



Teachers' Union of Ireland

Re-opening of Further Education and Training Centres

Guidance for TUI members

The TUI strongly urges members to read:

*The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) Plan for a Safe Return to Site – A safe return to on-site further and higher education and research
(<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/bcd91-a-safe-return-to-on-site-further-and-higher-education-and-research/>)*

*DPER FAQs re Working Arrangements
<https://assets.gov.ie/137721/ecb9da53-389c-4e52-bf3e-898dc399dbc7.pdf>*

*Announcement by government on 31st August 2021 about the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.
(<https://www.gov.ie/en/speech/eef37-speech-by-the-taoiseach-micheal-martin-covid-19-reframing-the-challenge-continuing-our-recovery-reconnecting/>)*

Previous Updates from the FET Stakeholders (circulated to Areas 1-11)

**** This Guidance document will be updated on a regular basis so please continue to check the website (www.tui.ie), TUI's social media and the TUI App following the initial publication***

Table of Contents

To whom do the guidelines in these TUI FAQs apply?.....	8
When are students returning to on-site activity?	8
What do the Implementation Guidelines Require from ETBs?	8
What is the current public health advice?	9
<i>Infection Prevention and Control</i>	10
What Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures will be in place in my centre/college in the 2021/2022 academic year?	10
<i>Prior to returning to Site</i>	10
What do I have to do before I return to site?	10
Must COVID-19 signage and sanitising stations still be in place throughout the site?	10
Are management required to consult with the TUI prior to re-opening?	10
What questions should a Workplace Committee/Branch now ask management prior to a return to the workplace?	10
Will training be provided to teachers on COVID-19 and related issues?	11
Will training be provided to new Lead Worker Representatives?	11
Are management required to undertake risk assessments in every classroom/practical room/staff office, etc. prior to re-opening?.....	11
Am I entitled to view these risk assessments?.....	11
If there is an immediate H&S risk, that has not been assessed or that has been assessed but ignored, how do I proceed?	12
Can I refuse to work in a classroom/facility/office that is unsafe?	12
Can a member continue to engage in Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) as opposed to returning to the physical setting of a centre?	12
A number of my students are isolating, do I have to provide additional support to these students through ERT as well as teaching the rest of the class onsite?	12
Can meetings such as staff meetings continue to be held remotely?	12
How should staff meetings be conducted?	13
<i>Lead Worker Representative (LWR)</i>	13
What is a Lead Worker Representative (LWR)?	13
Is a Lead Worker Representative the same as the Safety Representative?	13
How many Lead Worker Representatives (LWRs) should my centre have?.....	13
I was a Lead Worker Representatives (LWR) in my centre last year. Does this mean I am automatically the LWR this year?	13
Does a LWR have any legal responsibilities?	13
Who selects the LWR?	13

I have been selected by staff to be the Lead Worker Representative. What exactly do I do?	14
Should all staff know who the LWR is?.....	14
Am I entitled to time off timetable to undertake the role of LWR?	14
Is the time remission from timetable for the LWR available for the duration of the academic year 2021/2022?	15
Can centre management ask me to undertake alternative or additional duties/responsibilities during the 2-hour remission for LWR activities?	15
COVID-19 Vaccination.....	15
Is it envisaged that all staff will be offered a vaccine prior to the re-opening of FET?	15
Can an employer ask me if I am vaccinated?	15
Will all students be offered a vaccine prior to the re-opening of FET?	15
Social Distancing/Physical Distancing	16
What is social distancing/physical distancing?	16
Why is physical distancing so important?.....	16
What are the physical distancing requirements for my classroom etc.?	16
Where 2 metre physical distancing is not feasible - does the employer need to outline why it is not feasible and outline the additional mitigation measures that are being used?	16
What should be done where management forms the view that 2 metre distancing is not feasible?	16
Management have advised that 2 metre physical distancing is not possible in my classroom/ work space; what should management do to protect the health and safety of staff and students?.....	17
What are the health and safety measures being implemented in canteens (staff and student)?17	
Cleaning.....	17
How often should classrooms be cleaned?.....	17
Ventilation	18
What about ventilation? Is it important?	18
What practical measures should be used to ensure good ventilation?	18
CO₂ Monitors.....	18
Should centres/colleges have CO ₂ Monitors?	18
How effective are CO ₂ monitors in relation to COVID-19?.....	19
What level of CO ₂ indicates that a room is not adequately ventilated?	19
Should every room have a CO ₂ Monitor?	19
Where should I place the CO ₂ Monitor?	19
Air Quality Cleaners.....	20
What is an Air Quality Cleaner?	20
When should Air Quality Cleaners be used?.....	20

<i>Wearing of Masks</i>	20
Do staff and students/learners have to continue to wear masks this year?	20
How will staff be notified if a student/learner has a medical exemption and isn't required to wear a mask?.....	20
As a member of staff, am I required to wear a mask in the centre?.....	20
I have a breathing difficulty and cannot wear a mask. What happens?	21
What type of mask should I wear?.....	21
Are there any exceptions to (exemptions from) the general rule (that masks must be worn)?..	21
Can I wear a visor rather than a mask?	22
Do I have to provide my own mask?	22
Should I wear medical standard face masks?	22
My centre/college has installed a perspex screen at my desk. Do I still have to wear a mask? .	22
My centre/college has installed a perspex screen at my desk. Is it ok if I just wear a visor?	22
Am I required to wear a mask in other areas of the centre/college outside of my classroom, for example, in the staff room?	23
Will I ever be required to wear additional PPE ?.....	23
Will students/learners (including those in laboratories/practical rooms) be required to wear masks?	23
Will students/learners be required to wear masks throughout the day?	23
What happens if a student, other than in one of the four categories set out above and or those with a medical exemption, refuses to wear a mask?	23
Would reliance on physical distancing allow a workplace to abandon compulsory mask wearing	24
Does the roll-out of the vaccination programme allow a centre/college to abandon compulsory mask wearing?.....	24
<i>Hand Hygiene</i>	24
How often should members of staff and students/learners wash their hands/use hand sanitiser in work?	24
<i>Temperature Checks</i>	24
Is it appropriate for my workplace to take the temperature of staff and students and refuse entry to those with a high temperature?	24
<i>Antigen and PCR Testing</i>	24
Will there be Rapid Antigen Testing in ETBs?	24
<i>Underlying illnesses/conditions</i>	25
I have a pre-existing illness and do not feel safe returning to on-site work. What do I do?	25
<i>Very High Risk Teachers</i>	25
How do I know if I am in the category of being at Very High Risk from contracting COVID-19 for the 2021/2022 academic year?	25

Can I appeal the categorisation of Medmark (OHS)?	25
<i>Pregnant Staff Members</i>	26
I am pregnant. How is my level of risk to be determined?	26
I am pregnant but not categorised as Very High Risk. Must I attend the workplace (i.e. return to work)?	26
I am pregnant and Medmark (OHS) has categorised me as Very High Risk; should I attend the workplace (i.e. return to work)?	26
I am pregnant and Medmark (OHS) has categorised me as High Risk; should I attend the workplace (i.e. return to work)?	26
Can I appeal the categorisation of Medmark (OHS)?	26
I am pregnant, should my employer carry out a specific risk assessment owing to my pregnancy?	27
<i>Caring/Childcare Responsibilities</i>	27
Can I apply for Parental Leave or Carer’s Leave if I have caring or childcare responsibilities or am living with a person/s with a high risk or very high risk of contracting COVID 19?	27
<i>COVID-19 Response</i>	27
What specific measures should the ETB take in responding to the COVID-19 threat?	27
If I am identified as a close contact and have not heard from contact tracing should I go for a test?	28
If I am advised that I am a close contact and do not need to go for a test as I am asymptomatic can I still go for a test?	28
If this result is positive and I am asymptomatic should I notify my employer and stay at home?	28
What contact tracing systems should be in place on site and whose responsibility are these?..	28
<i>COVID-19 Symptoms and Diagnosis</i>	28
I have COVID-19 symptoms, should I attend work?	28
What should I do if I develop symptoms of COVID-19 at work?	28
What are the symptoms of COVID-19?.....	28
What procedure should be followed if an employee or student falls ill with COVID-19 symptoms while at work/in the centre/college?.....	29
What happens if a student presents with COVID-19 symptoms during the day?.....	29
I have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Will I still get paid?	29
I have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Must I advise my Employer/ETB?	29
If I have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Will it affect my normal sick leave?	29
How much special leave with pay am I entitled to?	29
<i>Self-isolation</i>	30
What is self-isolation?.....	30
I have been advised to self-isolate. Will I still get paid?	30

