “Efficacy of visors compared with masks in the prevention of transmission of COVID-19 in non-healthcare settings”, those involved in the provision of Irish Colleges should consider the following recommendations:

- In public settings, expert opinion and international guidance generally favours cloth face coverings over visors or shields.
- There is a rationale and laboratory evidence favouring cloth face coverings over visors where the wearer is at a higher level (standing) than those potentially exposed at a lower level (sitting). This is extremely important for classroom activities and food service.
- Visors reduce exposure to a certain extent when compared to no face covering and may be considered an alternative in certain circumstances where an individual is unable to wear a face covering/mask. Click [here](#) for more information.
- If visors are used, they should cover the entire face (above the eyes to below the chin and wrap around from ear to ear) and be correctly applied.
- Further information on the use of face coverings can be found [here](#).

Under current legislation a face covering must be worn:

- on public transport
- in shops, shopping centres and [some other indoor settings](#)

There are cases where people may be unable to wear a face covering and this is deemed as a reasonable excuse. For details on what constitutes a reasonable excuse see [here](#). Organisations must ensure that they are familiar with the various reasons why an employee, contractor or student may not be required to wear a face covering/mask, further details can be found [here](#). Face coverings are not recommended for children under the age of 13, but some children may choose to wear one.

Ensure that all those involved in working at or attending Colleges are clearly informed of your own policy and government regulations regarding face coverings/masks in advance of arrival. Employers and employees must keep up to date with the latest Public Health advice issued regarding face coverings/masks.

Physical Distancing

Physical distancing guidelines in line with the Government's Public Health advice must be incorporated into the Action Plan for every activity and setting within each college. Specific areas must also comply with mandatory capacity limits. Physical distancing can be maintained by:

- keeping a space of 2 metres between you and other people
- where practicable avoiding or limiting communal sleeping areas. The room occupancy figure will be informed by the providers response plan.
- avoiding any crowded places
- not shaking hands, hugs or making close contact with other people, if possible
- where practicable adopt PD arrangements of at least 2 metres* between groups of students who are not in their pod.

Fixed Teams and Pods

Where possible, organise staff and students into teams or pods who are accommodated and consistently work together. The teams should be as small as is reasonably practicable in the context of the activity to be done and there should be no cross-over between teams. This is to allow for easier isolation should a person contracts COVID-19. In the event of an infection of a staff or student within a pod, this will decrease the potential for infection spread to other pods and teams. Breaks should be organised in such a way as to facilitate maintenance of physical distancing, for example, placing tables and chairs far enough apart in canteens, reorganising and staggering breaks.

Cleaning & Frequency

Cleaning and disinfection must be carried out with increased frequency, at least twice a day, but more frequently depending on the use of the area at a given time and whenever facilities are visibly dirty. Responsibility for cleaning should be an assigned role and a need for record keeping.

Routine Cleaning

- Cleaning which consists of the standard combination of detergent, water and manual scrubbing used for the general or routine cleaning of equipment and surfaces, is sufficient. Such cleaning is necessary before disinfection because if surfaces are not cleaned appropriately, the remaining dirt/contamination renders the disinfectant ineffective.
- Frequently touched surfaces must be cleaned regularly in line with current HSE and Government guidance. Ensure that door handles, doorknobs and door bars, chairs and armrests, tabletops, light switches, handrails, water taps, elevator buttons, etc. are visibly clean at all times and cleaned at least twice daily. Implement modified cleaning intervals for rooms and work areas. This applies especially for washroom facilities and communal spaces.
- If individuals work together on the same task or have to use the same equipment it is essential that it is cleaned appropriately between users and after the task has been completed. Different sets of cleaning equipment should be used when cleaning different spaces; for example, areas used by students and employee-only spaces.

Cleaning, followed by disinfection, is required for specific areas which have been contacted or touched by a suspected or confined case of COVID-19.

Please see the [ECDC](#) for more information.

Disinfection – the Second Stage of the Process

Disinfection is required:

- When infection is suspected/confirmed.
- If there has been spillage of potentially infectious matter.
- Where organic matter or body fluids are present.

When disinfecting, always follow these guidelines:

- All products must be used in line with manufacturers' instructions. Pay special attention to the concentration required, contact time, safe storage, shelf life of diluted product and expiry dates. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) recommendations and product data sheets must also be adhered to.
- Cleaning and disinfection of toilets, bathroom sinks and sanitary facilities used by multiple people must be carefully performed. A disinfectant effective against viruses should be used and its manufacturer's instructions must be followed.
- Equipment used for cleaning must be properly cleaned and disinfected at the end of every cleaning process. Where appropriate, PPE must be used. A risk assessment must be performed to determine the PPE required.
- Hand hygiene should always be performed before and after putting on and removing all PPE items (e.g., aprons, gloves or mask). Further detail can be found [here](#).
- Waste material produced during the cleaning process should be placed in the appropriate waste bins which must be pedal operated and lidded.