Am I required to tell my employer/ETB if I have been advised to self-isolate?.....	30
Close Contacts	31
Whose responsibility is it to advise me that I have been in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case/person? Is it the responsibility of the ETB or the HSE?	31
I have been in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case/person. Should I attend work?.....	31
I have been advised that I am a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case/person and have been advised to restrict my movement. What happens?	31
Am I required to deliver remotely while restricting my movements?	31
Members with caring or childcare responsibilities or living with high risk or very high risk individual	32
I live with a high risk or very high risk individual, do I have to attend work?	32
I am required to care for a COVID-19 positive individual (e.g. child), what happens?.....	32
COVID-19 Related Leave Provisions	32
Travel Abroad.....	34
What happens if I wish to travel abroad before going back to work or during Christmas or other breaks?.....	34
Staff Rooms	35
My staff room has been converted into a classroom. Is this allowed?	35
What is the physical distancing requirement for the staff room?	35
What is the physical distancing requirement for staff meetings?	35
What about other gatherings, assemblies etc.?	35
If the staff room in my centre/college is being used as a classroom, is my employer required to provide suitable alternative facilities for staff?	35
Local management has said that because the staff room is being used for classes and space is at a premium, staff will have to eat their lunch/drink their tea in their cars/in the centre/college yard/in the local park/in a local café. Is that acceptable?	36
Local management has said that because the staff room is being used for classes and space is at a premium, staff will have to eat their lunch/drink their tea in a classroom while supervising students. Is that acceptable?	36
What should I do if management refuses to provide or put arrangements in place to allow employees access to suitable and adequate facilities?	36
Extra-Curricular Activities	37
Can extra-curricular activities still take place?.....	37
Access to the Workplace	37
Can visitors be permitted entry to my workplace?	37
Is my workplace required to keep a contact log for all those attending or visiting the workplace?	37
Meetings with Parents/Guardians	37

Is it possible to meet with parents/guardians in a physical setting?.....	37
Croke Park Hours (Teachers)	37
Should Croke Park Hours- related activities take place this year?	37
Should Croke Park Hours-related activities take place corporeally this year?	38
Does this include open days/open nights?	38
Centre/College management is seeking to change the Croke Park schedule for the 2021/22 academic year that was agreed in April/May. Is this allowed?	38
Croke Park Hours (Other Grades)	38
Should Croke Park Hours- related activities take place this year?	38
Compliance Issues.....	39
I have a student who deliberately flouts the COVID-19 response plan; for example, by refusing to comply with hand hygiene, mask wearing or social distancing. What should I do?	39
What are my Health and Safety (H&S) responsibilities in terms of COVID-19?.....	39
What is the procedure for dealing with COVID-19 Health & Safety concerns?	39
Step One:.....	39
Step Two:.....	39
Step Three:.....	40
Step Four:.....	40

To whom do the guidelines in these TUI FAQs apply?

These guidelines apply to all TUI members working in FET provision, comprehending:

- *Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) colleges,*
- *Dual-provision post-primary/FET schools and centres*,*
- *Back to Education Initiative (BTEI),*
- *Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS),*
- *Adult Literacy, Numeracy, and ICT,*
- *Youthreach,*
- *Community Training Centres (CTCs),*
- *Community Education,*
- *Bridging/Foundation courses,*
- *English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL),*
- *Apprenticeship,*
- *Traineeship,*
- *Specific Skills Training (SST),*
- *Skills for Work*
- *Evening Courses (incl. self-financing),*
- *Specialist Training Providers (STPs),*
- *Local Training Initiative (LTI)*
- *Courses delivered under co-operation hours and*
- *Education Units in prisons (some provisions from Department of Justice also apply in these units).*

**Given the range of workplaces in which TUI members work, “TUI member”, “staff” and “centre/workplace” comprehend members in all grades and posts, in all FET and dual-provision institutions.*

When are students returning to on-site activity?

Stage 1: August 2021 - Vulnerable learners, including Youthreach, CTCs, Apprenticeship, and practical training programmes (Excluding self-financing programmes and night training).

Stage 2: Post September 20th 2021 (date subject to change depending on public health advice) – All other full-time and part-time FET Learners.

What do the Implementation Guidelines Require from ETBs?

The ETB should have an ongoing communication plan to raise awareness amongst all members of its community about how COVID-19 spreads and how spread can be prevented on-site and off-site.

1. *The ETB should consider if there is a requirement to communicate with the wider community regarding potential fears regarding the student body contributing to spread of COVID-19 in the wider community.*
2. *Any communication campaign should emphasise the need to avoid exposing those at most risk of serious disease in the ETB community and wider community to COVID-19. Students or staff who are concerned that they may have symptoms should be particularly careful to avoid contact with older people or people who they know to have medical conditions that put them at particular risk of severe disease.*

3. *Any communication campaign should provide information for members of the ETB community regarding where they should go to self-isolate if they develop symptoms of COVID-19 on-site, in residences or elsewhere.*
4. *Any communication campaign should provide information for members of the ETB community regarding who to contact if they develop symptoms of COVID-19.*
5. *The ETB should encourage all members of its community to register with a GP (student health unit or other GP) to whom they have access if they require medical attention for COVID-19.*
6. *The ETB should have a protocol in place to enable safe access to indoor space. Where practical, a one-way system and or marked lanes should be used to separate flow of people into, out of and within the building and a plan for access and egress from classrooms etc*
7. *ETBs should clearly communicate with all staff and students that they should not attend on-site if they have any COVID-19 symptoms. Such communication should be re-affirmed on an ongoing basis.*
8. *The ETB should encourage all members of the ETB community to download the COVID-19 Tracker App and to use the symptom checker on the App on a daily basis. Advice on using the COVID-19 Tracker App will be included in email communication to students, on the ETB's website and on noticeboards across the site.*
9. *Monitoring of temperatures on access to site facilities is not required.*
10. *Members of the ETB community who travel to Ireland from other jurisdictions should follow Government advice on restricted movement on arrival in Ireland and may require support to do this if they are new to the area and are alone.*
11. *ETBs should encourage staff and students to avail of the vaccination programme in order to acquire significant vaccine protection. ETBs should make available all information in this regard.*

What is the current public health advice?

“Further and higher education and research is essential on-site and, as such, there will be instances and contexts in which adherence to the recommended physical distancing is not feasible. Current general public health advice contains a package of precautionary measures and physical distancing is one of these measures. There is no strict baseline with regard to physical distancing and the package of measures to be implemented is dependent on risk assessment informed by local engagement. It is key that where physical distancing is not feasible there are appropriate precautionary measures in place, particularly as they relate to ventilation, entry and egress to minimise congregation, hand sanitising and the wearing of face coverings and that institutions have the autonomy and flexibility to risk assess and adapt these in respect of their specific settings.”

Infection Prevention and Control

What Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures will be in place in my centre/college in the 2021/2022 academic year?

The same IPC measures that were in place last year will remain in place this year – e.g. physical distancing, wearing of masks, hand hygiene, hand sanitising and cleaning regimes.

Prior to returning to Site

What do I have to do before I return to site?

You must complete a Return to Work (RTW) Form which will be available from your employer. This completed form must be submitted before you return to your workplace.

Members must also confirm that their status has not changed following other periods of closure or leave, e.g. sick leave.

Must COVID-19 signage and sanitising stations still be in place throughout the site?

Yes.

Are management required to consult with the TUI prior to re-opening?

Yes.

What questions should a Workplace Committee/Branch now ask management prior to a return to the workplace?

- *Who are the Lead Worker Representatives (LWR)?*
- *Has the time remission for LWRs been applied to the timetable?*
- *Has a risk assessment been carried out for each working and communal space, e.g. teaching space, staff offices, canteen?*
- *Will you please supply a copy of the risk assessments in an understandable format for each space?*
- *Does each space have adequate ventilation?*
- *How will adequate ventilation be monitored?*
- *Will CO₂ monitors be available?*
- *Will physical distancing of 2m apply in teaching spaces and/or communal areas?*
- *If 2m distancing is not feasible what mitigating measures will apply?*
- *What arrangements will apply for immuno-compromised staff?*
- *What arrangement will apply for staff in the early stages of pregnancy?*
- *What arrangements will apply for other High Risk (HR) staff?*
- *What arrangements will apply for Very High- Risk staff (VHR)?*

- *Other than the categories of staff organised by the TUI, what other staff will be returning on-site?*
- *What arrangements are in place for entry and egress and minimisation of congregation?*
- *Will you please clarify the arrangements for emergency remote teaching, if required?*
- *How will the requirement for mask wearing be enforced?*
- *How will medical exemptions for students/learners who will not be wearing masks be communicated to our members?*
- *Will microphones be available for staff owing to the necessity to wear masks?*
- *Will members and students have access to cleaning products to clean their desks/work areas after use?*

Will training be provided to teachers on COVID-19 and related issues?

Yes. The Department of Education (DE) has published training videos for use in post-primary schools which are also relevant to the FET setting. Training should be completed by newly appointed staff. The training videos address COVID-19 training for all staff in centres. The links to all videos have been sent to your ETB.

In addition, the DE has published posters (in English and Irish) for use in schools, which can be used in centres/colleges – these are also applicable in FET Centres. These posters cover coughing etiquette, correct hand washing, wearing of masks, correct use of hand sanitisers, etc.

Will training be provided to new Lead Worker Representatives?

Yes. Lead Worker Representative induction is mandatory for LWRs.

Are management required to undertake risk assessments in every classroom/practical room/staff office, etc. prior to re-opening?

Yes. An employer is required under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 to ensure the safety and welfare of staff at work. It is the duty of the employer to carry out a risk assessment to meet these obligations, including workplace pregnancy risk assessments. For specific questions on health and safety and for updated legislation, please refer to the Health and Safety Authority (HSA): <https://www.hsa.ie>

Am I entitled to view these risk assessments?

Yes. Under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work act, you are entitled to this information. <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/10/enacted/en/print#sec19>

If there is an immediate H&S risk, that has not been assessed or that has been assessed but ignored, how do I proceed?

If the room/work space to which a member is assigned is unsafe (in terms of the relevant sections of the Health and Safety legislation) and therefore poses an immediate threat to, or places at unacceptable risk the health and safety of the member, the member should

- *immediately and formally apprise ETB management and the LWR of her/his concerns.*
- *advise management that s/he will not be using the room/work space until it is made safe and that, in the interim, s/he is available to continue with her/his work in a suitable and safe work space.*
- *without delay, inform the TUI Branch accordingly*

Can I refuse to work in a classroom/facility/office that is unsafe?

Yes. If the space is unsafe – for example an internal space without windows to the outside, or mechanical ventilation of an adequate standard – immediately advise both the Lead Worker Representative and the TUI Branch Officers that the ETB is in breach of the requirements of the Health and Safety Legislation (sections 8/9).

The LWR and Branch should separately so advise ETB management. Management should be advised that you are available for work in a suitable safe space but that neither you nor other members will work in the identified unsafe space. In identifying a space as unsafe in this context, the risk assessment process and the relevant Health and Safety legislation must be invoked.

Can a member continue to engage in Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) as opposed to returning to the physical setting of a centre?

ERT may be used for example:

- *where classrooms can't be used (e.g., lack of appropriate ventilation because there are no windows)*
- *if there is a partial or full closure of a college, building or department*
- *in the case of delivery by a Very High Risk(VHR) member of staff **or** to a VHR student, as per previous advices in this regard i.e. additional tuition to a VHR student must be separate from class tuition and within timetabled hours.*

A number of my students are isolating, do I have to provide additional support to these students through ERT as well as teaching the rest of the class onsite?

You are not required to teach both groups simultaneously.

Can meetings such as staff meetings continue to be held remotely?

Yes. As below.

How should staff meetings be conducted?

When organising staff meetings, management should make every possible effort to hold them remotely. It may be possible to hold meetings safely in small groups while maintaining a 2 metre distance. Large gatherings in one physical space are to be avoided. Consideration should be given to formation of staff pods or teams who work together and who can take breaks together.

Lead Worker Representative (LWR)

What is a Lead Worker Representative (LWR)?

A Lead Worker Representative is a person, selected by staff, to assist centre management to implement a range of measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a centre.

Is a Lead Worker Representative the same as the Safety Representative?

No. Both roles are separate although they may be undertaken by the same person

How many Lead Worker Representatives (LWRs) should my centre have?

The number of LWRs a centre has depends on the total number of staff in the centre. Every centre will appoint one Lead Worker Representative.

In centres with more than 40 staff (inclusive of teaching staff, secretaries, caretakers etc.), a second Lead Worker Representative may be appointed. Appointment by management follows selection by staff of the LWR/s, in accordance with a process that has been agreed at national level.

I was a Lead Worker Representative (LWR) in my centre last year. Does this mean I am automatically the LWR this year?

Not necessarily. A new selection procedure should take place in advance of the new academic year. However, the person/s who undertook the role last year may undertake the role this year.

Does a LWR have any legal responsibilities?

No. A Lead Worker Representative does not have any legal responsibilities in relation to COVID-19 measures other than those that apply to employees generally.

Who selects the LWR?

There is a nationally agreed process that must be followed. The first step in the process requires centre management to seek expressions of interest from all staff. If more people are interested in the position than there are LWR positions on offer, an election by all staff must take place.

I have been selected by staff to be the Lead Worker Representative. What exactly do I do?

You are required to:

- *Represent all staff in your centre/college*
- *Keep up-to-date with the latest COVID-19 public health advice*
- *Liaise and work with centre/college management to ensure, insofar as is practicable, the safety, health and welfare of all staff in the centre/college, including consulting on COVID-19 control measures implemented in centres*
- *Promote good hygiene practices*
- *Assist management to implement measures to suppress COVID-19 in the centre/college*
- *Monitor, in conjunction with centre/college management, compliance with measures introduced to prevent the spread of COVID-19*
- *Conduct safety reviews - including a walk around of the centre/college at least twice a week - to ascertain if safety measures are being complied with*
- *Report any concerns immediately to centre/college management*
- *Keep records of any issues of concern*
- *Keep records of actions taken by centre/college management to rectify concerns*
- *Consult with centre management on the centre's/college's COVID-19 Response Plan*
- *Consult with colleagues on all matters relating to COVID-19 in the centre/college*
- *Make representations to centre/college management on COVID-19 related matters*

Should all staff know who the LWR is?

Yes. All staff should be advised of the name and contact details of the LWR/s. Centre/college management is required to provide this information.

Am I entitled to time off timetable to undertake the role of LWR?

Yes. Members are entitled to a reduction of 2 hours class contact/teaching time per week to engage in this role.

For example, a full-time teacher in an FE College (who is not an AP1 post holder) would ordinarily have a maximum of 22 class contact per week. If selected/appointed as LWR, s/he will have a maximum class contact of 20 hours per week.

If a teacher with an AP1 post of responsibility is selected by staff to be a LWR, s/he will be entitled to 2 hours off class contact/teaching time to engage in this role and will therefore have a maximum class contact of 16 hours per week.

If a member of staff has a contract for 35 hours per week (e.g. Youthreach), the 2 hours should be reduced from any teaching timetable or, in the case of the administrative element of a contract, clearly delineated from the administration time dedicated to other duties.

Is the time remission from timetable for the LWR available for the duration of the academic year 2021/2022?

Yes.

Can centre management ask me to undertake alternative or additional duties/responsibilities during the 2-hour remission for LWR activities?

No.

The time cannot be used for **any** purpose other than those set out above.

COVID-19 Vaccination

Is it envisaged that all staff will be offered a vaccine prior to the re-opening of FET?

Yes. All members eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine, and who opt to avail of the vaccine, should be fully vaccinated prior to a return to work.

Can an employer ask me if I am vaccinated?

In the following circumstances, an employer can ask you if you are vaccinated.

- *A member who has 'significant vaccine protection' and who has been advised by the HSE that he/she is a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, may be required to inform her/his employer. The HSE rules around restricted movement have changed for individuals with 'significant vaccine protection'. In certain circumstances, determined by the HSE, such individuals are no longer required to restrict their movements where they are a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case.*
- *Where an employee is required to attend the workplace and is a close contact, the employer may need to establish, in limited circumstances, if he/she has 'significant vaccine protection', in order for the employer to take a decision in relation to health and safety requirements and workplace attendance.*

Will all students be offered a vaccine prior to the re-opening of FET?