Cleaning Products & Protocols

Cleaning products and protocols need to be suitable and manufacturer approved for use against viruses, bacteria and similar risks. It's important to follow manufacturer instructions with regard to dilution, application and duration of use. Management must review cleaning procedures within all departments and update these if any cleaning products are changed. It's also important to work with suppliers, vendors and distribution partners to ensure an uninterrupted supply of cleaning supplies.

Public Spaces & Communal Areas

Cleaning and disinfecting must take place in all public spaces regularly during the day and more frequently during busy periods. Particular attention must be paid to frequently touched surfaces such as desks, chairs, counters, door handles, vending machines, stair handrails and seating areas.

Staff Areas

Staff areas must also be cleaned and disinfected at least twice per day and whenever facilities are visibly dirty. Particular attention must be paid to employee areas including staff rooms, canteen, staff entrances, staff bathrooms, offices and kitchens.

Equipment Shared by Staff and Students

Appropriately clean and disinfect shared equipment and tools before and after use or any time the equipment is transferred to another employee. This includes items such as phones, computers and other communication devices, payment terminals, kitchen implements, tools, safety buttons, cleaning equipment and all other direct contact items used. Shared food and beverage equipment in staff rooms, canteens (e.g., kettle, microwave, etc.) needs to be cleaned and disinfected after each use.

Students should be encouraged to be responsible for cleaning equipment they use before and after use using suitable cleaning products or wipes provided by the college.

Health Screening

Temperature Checks

Daily contactless temperature checks on staff and students may be implemented in line with Public Health advice. A daily temperature check is not mandatory but may act as a helpful check-in point & log in point and provide an opportunity to review COVID-19 protocols and symptom list.

Testing

Testing for COVID-19 for those displaying signs and symptoms can be arranged through a GP (free of charge) who will assess the patient and decide whether a test needs to be carried out. Further information on getting tested for COVID-19 is available on [hse.ie/coronavirus](https://www.hse.ie/coronavirus)

Public Health contact tracing teams will determine who else in the college may need to be tested as part of the contact tracing process. The college's contact logs may be used to facilitate this.

Pre attendance health checks

A Student health form and pre attendance should be submitted in advance of arrival. This may include information outlined with the HSPC [Return to Education](#) and be supplemented with school specific information or requirements. See the HSA [Pre-return work](#) forms for Staff, Service Provider Health Check including houses/transport and other activities

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

As part of the COVID-19 risk assessment, consideration needs to be given to the level of PPE required for various tasks. In the context of COVID-19 risk, colleges should check the [HPSC website](#) regularly for updates regarding use of recommended PPE.

- All Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures and hygiene compliance should be applied and maintained in all circumstances.
- PPE must be selected based on the hazard and risk to the worker.
- Employers must provide PPE and protective clothing to staff in accordance with identified COVID-19 exposure risks and in line with public health advice.
- Staff should be trained in the proper use, cleaning, storing and disposal of PPE.
- Gloves are generally not required for IPC purposes. Where gloves are necessary, they must not be considered a substitute for hand hygiene and hands must be cleaned whenever gloves are removed. Gloves should not create an additional occupational hazard (such as gloves getting caught in rotating parts). Limitations on wearing time and staff' individual susceptibilities (allergies, etc.) must also be considered.
- PPE needs to be consistently and properly worn when required. In addition, it must be regularly inspected, cleaned, maintained and replaced as necessary. Hands should be sanitised before donning and after doffing PPE
- Further [information on PPE](#) is also available from the HSA.

Communication

Signage

The use of signage is an essential tool (in a language understood by all) to inform and remind all staff, students and visitors to adhere to the new working guidelines. Signage should be assessed or all college venues and associated facilities and placed in prominent and relevant positions, reinforcing key messaging around:

- Social distancing
- Face coverings
- Area and room capacities
- Good hand hygiene
- Respiratory etiquette

- Entry requirements/admission policy
- Symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if symptoms are experienced while on the premises
- Directional signage including one-way systems and entry and exit points.

Floor/lane markings can be used to advise of pedestrian flow routes. Social distancing floor markers should be put in place where queuing is likely to occur.

Signage Resources:

[HSE Resources](#)

[Failte Ireland – COVID-19 Support Hub](#)

Advance communication with Guardian and Students

To prevent introduction and spread of COVID-19 in Irish Colleges parents should be asked to monitor their child in the week prior to the course starting for signs of infection and to keep them home if they are presenting with symptoms.

- Parents are asked to inform the school immediately if their child has been at risk of infection outside the college.
- The college will have a response team who will have a set of protocols, including isolation spaces if a child presents with symptoms whilst at the college or becomes ill during their stay.
- Students will have a symptom check each morning and evening; this may include infra-red temperature check at the beginning of each day.