Students aged over 18 who opt to avail of the vaccine should be fully vaccinated (i.e. have received both doses) prior to FET re-opening.

Students aged 16 – 18 who opt to avail of the vaccine should be fully vaccinated (i.e. have received both doses) prior to FET re-opening.

Social Distancing/Physical Distancing

What is social distancing/physical distancing?

Social/physical distancing involves minimising contact and maintaining distance between potentially infected individuals and healthy individuals. Members should maintain 2 metre distance between themselves and others, avoid all physical contact (for example, shaking hands) and also avoid sharing personal items such as pens, cups, etc.

Why is physical distancing so important?

It is important because it is an effective protection against transmission of the virus. In the context of the busy, crowded setting of a work space, it is a fundamental responsibility of management to provide and maintain, where feasible, this protection for staff and students.

What are the physical distancing requirements for my classroom etc.?

Teaching and other spaces should be laid out and managed in order to safeguard the health of both staff and students. A physical distance of 2 metre should be maintained, where possible. However, there are situations where tuition can only be realistically delivered with less than 2 metre distancing.

Where 2 metre physical distancing is not feasible - does the employer need to outline why it is not feasible and outline the additional mitigation measures that are being used?

There will be circumstances under which teaching cannot be delivered while maintaining 2m distance between learners - i.e. practical elements of certain courses, skills demonstrations etc (see further advice below) - and under such circumstances the distance between learners' seats or workstations may be reduced to (but not less than) 1m, with appropriate precautions to minimise the risk of viral transmission, and specific provision made for vulnerable learners.

Any other infringement on the 2m physical distancing is dependent on risk assessment informed by local engagement. The employer must give the reason/s and must outline the other mitigation factors available and in operation and how they mitigate the spread of infection by COVID.

What should be done where management forms the view that 2 metre distancing is not feasible?

The following steps should be implemented in sequence:

- There should be local engagement with staff and staff trade unions*
- Management should already have conducted a risk assessment to establish how best to mitigate the reduction from 2 metres (i.e. other measures including but not limited to*

those set out above - ventilation, quality of masks required, etc.) and the TUI Branch (and members) must insist that this risk assessment is made available and explained in layman's terms

- If the local engagements cannot resolve issues with management, then the matter should be referred to the Director of FET, the local TUI Branch and the TUI Head Office official with responsibility for your branch who will forward it to the FET Stakeholders- at national level for discussion/resolution.

Management have advised that 2 metre physical distancing is not possible in my classroom/ work space; what should management do to protect the health and safety of staff and students?

Management should:

- Utilise and reconfigure all available space in the centre/college in order to maximise physical distancing
- Review timetables
- Reconfigure classes
- Consider use of live streaming within the Centre/College (not to devices outside of the workplace) to accommodate students between 2 or more rooms
- Access available spaces within the local community

Management must also ensure that all other risk mitigation measures are fully utilised, e.g. ventilation and the requirement to wear a mask.

What are the health and safety measures being implemented in canteens (staff and student)?

The guidance already available in relation to canteens/restaurants will generally apply in the FET context but which may require some adaption for the FET site setting. We are awaiting further clarification.

Cleaning

How often should classrooms be cleaned?

Each FET setting should be cleaned at least once per day by cleaning staff. Additional cleaning should be focused on frequently touched surfaces – door handles, hand rails, chairs/arm rests, communal eating areas, sink and toilet facilities.

Students/learners and staff are also responsible for wiping down their own individual work area during the day.

- Students/learners who move between classes should be given cleaning products to allow them to wipe down their own desk, chair and surface area before they leave the room.

- *All staff will have access to cleaning products and will also be required to clean and disinfect their work area each day/before they leave the room.*

Ventilation

What about ventilation? Is it important?

Yes, good ventilation is important in preventing spread of the virus. Classrooms and other work spaces must be well ventilated. For example, the opening of all windows and doors is recommended. Frequent complete air change should take place as required.

What practical measures should be used to ensure good ventilation?

- *Open windows to introduce fresh air. If possible, windows should remain open during tuition hours.*
- *Partially opening a number of windows rather than fully opening one can help minimise discomfort. In colder weather, to minimise the chilling effect, windows nearest and above the radiator should be opened.*
- *Rooms should not be stuffy or have condensation on the window glass.*
- *Workplaces should ensure that all permanent ventilation openings in rooms are fully open and not blocked by wall hangings etc. These normally are either a circular or rectangle ventilation grill on the external wall or linear slot type ventilators built into the window frames. All of these should be opened all the time. If they have been taped and sealed for decorating purposes then the tape/sealing must be removed.*
- *All mechanical ventilation systems and any air conditioning systems should be set to 100% fresh air. Any air conditioning units that cannot operate on 100% fresh air should be left off. Management needs to check with unit suppliers if in doubt.*
- *Rooms with no windows and no mechanical ventilation or inadequate ventilation to the outside should not be used for activities. If management seeks to insist that such rooms/spaces be used, you should invoke the relevant Health and Safety legislation and follow the procedure set out above in that regard. You are not obliged to work in a room/space that is unsafe. Of course, you remain available for work once management meets its obligations to provide you with a safe room/space.*
- *The risk assessment of each room/space should make clear how it is to be safely and adequately ventilated.*

CO₂ Monitors

Should centres/colleges have CO₂ Monitors?

As an additional mitigation measure, portable CO₂ monitors can be used. The TUI was the first group to call for the provision of these monitors, arguing that they would help members to know when enhanced ventilation is required, both to improve air quality in rooms but also to ensure that sufficient air changes are taking place to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. It is important to note that the monitors do not regulate air quality. They simply

measure the CO₂ level, thereby giving an indication of air quality. They are a guide as to when it is appropriate to open windows and initiate air change. Monitors deployed must provide a digital display of the CO₂ levels. Monitors that rely on colour-coding do not meet the digital standards.

How effective are CO₂ monitors in relation to COVID-19?

The use of CO₂ monitors can provide a useful general indication that areas/rooms may not be adequately ventilated and can enable occupants to become familiar with the impact that activities, outdoor weather and window openings have on levels of good ventilation within a room.

In the context of COVID-19 transmission, CO₂ measurements are not a reliable proxy of risk to airborne exposure to the virus. Nevertheless, CO₂ measurements can be used to identify poorly ventilated multi-occupancy spaces. However, CO₂ measurements are a less reliable measure of ventilation performance in single or low occupancy spaces (such as offices) or in very large spaces (such as corridors).

It is important, however, that air exchanges also occur in corridors and offices.

What level of CO₂ indicates that a room is not adequately ventilated?

A CO₂ level of more than 800 parts per million is an indication that the ventilation in a room needs to be improved, e.g. by opening more windows. A CO₂ level of more than 1500 parts per million indicates that there is a significant ventilation problem and, in the context of COVID-19, that the room should be vacated until the matter is addressed.

Should every room have a CO₂ Monitor?

In order to make best use of the portable monitors, their use should be focussed to those rooms where most beneficial (i.e. not placed in an idle room or in a large well-ventilated area with few students) and they should be used across rooms as necessary.

It is not recommended that CO₂ measurements be used as an indicator of room/building ventilation when there are CO₂ sources present other than people, such as cooking and bunsen burners.

Where should I place the CO₂ Monitor?

The monitor should be placed at least 0.5 metres away from people and should not be placed near windows or ventilation grilles.

Air Quality Cleaners

What is an Air Quality Cleaner?

Air Quality Cleaners are self-contained units that must be plugged into an electrical power socket in the room they serve. They typically comprise a filter or multiple filters and a fan that sucks room air into the filter system and discharges purified air back into the room. As air moves through the filter, pollutants and particles are captured.

When should Air Quality Cleaners be used?

Where the practical measures for the deployment of good ventilation practices have been undertaken and poor ventilation continues to exist in a particular room/area, air cleaners may be considered as an additional measure in conjunction with other methods of ventilation that are available.

They should not be used to replace ventilation but should be used in conjunction with, and to support other methods of ventilation that are available.

Wearing of Masks

Do staff and students/learners have to continue to wear masks this year?

Yes. Wearing a mask is very important because, combined with ventilation and physical distancing, it is an effective protection against transmission of the virus. In the context of the busy, crowded setting of a centre/college, it is a fundamental responsibility of the employer to maintain this protection for staff and students by insisting that staff, students and visitors to the centre/college wear appropriate masks i.e. masks that cover the nose and chin.

How will staff be notified if a student/learner has a medical exemption and isn't required to wear a mask?

Internal notification systems should be agreed and used. Only staff who need to know should be informed. They should also be told of any other mitigation that might apply e.g. separate seating at a 2 m distance.

As a member of staff, am I required to wear a mask in the centre?

Yes. As a member of staff you must wear a mask unless you have breathing difficulties – verified by way of a medical certificate that you must provide to your employer.

FET guidelines require that masks are worn at all times on site except when eating and when there is a medical exemption.

I have a breathing difficulty and cannot wear a mask. What happens?

If you are medically advised not to wear a mask and have provided a medical certificate to this effect to your employer, you must wear a clear visor and remain 2 metres from others at all times.

What type of mask should I wear?

The general rule is that cloth masks must be worn. This is in line with the advice of the public health authorities and has been established as a requirement by the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science/Government.

- *Masks must not contain any slogans/logos/images that may cause upset or be deemed offensive*
- *Cloth masks should be washed, in a hot wash (i.e. over 60 degrees) with detergent after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.*
- *Masks should not be worn if they are wet. A wet cloth mask is ineffective and may make it difficult to breathe.*

*The HPSC has published the following guidance in relation to the wearing of face masks:
<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/infectionpreventionandcontrolguidance/ppe/useoffacemasksbythegeneralpublic/Guidance%20on%20use%20of%20face%20mask%20by%20general%20public.pdf>*

Are there any exceptions to (exemptions from) the general rule (that masks must be worn)?

There are specified exceptions to/exemptions from this general rule. The public health authorities have stated that masks should not be worn by anybody in the following categories:

- *Any person with difficulty breathing*
- *Any person who is unconscious or incapacitated*
- *Any person who is unable to remove the mask without assistance*
- *Any person who has special needs and who may feel upset or very uncomfortable wearing the mask; for example, persons with intellectual or developmental disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.*

A medical certificate to certify that a person falls into a category listed above must be provided to the employer by, or on behalf of, any person (staff or student/learner) who claims that s/he is covered by one or more of the listed exceptions/exemptions.

Can I wear a visor rather than a mask?

No, save in certain limited situations, where the use of clear visors should be considered; for example, when staff are interacting with students with hearing difficulties or learning difficulties. In all other instances, cloth masks must be worn.

Visors do not offer the same level of protection from the spread of COVID-19 as cloth masks. If a visor is used instead of a mask (in one of the limited circumstances in which that is allowed), it is particularly important that the 2 metre distancing is maintained.

*It is of course open to a member to wear a visor **as well as** (but not instead of) a cloth mask.*

Do I have to provide my own mask?

Members may wish to use their own cloth masks and are, in any event, expected to wash such coverings, in a hot wash (i.e. over 60 degrees) with detergent after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.

However, FET Centres should have additional disposable masks available on site.

Should I wear medical standard face masks?

The use of medical standard face masks is not generally required in FET Centres/colleges. If for some reason close physical proximity is essential in specified circumstances, then a medical grade mask should be used.

The TUI is monitoring the advice of Public Health and of authorities such as the WHO in regard to the wearing of masks and the quality of mask required.

My centre/college has installed a perspex screen at my desk. Do I still have to wear a mask?

Yes.

Members, in many instances, will be moving from room to room and should therefore wear a mask at all times. A perspex screen may be a useful additional protection but it cannot and does not reduce or remove the requirement that members wear masks. The perspex screen may also be deemed necessary in conjunction with a quality mask for staff who are categorised as High Risk from COVID-19.

My centre/college has installed a perspex screen at my desk. Is it ok if I just wear a visor?

No, other than in the limited circumstances set out above.

Members, in many instances, will be moving from room to room and must therefore wear a mask, as opposed to a visor, unless working with a student/learner with a hearing or learning difficulty, as specified above. If wearing a visor in one of these limited circumstances, it is essential to maintain 2 metre distancing. It is of course open to a member to wear a visor as well as (but not instead of) a mask.

Am I required to wear a mask in other areas of the centre/college outside of my classroom, for example, in the staff room?

Yes. All members must wear a mask. ETBs require that masks be worn at all times.

Will I ever be required to wear additional PPE ?

Some circumstances and/or work activities will require the wearing of additional PPE. These include, but are not limited to:

- Where a suspected case of COVID-19 is identified while at work
- Where a member is particularly vulnerable to infection but not categorised as being in the Very High Risk category
- Where a member may be living with someone in the Very High Risk category
- When administering first aid
- For some practical activities.

Will students/learners (including those in laboratories/practical rooms) be required to wear masks?

Yes, unless the student has a medical exemption.

Will students/learners be required to wear masks throughout the day?

Yes, masks must be worn by every student unless s/he

- Has a breathing difficulty
- Is unconscious or incapacitated
- Is unable to remove the face covering without assistance
- Has special needs and may feel very uncomfortable wearing the face covering, for example persons with intellectual or development disabilities, mental health conditions, sensory concerns or tactile sensitivity.

What happens if a student, other than in one of the four categories set out above and or those with a medical exemption, refuses to wear a mask?

A student/learner without a medical exemption who refuses to wear a mask should be refused entry or asked to leave a room. Any such refusal should also be referred promptly to management of the centre/college and the LWR so advised. It would also be advisable and prudent for a member who has had to refuse entry (to a student) to report the incident to the Branch Officers of the TUI.

If there is a continued refusal by a student/learner to wear the mask or leave the class the staff member should end the class and report to management that the class had to be abandoned for health and safety reasons.

Would reliance on physical distancing allow a workplace to abandon compulsory mask wearing

No. Absolutely not. Both measures are required.

Does the roll-out of the vaccination programme allow a centre/college to abandon compulsory mask wearing?

No. The threat represented by COVID-19 remains potent, not least because of the prevalence and transmissibility of the Delta variant.

Hand Hygiene

How often should members of staff and students/learners wash their hands/use hand sanitiser in work?

- *On arrival at work*
- *When moving between rooms*
- *Before eating or drinking*
- *After using the toilet*
- *After petting animals*
- *After being outdoors*
- *When their hands are physically dirty*
- *When they cough or sneeze*

Temperature Checks

Is it appropriate for my workplace to take the temperature of staff and students and refuse entry to those with a high temperature?

There is currently no provision in the guidelines for taking the temperature of staff and/or students at workplaces. Students and staff should be reminded regularly by the ETB authorities that if they feel unwell and/or have any COVID-19 symptoms they must not attend.

Antigen and PCR Testing

Will there be Rapid Antigen Testing in ETBs?

Some training sites are currently involved in a pilot studying the effectiveness of antigen testing

If the results of the pilot indicate that antigen testing is an effective measure in preventing the spread of COVID-19, then the Minister has indicated his support for its implementation across the sector.

Underlying illnesses/conditions

I have a pre-existing illness and do not feel safe returning to on-site work. What do I do?

In relation to COVID-19, the HSE has classified certain underlying illnesses/conditions as putting persons at either Very High Risk or High Risk. You will need to establish which category you are in as different procedures apply to each. Therefore, you should consult the HSE lists of illnesses in advance of returning to work. The list of illnesses/conditions is available at <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>

Very High Risk Teachers

How do I know if I am in the category of being at Very High Risk from contracting COVID-19 for the 2021/2022 academic year?

The HSE advice on the 'very high risk' group is available at:
<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>

The HSE has also recently published 'Education Sector Guidance on Employees in the COVID-19 Higher Risk Categories, including Pregnant Employees'.

An employee who believes he/she is at very high risk of serious illness from contracting COVID-19 must:

- complete the online Occupational Health Service (OHS) COVID-19 Risk Assessment Questionnaire immediately and submit it to the OHS. This Questionnaire, which is available on the OHS website, must be accompanied by a completed 'Report from Treating Consultant'. Where such a report cannot be obtained from the treating consultant within a short timeframe, a copy of the latest treating consultant's report can be obtained from the employee's GP. The report from the treating consultant template is also available on the OHS website. The contract to provide the OHS is currently held by Medmark.
- inform the employer immediately, or on diagnosis, that he/she believes he/she is in the 'very high risk' group.