As well as the regular information parents would receive from colleges the following information should also be provided:

- Physical distancing measures including class groupings/pods
- Hand and respiratory hygiene
- Symptoms of COVID-19 and how it spreads
- Requirements for face coverings – when and where they should be worn
- Stay at home policy for any children with symptoms
- COVID-19 health declaration form to be completed 3 days prior to the start of the course
- Cancellation or refund policy
- Contact tracing system
- Visitation policy
- Any other changes which are now in place

Parents should ensure all students are familiar with the health and safety risks posed by the Covid-19 virus both generally and to them as individuals and be up to date with and adhere to public health advice and the College Response Plan.

Responsibilities of Colleges as Employers and course operators

Responsibly across organisations and service providers in the running of the College with regards to the duty of care for all staff, students, Bean an Tí, hostels, contractors and visitors for the duration of the Irish college stay must be agreed in advance.

The safety plan and response plan must incorporate all elements of the Irish college stay to include accommodation, college and learning environment and any other activity including sports, outings, and entertainment. The College must ensure the COVID-19 response plan, risk assessments and IPC measures are in place, checked, recorded and reviewed regularly for all aspects of college operations.

The Colleges responsibility as an employer

The College as an employer and organiser should provide up-to-date information and guidance to staff. The type of information should include:

- Training and induction
- the signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- how COVID-19 spreads
- advice about hand and respiratory hygiene and physical distancing
- the importance of not going to work if displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or feeling unwell
- use of face coverings/masks, Personal Protection Equipment (PPE)
- cleaning routines and waste disposal.

Procedures and steps to be taken in the event of a suspected or positive case or outbreak while attending or working at the college and the role of public health authorities in managing an outbreak should also be made clear. The college will need to provide COVID-19 induction training for all staff and students before opening. In addition, given the fact that COVID-19 is equally an issue in the wider community, general advice in relation to measures the staff and students should follow. A key role in each workplace is that of the Lead Worker Representative (LWR). Each college will appoint at least one LWR charged with ensuring that COVID-19 measures are strictly adhered to. Further details on this role are provided in the section below.

The College can also use a competent person responsible for managing health and safety (internally or externally) as required to ensure the effective implementation of changes to work activities and the implementation of IPC measures at the place of work.

The college will also communicate with safety representatives selected or appointed under Occupational Health and Safety legislation and consult with staff on safety measures to be implemented in the workplace.

For further information on the role of Safety Representative, [visit the HSA website.](#)

Lead Worker Representative

Each College as a workplace will be required to appoint at least one Lead Worker Representative (LWR). Their role is to work together with the College to assist in the implementation of and monitor adherence to the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures in this guidance document to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their workplace. The number of representatives appointed will ideally be proportionate to the number of staff. The LWR, together with the COVID-19 response management team, should support the implementation of the IPC measures identified in this Protocol. The identity of the person or persons appointed should be clearly communicated to staff. They should also receive the relevant and necessary training from their employer. Further

information and a short online course on the role of [Lead Worker Representative](#) can be found on the HSA website.

Staffing Resources

Colleges must review schedules and timetables in line with The Work Safely Protocol, which provides that full consultation on these matters is required to ensure sufficient staff are available to maintain physical distancing while completing the tasks to the required standards. Further information can be found [here](#). To achieve this, you should:

- Implement phased shifts.
- Schedule small teams – see [fixed teams and pods](#)
- Keep the same team combinations where possible to limit employee/student interaction. This will assist should contact tracing be required.

You will also need to plan for the impact of staff absences; this may involve reallocating staff from nonessential tasks. Where appropriate, cross-training staff will help maintain staffing levels in the college. Staff who have not had close contact with a confirmed case should continue taking the usual precautions and attend work as usual. Further information on [close contacts, casual contacts](#) and [testing](#) is available from the HSE website.

Training

Colleges must inform all staff of the measures being adopted to manage the threat of COVID-19. Use the most appropriate training channels to do this and ensure all staff remain at home/their accommodation and seek medical attention if they have key symptoms such as a high temperature, coughing or shortness of breath. **There is an obligation on Colleges to ensure that staff and students are aware that they must not attend College if they have symptoms.** This is essential to ensure that the virus does not spread. You must organise information briefings that cover all the basic protective measures against COVID-19 and the signs and symptoms of the disease. In particular, training should cover:

- signs and symptoms of covid-19
- how covid-19 is spread
- hand and respiratory hygiene
- physical distancing measures
- correct use of PPE
- cleaning regimes
- staff and student health and what to do if feeling unwell
- unwell students /dealing with suspected cases/liaising with authorities, contacting next of kin
- if training is needed for specific procedures or if a particular activity has specific requirements, it must be included in the training programme.
- first aid responders will require further training in light of COVID-19.
- any sector specific advice that is relevant

When they return to work, staff must be trained on what to do if they or a student becomes unwell, in line with the Work Safely Protocol. If management is alerted to a suspected case of COVID-19 on with the college/houses/hostel or other activity areas, the individual should contact their own GP / Covid HSE Contact service for further advice and to arrange a test if required. Further information is available on the [HSE website](#).