Can I appeal the categorisation of Medmark (OHS)?

Yes.

The details of the appeal mechanism are set out in in CL42/2021(teachers) and CL43/2021 (other grades).

Pregnant Staff Members

I am pregnant. How is my level of risk to be determined?

- *A pregnant staff member who has any of the medical conditions as listed on the HSE website under 'Very high risk groups (extremely vulnerable)' should apply to Medmark (OHS) for a COVID-19 Health Risk Categorisation assessment to determine if she should attend the workplace.*
- *All pregnant staff members should return a completed COVID-19 Risk Assessment Questionnaire to Medmark (OHS) to determine their individual level of risk.*
- *Medmark (OHS) will determine initially whether or not the pregnant staff member has significant vaccine protection.*

I am pregnant but not categorised as Very High Risk. Must I attend the workplace (i.e. return to work)?

Yes. The current HSE advice for the education sector states that pregnant employees, including those up to 14 weeks gestation, who are medically fit for work can attend the workplace, unless categorised by the OHS as 'Very High Risk' due to an underlying medical condition unrelated to the pregnancy.

The TUI is keenly aware of the concerns of members who are pregnant and is engaged in on-going discussions with the Department of FHERIS and other relevant authorities with a view to having those concerns addressed and allayed.

I am pregnant and Medmark (OHS) has categorised me as Very High Risk; should I attend the workplace (i.e. return to work)?

No. However, If Medmark categorises a pregnant employee as Very High Risk, she remains available for work and the employer must facilitate - and she must engage - in alternative working arrangements i.e. work from home.

I am pregnant and Medmark (OHS) has categorised me as High Risk; should I attend the workplace (i.e. return to work)?

You are required to attend the workplace. However, if you are categorised as High Risk you should take the advice of your medical advisor and/or Medmark in relation to any additional risk mitigation measures that may be required due to this categorisation.

Can I appeal the categorisation of Medmark (OHS)?

Yes. The details of the review mechanism are set out in CL42/2021(teachers) and CL43/2021 (other grades). You can supply additional information in the review process supplied by your own doctor and consultant/s.

I am pregnant, should my employer carry out a specific risk assessment owing to my pregnancy?

Yes. There is a statutory obligation on the employer to carry out a workplace pregnancy risk assessment on an employee as soon as they are notified that she is pregnant. This is separate from and in addition to any assessment of the level of risk as determined by Medmark (OHS) and has the purpose of establishing what (if any) additional measures to mitigate risk should be put in place if the pregnant employee is required to be in attendance in the workplace.

Caring/Childcare Responsibilities

Can I apply for Parental Leave or Carer's Leave if I have caring or childcare responsibilities or am living with a person/s with a high risk or very high risk of contracting COVID 19?

Yes. You are entitled to have a request to avail of existing, relevant leave entitlements considered by your ETB. In considering such applications, your ETB will take account of its policy on employee absences where the welfare and educational needs of the students must take precedence over all other considerations.

COVID-19 Response

What specific measures should the ETB take in responding to the COVID-19 threat?

- 1. The ETB should enhance programmes to promote a healthy lifestyle to the greatest extent possible.*
- 2. The ETB should encourage members of the site community to signal to a central contact point in the ETB early if they are diagnosed with COVID-19 (Note: confidentiality and data protection issues must be considered in how this is done). The intention is to support the ETB in identifying early if there is evidence of transmission of COVID-19 related to ETB community activity so that it can respond appropriately in association with public health authorities.*
- 3. Pathways for access to healthcare should be clear so that people know who to contact for access to healthcare at any time if they develop symptoms of illness.*
- 4. Staff who consider themselves specifically at risk of severe illness, or with vulnerable members of their household, should engage with the ETB as their employer to manage that risk as appropriate.*
- 5. The ETB should advise staff who are Very High Risk (as per HSE guidance) that they are not required to teach/deliver face to face and facilitate such staff to work remotely, including offering teaching and learning online, where this is necessary. This is crucial in ensuring the safety of such staff.*

If I am identified as a close contact and have not heard from contact tracing should I go for a test?

Public Health authorities will advise if you are a close contact i.e. the HSE contact tracing team.

If I am advised that I am a close contact and do not need to go for a test as I am asymptomatic can I still go for a test?

You must follow the advice of your GP/HSE/Public health authorities.

If this result is positive and I am asymptomatic should I notify my employer and stay at home?

You must remain at time and notify your employer accordingly via the appropriate circular i.e. as per the appendices in CL42/2021(teachers) and CL43/2021 (other grades).

What contact tracing systems should be in place on site and whose responsibility are these?

Each centre/college should have a contact person should the HSE/Public Health Authorities need to contact the centre/college.

COVID-19 Symptoms and Diagnosis

I have COVID-19 symptoms, should I attend work?

No, absolutely not. You have no discretion in this matter. You must not attend work.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can be found at:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/symptoms/overview/>

What should I do if I develop symptoms of COVID-19 at work?

You must advise your ETB line management immediately and follow the relevant procedures as set out in the centre's/college's COVID-19 Response Plan.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Symptoms of COVID-19 can be found at:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/covid19/symptoms/overview/>

Note that the list of symptoms of COVID-19 has been expanded since the arrival of the Delta variant.

What procedure should be followed if an employee or student falls ill with COVID-19 symptoms while at work/in the centre/college?

Each ETB should have a COVID-19 Response Plan which outlines the centre's/college's procedure including availability of an isolation room and the location of additional PPE (if required).

What happens if a student presents with COVID-19 symptoms during the day?

Staff should inform the management of the ETB immediately. Each ETB must have a response plan to deal with such a scenario. All staff must be advised of the procedure that applies in their workplace.

I have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Will I still get paid?

Yes. Special leave with pay will be granted by the ETB, for those members who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or those who have been advised to self-isolate. To apply for special leave with pay, a member must complete form appended to Circular Letter 42/2021 (teachers) 43/2021 (other grades) and return it to the ETB immediately. The completed form, which can be signed digitally, must be accompanied by appropriate HSE/medical certification to include the estimated date of fitness to return to work. The certification can be scanned and emailed to the line manager/ETB until you are fit to return to work and are in a position to provide the original version.

I have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Must I advise my Employer/ETB?

Yes. A member must provide HSE/medical certification to the employer, to include estimated date of fitness to return to work.

If I have been diagnosed with COVID-19. Will it affect my normal sick leave?

No. Special leave with pay is separate to the normal sick leave scheme.

How much special leave with pay am I entitled to?

Special leave with pay commences on the day that you develop symptoms of COVID-19 and notify your employer/ETB.

It is considered by the Occupational Health Service (OHS – e.g. MedMark) that most recoveries will happen 14 days after the onset of symptoms. You must be 5 days fever free (which may run concurrently) before returning to work. It should be noted that the 14 days is from the onset of symptoms and not the date of receiving a positive COVID-19 test result.

Nonetheless, if symptoms persist you must keep in touch with your employer regarding the need for further leave which may be considered in consultation with the OHS, e.g. MedMark.

These arrangements do not preclude an employee working from home at an earlier stage, if this is feasible, depending on the individual case.

When you return to work, you must be informed by the employer of the procedures in the workplace regarding social distancing, use of personal protective equipment and hand washing techniques.

Self-isolation

What is self-isolation?

Self-isolation means staying indoors and completely avoiding contact with other people. This includes other people in the household, as much as possible. A member with COVID-19 symptoms will be medically/HSE advised to self-isolate while he/she waits for a COVID-19 test appointment and test results.

I have been advised to self-isolate. Will I still get paid?

Yes. Special leave with pay will be granted by the ETB for members who have been advised to self-isolate pending a COVID-19 test. A member must seek a COVID-19 test immediately upon experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 and/or being advised to self-isolate.

To apply for special leave with pay, a member must complete the form appended to Circular Letter 42/2021 (teachers) and 43/2021 (other grades) and return it to the ETB immediately. The completed form, which can be signed digitally, must be accompanied by appropriate HSE/medical certification to include estimated date of fitness to return to work. The certification can be scanned and emailed to the ETB until you are fit to return to work and are in a position to provide the original version.

If the COVID-19 test is positive the member remains on special leave with pay.

If the COVID-19 test is negative, following the period of self-isolation, and the member remains unwell, s/he reverts to the normal sick leave scheme.

Am I required to tell my employer/ETB if I have been advised to self-isolate?

Yes. All members have a responsibility to adhere to Government guidelines as they relate to COVID-19. If management becomes aware that a member attended work when s/he should have been self-isolating, they are expected to report this to the HSE. The matter may also have to be dealt with at local level.

Close Contacts

Whose responsibility is it to advise me that I have been in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case/person? Is it the responsibility of the ETB or the HSE?

If you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 you will receive either:

- *a call from a contact tracer*
- *an alert on your mobile phone, if you're using the COVID Tracker app*

Calls from contact tracers come up as a private number. You cannot contact a contact tracer directly or return a missed call. If you don't answer a call from a contact tracer, s/he will leave a message, if voice mail is working. Contact tracers will let you know that they have tried to contact you. They will call you a few times, if necessary.

If you are advised that you are a close contact, you will have to get tested for COVID-19. A contact tracer will arrange a COVID-19 test for you, even if you do not have symptoms.

It is not the responsibility of the ETB to conduct contact tracing. However, ETBs are required to keep a contact log of all persons attending/visiting the workplace.

I have been in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case/person. Should I attend work?

If you are fully vaccinated and have sufficient vaccine protection and do not have any COVID-19 symptoms you may be allowed to attend work. This will be determined by the HSE following a public health risk assessment.

I have been advised that I am a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case/person and have been advised to restrict my movement. What happens?

If you have no COVID-19 symptoms you may still be medically/HSE advised to restrict your movements if you have been in close contact with a person who has a confirmed case of COVID-19 or if you live with someone who has COVID-19 symptoms. This will be determined by the HSE.

Am I required to deliver remotely while restricting my movements?

If you are advised to restrict your movements and are not, yourself, symptomatic, you are medically fit for work and remain available for work. You will be assigned work, which can be completed remotely, for the 14 day period and your employer must therefore facilitate alternative working arrangements to the maximum extent possible e.g. working from home.

As there is a contractual obligation to work while well, all employees must co-operate with all such flexibilities while they are restricting their movements. Where an employee on restricted movement tests positive for COVID-19, the provisions set out above apply.

Members with caring or childcare responsibilities or living with high risk or very high risk individual

I live with a high risk or very high risk individual, do I have to attend work?

Special leave with pay is not available for an employee who lives with a high risk or very high risk individual. However, an employee may avail of other relevant leave provisions such as parental leave, parent's leave, carer's leave etc.

I am required to care for a COVID-19 positive individual (e.g. child), what happens?

You can apply for restricted movement leave during the 10-day period of self-isolation for the 'person' who needs care and also for a further 7 days after the 'person's' period of self-isolation ends.

You remain available for work and should be facilitated to work remotely for the 17-day consecutive period.

COVID-19 Related Leave Provisions

Scenario	Leave Provision	Paid (yes/no)
<i>I have COVID-19 symptoms and I am waiting for a medical assessment to determine if a COVID-19 test is required (irrespective of whether I have significant vaccine protection or not).</i>	<i>Special Leave with Pay</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>I have COVID-19 symptoms and I have been advised by GP/HSE to attend for a COVID-19 test and I am waiting for the test and test result.</i>	<i>Special Leave with Pay</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>I have COVID-19 symptoms and I have been notified of a negative COVID-19 test result but have been advised by the HSE to attend for a second test.</i>	<i>Special Leave with Pay</i>	<i>Yes</i>

<i>Scenario</i>	<i>Leave Provision</i>	<i>Paid (yes/no)</i>
<i>I have COVID-19 symptoms and I have been notified of a positive COVID-19 test result.</i>	<i>Special Leave with Pay (COVID-19: Diagnosis) applies during this period, up to maximum of 28 days. Where the absence extends beyond 28 days, the employee is recorded as absent on Sick Leave, unless the criteria set out in CL42/2021 apply.</i>	Yes
<i>I have COVID-19 symptoms, have been notified of a positive COVID-19 test result and I am absent beyond the 28-day period.</i>	<i>Special Leave with Pay may be extended by the employer beyond 28 days where the criteria as set out in CL42/2021 are met.</i>	Yes
<i>I have no COVID-19 symptoms and was a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. I have been notified of a positive test result.</i>	<i>Special Leave with Pay</i>	Yes
<i>I do not have significant vaccine protection, have no COVID-19 symptoms and have been advised by HSE Contact Tracing Team that I am a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. A COVID-19 test is arranged for me.</i>	<i>Restricted movement leave until test result is known</i>	Yes
<i>I (regardless of vaccination status) have no COVID-19 symptoms and have been advised by HSE Contact Tracing Team that I am a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 variant of concern case.</i>	<i>Restricted movement leave until test result is known</i>	Yes
<i>I have no COVID-19 symptoms, have significant vaccine protection or have previously recovered from COVID-19 and have been advised by the HSE Contact Tracing Team that I am a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case.</i>	<i>No leave provision – attend work</i>	N/A
<i>I have no COVID-19 symptoms and live with a ‘person’ who has COVID-19 symptoms. This ‘person’ must arrange a COVID-19 test.</i>	<i>Restricted movement leave until test result is known</i>	Yes

<i>Scenario</i>	<i>Leave Provision</i>	<i>Paid (yes/no)</i>
<i>I am concerned that I have COVID-19 symptoms, but GP advises that I do not meet the criteria for a COVID-19 test. I am advised by the GP to restrict my movements until I am 48 hours symptom free.</i>	<i>Sick leave if not fit to work. Restricted movement leave if fit to work remotely.</i>	<i>Yes - if paid sick leave remaining Yes – restricted movement</i>
<i>I have COVID-19 symptoms and have been notified of a negative COVID-19 test result and have been advised by the HSE to self-isolate until I am 48 hours symptom free</i>	<i>Sick leave if not fit to work. Restricted movement leave if fit to work remotely.</i>	<i>Yes - if sick leave remaining Yes – restricted movement</i>
<i>I am providing care to a ‘person’ (e.g., young child) who is a confirmed COVID-19 case.</i>	<i>Restricted Movement leave during the 10-day period of self-isolation for the ‘person’ who needs care and also for a further 7 days after the ‘person’s’ period of self-isolation ends</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>I am concerned that I may be a close or casual contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case.</i>	<i>No leave provision and should attend for work unless advised differently by the HSE Contact Tracing Team</i>	<i>N/A</i>
<i>I do not have COVID-19 symptoms, but I live with a ‘person’ who is a close contact of a confirmed case. The ‘person’ feels well so therefore the other household members do not need to restrict their movements.</i>	<i>No leave provision and should attend for work</i>	<i>N/A</i>

Travel Abroad

What happens if I wish to travel abroad before going back to work or during Christmas or other breaks?

Where there is an intention to undertake travel overseas to any country which requires a restricted movement period on return to Ireland, an employee must make provision by way of an Unpaid Leave application, in advance, for that period of restricted movement, where it coincides with their return to work due date.

The travel advice that pertains at the time of travel will apply to all staff and students.

Staff Rooms

My staff room has been converted into a classroom. Is this allowed?

The staff room should only be used as a classroom where centre/college management has exhausted all other options and management informs staff of all other options explored.

Where a staff room is being used as a classroom, centre/college management should provide a suitable alternative facility for staff.

What is the physical distancing requirement for the staff room?

In staff rooms and canteens, the physical distance of 2 metres should be maintained where possible.

Consideration should be given to formation of staff pods or teams who work together and who can take breaks together.

What is the physical distancing requirement for staff meetings?

When organising staff meetings, management should make every possible effort to hold them remotely.

If corporeal meetings are held they should comprise small groups. In every instance, 2 metres physical distancing must be maintained.

What about other gatherings, assemblies etc.?

Management should make every possible effort to hold such gatherings/assemblies remotely. Large corporeal gatherings, including large or full group assemblies in one physical space, should be avoided.

As was the case in the past year, the TUI will assist members in circumstances where centre/college management proposes to convene a meeting/gathering/assembly that is not in compliance with this advice.

If the staff room in my centre/college is being used as a classroom, is my employer required to provide suitable alternative facilities for staff?

Yes. The employer is required either to provide suitable and adequate facilities to allow employees to eat and drink any meals or beverages or to have arrangements in place to allow employees access to other suitable and adequate facilities.