Mental Health and Welfare of Staff and Students

Colleges should put in place support for staff and students who may be suffering from anxiety or stress. Staff who are returning to work for or provide a service for the College after a period of

isolation or working from home are also likely to have concerns about the risk of infection, while for many students this may be their first time away from home this coupled with the health protection measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 may create anxiety or concerns. Young people will not all respond to this change in the same way, each young person will have their own unique coping mechanisms. [Mental health supports and services during COVID-19](#)

The Department of Education offers guidance for managing stress and anxiety which can be found [here](#). The HSE also provides guidance which can be found [here](#).

The HSA has a range of supports, resources and advice such as:

- [dealing with stress](#) as a result of the changes in a staff's personal and/or working life during COVID-19.
- a free online risk assessment tool for addressing work related stress: [WorkPositive](#).

The Government's [In This Together Campaign](#) also provides information on minding one's mental health as well as tips on staying active and connected and may be useful for use by employers and staff.

Contact Tracing

The Contact Tracing system is run by the HSE and is the process of identifying persons who may have come into contact with a person infected with COVID-19 and the subsequent collection of further information about these contacts. The 'Work Safely Protocol' advises that all organisations appoint a case manager/designated contact person(s) for dealing with a suspect case and to keep a contact log to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 case. Contact tracing is a critical element of infection control in school settings to rapidly identify secondary cases in order to avoid outbreaks and the interruption of school activities. A daily log of contacts should be recorded for all staff, students and visitors (including contractors) to facilitate contact tracing. Details must be retained for 28 days and stored securely in line with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and should be readily available upon request from the HSE to assist with contact tracing. Further information on contact tracing can be found [here](#).

The HSE will contact all relevant persons where a diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The HSE will inform any staff/students/parents/visitors who have come into close contact with a diagnosed case via the contact tracing process. The instructions of the HSE should be followed and staff and student confidentiality is essential at all times. The ECDC provides advice for contract tracing within a school setting which can be found [here](#).

Encourage all staff and students to download the HSE [Covid Tracker App](#).

Outbreak Response.

An outbreak of COVID-19 is when two or more cases of the disease are linked by time, place or person. The management of an outbreak is managed by the local Departments of Public Health to enable the outbreak to be brought under control as quickly as possible. It also requires close engagement and cooperation between the College, the LWR, the staff, accommodation providers, students and in particular with the persons affected. Outbreaks in a single place, which are not managed and brought under control quickly, can rapidly spread within the college and/or the wider community. Continuous and effective communication between all parties is essential.

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) defines an outbreak as:

- 'A cluster/outbreak, with two or more cases of laboratory confirmed COVID-19 infection regardless of symptom status. This includes cases with symptoms and cases who are

asymptomatic.'

OR

- 'A cluster/outbreak, with one laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19, and at least one additional case of illness with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 infection (as per the COVID-19 case definition)'

Visiting arrangements

To reduce physical contact, consideration should be given whereby parents not visit student whilst they are on their course. The college should consider facilitating weekly Zoom sessions between students and parents to allow online face to face contact. If parents need to contact the college itself phone calls or email will be the preferred mode of communication. There should be no visitors to the college unless by prior arrangement in specific circumstances.

COVID-19 Travel Advice

It is essential that all those working at and attending Irish Colleges should abide by international travel restrictions as per current Governmental guidance [Travelling to Ireland from abroad](#) and should have completed any quarantine periods before travelling to the college.

Vulnerable groups

Infection with the virus that causes COVID-19 can cause illness, ranging from mild to severe, and, in some cases, can be fatal. For some people, the risks are higher. There are [two levels of higher risk](#) – very high risk (extremely vulnerable) and high risk.

There is different public health advice for each of these groups and employers should follow and adopt this advice. If you are at very high risk (extremely vulnerable) from COVID-19 you may be advised to cocoon.

If a member of staff is in the very high risk or high-risk categories and cannot work from home and must be in the workplace, employers must make sure that they are supported to maintain a physical distance of 2 metres from others at the workplace. However, employers should enable such staff to work from home where possible.

If students are in the very high-risk or high-risk categories this information should be included on the self-declaration health form and this will then allow staff to discuss any specific requirements of the student with parents/guardians and risk assess accordingly.

Individuals with disabilities

Any changes to entry, exits or movement around buildings or other protocols should take into account how they may affect individuals with disabilities. Wheelchair access should be maintained and other measures such as suitable height for hand sanitisers should be considered.

Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

The proven importance of ensuring adequate air circulation should be factored into operational practices. Ventilation refers to the movement of outdoor air into a building, and the circulation of that air within the building or room. This can be achieved through natural means (e.g., opening a window) or mechanical means (e.g., a central heating, ventilation and air conditioning).

- Natural ventilation through the introduction of fresh air e.g., opening doors and windows. Cross-ventilation is a good option for window ventilation as it facilitates the quick exchange of room air for fresh air through widely opened windows opposite to each other where possible. Propping open internal doors may increase air movement and ventilation rate. (Note: fire doors should not be propped open unless fitted with approved automatic closers so that they function as fire doors in the event of an alarm or fire).
- Mechanical ventilation through the use of HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) systems. These provide comfortable environmental conditions (temperature and humidity) and clean air in indoor settings such as buildings and vehicles. Switching off air conditioning is not required to manage the risk of COVID19. However, as many air conditioning units just heat, cool and recirculate the air, it is important to check ventilation systems to ensure that there is an adequate supply of fresh air (from a clean source) and that recirculation of untreated air is avoided. Where workplaces have Local Exhaust Ventilation, the make-up air should ideally come from outdoor air rather than from adjacent rooms.

Further information on ventilation is available at:

- [HPSC](#)
- [WHO](#)
- [ECDC](#)
- [Safety, Health and Welfare at Work \(General Application\) Regulations 2007, S.I. No. 299 of 2007](#)
- [Federal Environment Agency, Indoor Air Hygiene Commission \(IRK\)](#)
- [CIBSE Ventilation Guidance](#)

Legionella

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some buildings may have been closed, or their use restricted. This can increase the risk of Legionella growth in the water systems and associated equipment including evaporative air conditioning systems, water fountains, showers, taps, toilets, humidifiers in food cabinets and other equipment if the water systems have not been managed adequately. Before reopening, control measures will need to be in place to avoid the potential for Legionnaires' disease. Further advice on the prevention of [Legionnaires' disease is available from HSA](#).

COVID-19 Response Plan

If a person presents with symptoms

The key message is that staff should not attend college activities and students should not attend the college, if they are displaying **any** signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or are feeling unwell and follow the accommodation providers response plan. If a person displays any symptoms of COVID-19, the following outlines the steps colleges should put in place to deal with a suspected case that may arise during the College courses:

- There must be a defined response structure that identifies the team(s) responsible for responding to a suspected case in the COVID-19 response plan.
- Appoint a case manager/designated contact person(s) for dealing with suspected cases.
- Identify a designated isolation area in advance (see below). The designated area and the route to the designated area should be easily accessible and as far as is reasonable and practicable should be accessible by people with disabilities.
- Take into account the possibility of one or more persons displaying the signs of COVID-19 and have additional isolation areas available or another contingency plan for dealing with same.
- It may be necessary to isolate them for longer periods of time until appropriate transport can be arranged. Consideration should be given to welfare facilities needed.

If an individual displays symptom of COVID-19 at the college, the case manager/designated contact person and the response team must:

- Isolate the individual and have a procedure in place to accompany the individual to the designated isolation area via the isolation route, keeping at least 2 metres away from the symptomatic person and also making sure that others maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from the symptomatic person at all times.
- Provide a mask for the person presenting with symptoms. They should wear the mask at all times until they have exited the premises also the person attending should don a surgical mask, on entering the isolation room
- Assess whether the unwell individual can immediately be directed to go to their accommodation to call the Local GP of HSE Helpline and continue treatment and self-isolation at their accommodation.
- If the patient is a student, their parent/guardian should be contacted to inform them of the situation and to arrange for the child to be collected or to receive medical treatment if appropriate.
- Facilitate the person presenting with symptoms to be able to remain in isolation if they cannot immediately go to their accommodation and facilitate them calling the GP. The individual should avoid touching people, surfaces and objects. Advice should be given to the person presenting with symptoms to cover their mouth and nose with the disposable tissue provided when they cough or sneeze and to put the tissue in the waste bag provided.
- Arrange transport to their accommodation or to hospital for medical assessment if required. Public transport of any kind should not be used.
- Carry out an assessment of the incident, which will form part of determining follow-up actions and recovery.
- Arrange for appropriate cleaning of the isolation area and other areas involved (refer to section on Cleaning).
- Provide advice and assistance if contacted by the Department of Public Health or HSE in relation to contact tracing.

Isolation Area/Room

Identify an area/room on the premises where any student or staff showing possible COVID-19 symptoms can be isolated from other people. Where colleges are based over multiple buildings, locations and accommodation settings a suitable isolation room should be identified in each building/location. The designated area must have the ability to isolate the person behind a closed door. Where a closed-door area is not possible, an area away from other individuals should be provided.

Provide as is reasonably practicable:

- Ventilation, i.e., via a window.
- Tissues, hand sanitiser, disinfectant and/or wipes.
- PPE, gloves, masks.
- Waste bags/bins.

From there, the individual can travel to their accommodation to seek medical attention elsewhere. It is essential to clean and disinfect this isolation area thoroughly after it has been used.

Cleaning following suspected case

The isolation area must be kept closed after use by an individual suspected of having COVID-19. No one must enter the room until it has been well ventilated (i.e., by leaving the window open) for at least 1 hour. Only then can the disinfection process commence (see section on Cleaning)

Contact Log

Should a case of COVID-19 be confirmed, the college should be ready to assist the HSE contact tracing team or local Department of Public Health in providing details of all potential close contacts of the confirmed case within the college. See [Contact tracing](#).

First Aid Kit

A first aid kit must always be available at each location that the college operates from and in all locations where students will be including accommodation providers. Multiple kits must be located at various locations around larger premises.

In regards to COVID-19, first aid kits must include:

- Germicidal disinfectant/wipes for surface cleaning tissues.
- Face/eye masks. (Disposable face masks can only be used once)
- Gloves (disposable).
- Protective apron (disposable).
- Biohazard disposable waste bag

Waste disposal

In relation to disposal of waste from an individual who becomes symptomatic, this waste should be disposed of in a disposable refuse bag. When the waste bag is three quarters full, it should be tied securely and placed into a second refuse bag and tied again. The bag should then be left in a safe location for three days (72 hours) before putting out for collection.

Communication

Central communications system to alert the college of a possible case to alert, and to plan what to do if. Agree a platform of daily check ins and alert notification of issues to a central point.

Student accommodation

Operational at Level 1 Level 2 of the Recovery and Resilience- Plan for living with COVID-19 Accommodation checklist	
Nominated Household Person of Responsibility (Bean an Tí, hostel role)	
Covid-19 Response Plan developed and communicated to all align with the college and after school activities	
Conduct a specific COVID-19 risk assessment including fire risk assessment	
Revised emergency procedures	
A plan for responding to suspect case/outbreak of COVID-19	
A system in place for recording contact details to assist HSE with contact tracing (in line with GDPR)	
Consideration for Vulnerable and High-risk groups (students, staff and resident households)	
Implement your COVID-19 safe operating procedures and Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures as identified in your risk assessment and HSA checklists	
Identify Isolation room(s)	
Provide appropriate training and induction for households and students	
Calculated the safe occupancy of the operations and function of the Household factoring in Physical Distancing	
Accommodation considerations (capacity of bedrooms, dining area, toilet, shower communal space and other activities).	
Fixed teams/Pods arrangements in line with Level 1 and Level 2	
Daily Health screening protocol	
Rigorous regular cleaning procedures (records kept)	
Fáilte Ireland Safety Charter compliant (Guidelines for re-opening)	

Guidance for Accommodation

All student and staffing accommodation facilities must plan and prepare to minimise the spread of COVID-19. All accommodation providers must refer to the COVID-19 guidance on accommodation facilities issued by Fáilte Ireland can be found on the

- [Fáilte Ireland Supports Hub.](#)
- [Guidelines for re-opening Hotels and Guest Houses](#)
- [Guidelines for re-opening B&Bs and historic houses](#)
- [Guidelines for re-opening Hostels](#)

Response Plan

A response plan must be in place in all accommodation locations. A suitable isolation area/room should be identified, and students and staff should be aware of the procedures to follow – see [COVID-19 Response Plan Section](#).

Risk assessment for Accommodation

All accommodation providers must refer to specific guidance as noted above to consider and include the following elements:

- Review of existing and normal work arrangements.
- Area assessment as regards layout, space and ventilation.
 - a. Bedrooms
 - b. Dining
 - c. Activity areas,
- How might individuals come into contact with others

- Are household members in the higher risk groups?
- Considering minimum safe level of staffing: how would a household person developing symptoms affect operations?
- Putting arrangements in place for if someone becomes unwell, including designating an isolation area and facilitating the provision of first aid.
- The need for regular reviews of the risk assessment.

Physical/Social Distance in Accommodation settings

Plan for Physical/Social (PD) distancing measures within the household/hostel, to facilitate PD in bedrooms and for meals. In order to increase separation, consider the following measures, in line with the risk assessment:

Increasing separation:

- Reconfigure living spaces (bedroom, dining areas, common rooms etc.) to maximise physical distancing
- Utilising and reconfiguring all available space in order to maximise physical distancing
- Review schedules including mealtimes, extra-curricular, bedtime and free time

Decreasing interaction:

The extent to which decreasing interaction is possible in house will depend on the house/hostel and the other household/staff members and a common-sense approach is required recognising the limits to which this can be achieved between students. The following measures may be considered to decrease interaction among students:

- Reconfiguring class groups in the day school to ensure that students remain within the same pods/household units as their class group where possible.
- Hand washing and/or sanitising
- Where movement of households/pods between rooms/different areas in the school is required, it should be planned to minimise interaction with other class groups.
- Limit interaction on arrival and departure and in hallways and other shared areas.
- Social physical contact (hand to hand greetings, hugs) should be discouraged.
- Staff and students should avoid sharing of personal items.
- Where residential activities involve use of shared equipment, the contact surface of such equipment should be cleaned regularly and hand hygiene encouraged.
- Aim of any arrangements is to avoid congregation of people particularly where physical distancing requirements may not be respected.
- Where possible, consideration may be given to using a range of access points to reduce congestion.
- When finished for the day, students should head straight to their designated living space/area.