Any facilities provided or made available for use by employees must have means for boiling water.

Table surfaces should be easy to clean. Sitting facilities/seating should have back supports. The area should have adequate lighting and heating.

All members should familiarise themselves with the guidelines as provided by the Health and Safety Authority which are available at this link - https://www.hsa.ie/eng/Publications_and_Forms/Publications/General_Application_Regulations/gen_apps_workplace.pdf

Local management has said that because the staff room is being used for classes and space is at a premium, staff will have to eat their lunch/drink their tea in their cars/in the centre/college yard/in the local park/in a local café. Is that acceptable?

No.

As set out above, management must either provide suitable and adequate facilities or have arrangements in place to allow employees access to other suitable and adequate facilities. A car, centre/college yard, local park or café would not be suitable and/or adequate.

Local management has said that because the staff room is being used for classes and space is at a premium, staff will have to eat their lunch/drink their tea in a classroom while supervising students. Is that acceptable?

No.

Under the Organisation of Working Time Act, employees have an entitlement to scheduled breaks, including lunch breaks. You cannot be required to supervise students while on such a break, as supervision is work and a break is a break from work.

What should I do if management refuses to provide or put arrangements in place to allow employees access to suitable and adequate facilities?

In the first instance, the Lead Worker Representative should be informed and requested to make representations to management. If this does not lead to a swift resolution of the matter, TUI members should follow the 'Procedure for Dealing with Health and Safety Concerns in Schools/Colleges/Centres/IOs/TUs owing to COVID-19'.

You should also inform the TUI Workplace Committee which should, in turn, proceed in accordance with the procedure/steps set out later in these FAQs and keep the members and the local Branch officers advised of progress.

Extra-Curricular Activities

Can extra-curricular activities still take place?

The primary focus for all centres/colleges is on re-opening for classes and sustaining that re-opening. Following consultation with staff, centres/colleges may decide to commence extra-curricular activities that comply with public health guidelines. Before doing so, a risk assessment of the activity, as it relates to COVID-19, must take place and the activity can only proceed if it adheres to the public health advice applicable at the time. If the activity is governed by a national body, the guidelines of that body must also be adhered to.

Access to the Workplace

Can visitors be permitted entry to my workplace?

Attendance by visitors to workplaces is restricted to those attending for essential reasons only and will only be allowed with prior arrangement with senior management of the ETB.

Is my workplace required to keep a contact log for all those attending or visiting the workplace?

Yes.

Meetings with Parents/Guardians

Is it possible to meet with parents/guardians in a physical setting?

Communication with parents/guardians where required should transact remotely i.e. by phone/text. If necessary, communication may transact on a virtual platform used by the workplace (Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Classroom etc.).

If it is deemed essential and necessary to meet parents/guardians in a physical setting, this must transact by an appointment process only. The meeting must take place in a room where social distancing of 2 metres can be strictly maintained and which has been cleaned before and – will be cleaned again after - the visit.

Croke Park Hours (Teachers)

Should Croke Park Hours- related activities take place this year?

Yes. Under National Pay Agreements including:

- Public Service Agreement (aka 'Croke Park Agreement') and continued under:

- *Haddington Road Agreement (HRA)*
- *Lansdowne Road Agreement (LRA)*
- *Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) and*
- *Building Momentum Agreement*

*an additional **33 hours** per annum (Croke Park Hours) is required of teachers.*

Should Croke Park Hours-related activities take place corporeally this year?

When organising Croke Park meetings, management should make every possible effort to hold them remotely or in small groups. Large gatherings in one physical space should be avoided. In the case of any corporeal meeting, 2 metre physical distancing must be strictly maintained.

Does this include open days/open nights?

Yes. When organising open days/open nights management should make every possible effort to hold them remotely (i.e. via video streams and/or virtual platforms). Large gatherings in one physical space should be avoided. In the case of any corporeal meeting, 2 metre physical distancing must be strictly maintained.

Centre/College management is seeking to change the Croke Park schedule for the 2021/22 academic year that was agreed in April/May. Is this allowed?

- *Before the end of the academic year (i.e. in May 2021), the calendar for the use of the 23 hours in the next academic year (2021/2022) **must have been agreed by staff**, after consultation and consensus (as appropriate).*
- *The agreed calendar of usage of the 23 hours must be made available to the centre/college community at the **commencement** of each academic year.*
- *This calendar can subsequently be changed **only in exceptional circumstances** and only following consultation and consensus (as appropriate). A staff meeting should be called for the purpose of considering and responding to a written proposal to change the agreed calendar.*
- *Any attempt by management to impose a changed calendar is unacceptable, a breach of a national collective agreement and must be reported to the local TUI Branch officers and Area Representative as a matter of urgency.*

Croke Park Hours (Other Grades)

Should Croke Park Hours- related activities take place this year?

Yes.

Compliance Issues

I have a student who deliberately flouts the COVID-19 response plan; for example, by refusing to comply with hand hygiene, mask wearing or social distancing. What should I do?

Any breach of the COVID-19 response plan or any action/inaction that puts the health and safety of members, other staff or other students at risk is a serious disciplinary offence. You should, immediately, refer the matter to the management of the ETB and it would also be prudent to advise the LWR and advisable to inform the local Branch of the TUI.

What are my Health and Safety (H&S) responsibilities in terms of COVID-19?

An employee, must:

- *Comply with the workplaces measures for dealing with COVID-19, for example, by maintaining physical distancing where feasible, wearing face coverings and practising good hand hygiene*
- *Comply with safety and health legislation*
- *Take reasonable care to protect her/his own safety, health and welfare and that of any other person who may be affected by her/his acts or omissions at work*
- *Co-operate with the employer and any other person to enable them to comply with health and safety legislation*
- *Not engage in improper conduct or other behaviour which could endanger his or her safety, health and welfare or that of any other person.*

What is the procedure for dealing with COVID-19 Health & Safety concerns?

The COVID-19 response plan makes provision for a workplace to have a Lead Worker Representative (LWR). In the first instance, concerns or issues that arise are processed in accordance with the procedures specified in the COVID-19 response plan.

*However, if those procedures are not applied in a fair and prompt manner or if the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, the **TUI reserves the right to act on behalf of members to protect their health and safety, as outlined in the following steps.***

Step One:

If a TUI member wishes to raise a COVID-19 related health and safety issue in a workplace s/he should, in the first instance, inform the Lead Worker Representative (LWR). The member should also advise the TUI Workplace Committee (WPC) and the WPC should keep a record of this.

Step Two:

The LWR will deal with issues that arise in line with the procedure set out in the workplace COVID-19 Response Plan. This includes raising the matter with workplace management/employer immediately and keeping a record of all COVID-19 problems, areas

of non-compliance or defects that the LWR has identified or that have been reported to her/him.

Under this procedure the employer is expected to act promptly on these representations. If unable or unwilling to do so, the employer (for example, workplace management) must detail the reasons why, in order that the LWR can escalate the issue of concern, in the manner specified in the COVID-19 Response Plan.

If a concern is resolved, the LWR must record any actions taken to rectify the concern and inform staff.

Step Three:

If, notwithstanding the efforts of the LWR, a concern has not been addressed to the satisfaction of the TUI member/s, the matter should then be referred as an industrial relations issue/grievance to the TUI Workplace Committee (WPC).

The TUI WPC can seek advice from the local Branch Officers and/or Area Rep. The contact details for Area Reps can be found in the TUI Diary and Handbook that issues to all members in September. Contact details are also available by contacting TUI Head Office on 01-4922588 or tui@tui.ie.

The TUI WPC will meet with management immediately and seek to resolve the matter. In a ETB, if a satisfactory resolution is not provided by local management, the WPC will advise the local Branch who will contact the management of the ETB to seek an immediate resolution of the matter.

Step Four:

If a satisfactory resolution is not provided, following the steps as outlined above, the WPC will:

- *Lodge a collective grievance using the nationally agreed grievance procedure*
and
- *Report the matter to the Health and Safety Authority. If the HSA sends an inspector to the workplace, the LWR is entitled to accompany them during the inspection and to get a copy of any recommendations or orders. This should, in turn, be provided to the TUI WPC.*
and
- *Where relevant, report the matter to the Health Service Executive (HSE).*

This document will be updated on a regular basis so please continue to check the website (www.tui.ie), TUI's social media and the TUI App following the initial publication.