Bedrooms

Students will be asked to take personal responsibility abide by all IPC measures and to keep their bedroom and social spaces clear to facilitate cleaning.

Toilet and Showers

When cleaning bathrooms, particular emphasis must be placed on frequently contacted surfaces such as:

- Doors, door handles and doorplates
- Taps, plugs and sink
- Toilets and toilet handle
- Grabrails

- Tiles and flooring
- Shower cubicles and bath
- Bathroom vanities and accessories
- Bathroom fixtures and hardware.
- Where provided, soap and shampoo dispensers must be cleaned and disinfected thoroughly.

Hostel Accommodation

The hostel owner or management needs to meet Public Health advice on all IPC measures and including maintaining physical distancing (PD) of 2 metres between people.

Guests staying at hostels can be described as either

- Organised Groups Only – Individuals who are part of a household, can share a communal sleeping area, otherwise individuals within a group should keep the recommended 2 metre PD from each other.
- Individual guests – These guests have travelled to the hostel as individuals and must keep the recommended 2 metres PD from other guests while staying at the hostel.

Further detail in Fáilte Ireland [Guidelines for re-opening Hostels](#)

Fáilte Ireland Safety Charter

Fáilte Ireland has issued sector specific guidelines for hospitality businesses to provide guidance in how best to meet the Government's public health advice; by signing up to this Charter, the employer and employees agree to follow the recommended guidelines for the sector.

To be eligible to sign up to the COVID-19 Safety Charter, accommodation providers must agree to adhere to the official guidelines for re-opening relevant to your sector and to ensure that all employees take the official Infection Prevention Control for Tourism Businesses Course. Tourism and hospitality sectors eligible for the COVID-19 Safety Charter include sectors that received a set of Guidelines for Re-opening.

Details here [Fáilte Ireland website](#).

School arrangements and considerations

All colleges/schools should prepare COVID-19 protocols/procedures and a COVID-19 response plan and communicate the IPC measures to all relevant parties, staff, students, contractors etc.

Considering the following: (this is not an exhaustive list)

Entrances/ exits

- Access control (for contact tracing purpose)
- Stagger start times to the day so students are not all arriving at the same time.
- Hand sanitiser units should be prominently located at all entrances and around the school buildings.
- Signage should be located at entrances advising entry policy and that no unauthorised visitors are permitted.
- Entry policy should include:
 - To wear a face covering
 - Application of hand sanitiser
 - Temperature taking

Corridors/communal areas

- Excess furniture should be removed to allow more space for social distancing.
- A one-way student traffic management system should be in place.
- COVID-19 awareness and safety signage should be in place throughout the college on floors, walls and doors including social distancing floor markers especially where queuing is likely to occur.

Classroom

- Classrooms should be reconfigured to maximise physical distancing.
- All available space should utilise and reconfigure all available space in order to maximise physical distancing.
- Review timetables.
- Reconfigure classes.
- If more space required consider the possibility of accessing available spaces within the local community.

Student Toilet Facilities

Clear signage should indicate the location of and route to the facilities.

- A strict queuing system and limitations on number of users must be enforced to ensure physical distancing.
- Install clear markings to minimise contact between students and to ensure that queues follow physical distancing requirements. Encourage the use of alternate sinks.
- The frequency of cleaning and disinfection must be increased in toilet facilities.
- Ensure splashes are avoided while cleaning these facilities.
- Ensure soap and hand sanitiser dispensers, disposable tissue dispensers and other similar devices are regularly checked, cleaned and maintained. Repair or replace defective soap units.

Food and Meals

- Ensure physical distancing is applied in canteen facilities and a queue management system is in place.
- Stagger canteen use and extend serving times where possible to align with class groupings/pods.
- Students will be assigned a seat in the canteen for the duration of the course.
- Ensure students clean their hands before and after entering the canteen area.
- Cleaning should take place in between class grouping meal times.

Assembly

- May not workable in most situations, consider to advise against

Visiting Teachers

Where an individual is operating on a peripatetic (a person who travels from place to place, especially a teacher who works in more than one school or college) basis, and operating across multiple groups or individuals, they should be:

- Maintaining strict distancing requirement with each group
- Avoiding situations where distancing requirement is broken, for example demonstrating partnering work within an activity
- Making efforts to reduce the number of groups interacted with and locations worked in, to reduce the number of contacts made

- Restrict visits to under 2 hours to avoid becoming a close contact within the room.

Cleaning

Public spaces must be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Particular emphasis must be placed on touch points cleaning should be scheduled more frequently during busy periods. See Cleaning section for more details.

Refuse bins must be emptied, cleaned and disinfected at regular intervals.

Students will be asked to clean their own desk and chair after use using the wipes provided. They should then sanitise their hands.

Staff areas

- Employee entrances.
- Specific department offices.
- Cleaning and maintenance supplies stations.
- Food preparation areas
- Location in proximity to the Isolation Room
- A supply of PPE should be available at every accommodation location.

Response Plan

A response plan should be in place in all school buildings. A suitable isolation area/room should be identified, and students and staff should be aware of the procedures to follow – see COVID-19 Response Plan Section.

Office Areas

Cleaning & Disinfection Protocol

Cleaning and disinfecting must take place regularly during the day and more frequently during busy periods and whenever facilities are visibly dirty. This must focus on frequently touched surfaces especially counters, desks, equipment, communication devices, door handles etc. Records of cleaning should be maintained.

The sharing of office equipment should be avoided. Where shared equipment is necessary, it must be cleaned and disinfected before and after use.

Physical Distancing Protocol

Physical distancing protocols that follow the Government's Public Health advice must be observed in shared office spaces, staff rooms, staff rooms and other relevant employee facilities. As far as reasonably possible, a distance of 2 metres should be maintained between employees. Where 2 metres is not possible, all other measures to protect employees should be in place. Physical barriers such as sneeze guards / plexiglass and partition can be useful, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain apart. These physical barriers need to be regularly cleaned and disinfected.

Outdoor activities and training

The government COVID-19 Resilience & Recovery 2021 The Path Ahead from 26th April 2021 (subject to prevailing health situation) Under age outdoor training in pods of 15 can recommence for all exercise activities that can be delivered outdoors including dance. For further detail refer below:

- [Guidance for Non-Contact Training for School-Aged Children](#)

- [COVID-19 Interim recommendations for the return to sports activities for children and adolescents](#)
- [Guidelines for re-opening Activity providers](#)

Coach and local Transport arrangements

Transport operators should be compliant with the requirements set out with Failte Ireland's [Guidelines for re-opening tourism transport](#)

Where Buses and Coaches are used within the operation of the college the following should be considered.

- Before entering the vehicle, students should:
 - Be wearing a face covering
 - Apply hand sanitiser
- The driver or on-board personnel should encourage students to adhere to Government Public Health advice on physical distancing when boarding, alighting and on board. Government Public Health measures may limit the load capacity on transport, colleges and coach operators must ensure that they implement the required measures subject to the level of their specific region in relation to capacity on board.
- Face coverings should be worn the whole time whilst on board.
- Arrange seating so that students of different pods are the recommended physical distance apart and are not seated side-by-side or face-to-face.
- Seats should be pre-allocated to students.
- A strict queuing system should be implemented and managed by the bus driver or on-board personnel when boarding and alighting the vehicle.

Before Arrival

The college website should explain the guidelines that will apply to students during their coach journey. Details of the COVID-19 preventative policies and protocols that are in place should be outlined in detail for the student and their parents/guardians.

Boarding times should be reviewed to allow an extended window for arrivals. This will help reduce large queues of students arriving at the college at the same time.

References

Government of Ireland

[COVID-19 Resilience & Recovery 2021 The Path Ahead, Work Safely Protocol](#)
[Covid-19: Stay Safe Guidelines](#)

Health Service Executive

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resources](#)
[Guidance on Non-Healthcare Building Ventilation during COVID-19](#)

Health and Safety Authority

- <https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/COVID-19/>
- [https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/COVID-19/return to work safely templates checklists and posters](https://www.hsa.ie/eng/topics/COVID-19/return%20to%20work%20safely%20templates%20checklists%20and%20posters)

Health Protection Surveillance Centre

[COVID-19 Resources](#)
[Guidance for Educational Settings](#)

Department of Education

[COVID-19 Response Plan for the safe and sustainable reopening of Post Primary Schools](#)

Fáilte Ireland

[Fáilte Ireland - Business Supports Hub](#)
[Guidelines for re-opening Hotels and Guest Houses](#)
[Guidelines for re-opening B&Bs and historic Hostels](#)
[Guidelines for re-opening Hostels](#)

Sport Ireland

[Guidance for Non-Contact Training for School-Aged Children](#)
[COVID-19 Interim recommendations for the return to sports activities for children and adolescents](#)
[Guidelines for re-opening Activity providers](#)

ECDC

[COVID-19 in children and the role of school settings in transmission - first update](#)