


HEALTH AND SAFETY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM GUIDANCE REGISTER		Guidance	G028
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Introduction

Since July 2022, in line with Government guidance, there is no longer a specific requirement for a COVID risk assessment or a legal requirement to wear a face covering in any public or workplace.

Other infection prevention measures are included in the University's Communicable Disease Guidance, which make a real difference in limiting infectious transmission.

Whilst there is no requirement to wear a face covering, please respect those who choose to continue wearing one.

Masks will still be worn in some specialist areas such as labs and clinical settings based on the activity and risk control measures. Staff and students will be told if masks are required when using these spaces.

Wearing a face covering

If you choose to continue wearing a face covering, a FFP2 facemask would offer increased protection to the wearer. More information can be found in the "filtering face-piece mask" section below.

How do face coverings work in reducing infectious transmission?

Depending on the quality of the face covering and how it is used, the wearer may inhale fewer infectious droplets from others, providing some direct protective effect to the wearer. It's difficult to quantify this directly protective effect to the wearer with some face coverings. However, face coverings play an important role as a source control measure. In other words, a person who emits infectious droplets is less able to spread them to others if they are wearing a face covering. If everyone does so consistently, the spread of infectious transmission, including coronavirus can be reduced. In summary, face coverings primarily reduce transmission by preventing spread from infected individuals rather than directly protecting the wearer from infection.

If you are feeling unwell with a high temperature, a new continuous cough, a loss of or change in your normal sense of smell or taste (anosmia), or a new heavy cold, please stay at home and do not attend campus. If you do have to run an urgent errand, an appropriate FFP2 facemask will help to protect others from your symptoms.


Types of Face Coverings and Masks

Face coverings/masks can reduce the risk against the spread of infection because they cover the nose and mouth, reducing the spread of droplets and aerosols carrying coronavirus. This limits the amount of the virus being released when people talk and breathe. However, the effectiveness will depend on the quality of material, the standard used to manufacture and how well they fit over your nose and mouth.

These are the types of face coverings and facemasks available:

3 ply reusable fabric

The use of face coverings can be a public health protection measure. They are not classed as personal protective equipment (PPE) and are therefore not covered by health and safety legislation, because:

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- there is no need to conform to a manufacturing standard
- they do not provide protection for work risks such as dust and spray

Whilst they are reusable, not all fabric face coverings have the recommended 3 ply, as they do not have to conform to a manufacturing standard, neck gaiters in particular are only a single layer of fabric.

You are able to wear a different face covering of your choice if it is of suitable quality and standard. Your face covering should not be offensive to others and should not breach the [student rules and regulations](#).

Fluid Resistant Surgical Masks

Surgical face masks are designed to be worn in medical settings to limit the spread of infection. They are not considered to be PPE when worn outside of healthcare activities. Unlike face coverings:

- they are manufactured to a recognised standard
- some types are resistant to droplets of fluids and splashes

The University a stock of surgical face masks where identified as a requirement of a task/activity risk assessment.

Filtering Face-piece masks

FFP2 & FFP3 Face Masks are European classes of respirators, tested on the direction of inspiration (outside to inside) and take into account leakage to the face and filtration efficiency. These face masks have usually been used as personal protective equipment, protecting from hazards such as dust.


SAGE recommend FFP2-equivalent masks to offer the best balance of filtration and comfort as they are manufactured from high quality materials and fit well on the face, covering the nose and the mouth.

Filtering Face-piece 2 (FFP2) or KN95 Face Masks

FFP2 face masks are the UK/EU equivalent of N95/KN95 face masks, which meet the guidelines from the World Health Organisation for protection against coronavirus. FFP2 masks have a minimum of 94% filtration percentage and a maximum of 8% leakage to the inside. These masks are not shaped to your face but are simply held in place by the elastic ear loop and have a typical lifespan of 3-8 hours depending on environmental factors, when used as personal protective equipment. Using the mask as a source control, you may be able to use it for a longer time period.

Once the mask no longer creates a seal, or if the filters are visibly wet or dirty, it's time to throw it away, you could potentially have a number of FFP2/KN95 masks in weekly rotation to prolong their use, putting them in a paper bag or container and marked with a day of use to keep them clean when they're not in use.

The University recommends that FFP2 or KN95 facemask should be worn for specific tasks or activities. To enable this, the University will provide FFP2 face masks when required for work or study activities identified through a risk assessment.

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Should you wish to purchase your own facemask, with various designs and colours now available, you should ensure your purchase meets the BS EN149:2001+A1:2009 and has a CE marking, with a four digit code corresponding to the CE test centre. This will be listed in the purchase information and stamped on the facemasks.

Filtering Face-piece 3 Face Masks (FFP3)

Tight-fitting respirators (such as disposable FFP3 masks and reusable half masks) rely on having a good seal with the wearer's face. To ensure that respiratory protective equipment (RPE) will protect the wearer:

- a face fit test should be carried out the first time a worker uses a particular type of respirator
- the wearer should carry out a pre-use seal check or fit check, which they should repeat every time they put a respirator on

[Using a disposable respirator - poster](#)

Training and face fit testing must be undertaken before using these types of facemasks. The requirement to wear these face masks will be identified through the activity risk assessment.

[Personal protective equipment guidance.](#)

Where do I get a face covering?

Face mask stock is available from the post room, please email postroom@aber.ac.uk, with any requirements you may have from your risk assessment.


Communicating effectively while wearing a face covering

The use of face coverings will increase communication difficulty for some people, especially those that are deaf or hard of hearing. Please be aware that not everyone will understand you while wearing a face covering. Deaf people will not hear or see you speaking. It is important to check individual communication needs with the people you are talking to and be mindful of different strategies for communicating in general. Please consider alternative ways of communicating, such as typing in your mobile phone so another person can read your message, writing with pen and paper, or taking a further step back and lifting your mask temporarily to communicate with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing.

How to put on your face covering?

Hand hygiene either by washing hands or using the sanitisation stations at the entry of each building, should be performed before wearing or taking off a face covering. A face covering must only be handled by its straps. Inspect the face covering and do not use it if it is damaged or dirty.

1. Placing the straps behind your ears, adjust the covering to your face, leaving no gaps on the sides.
2. Avoid touching the covering while wearing it.
3. Change your mask once it gets dirty or wet.
4. To remove the covering, wash or sanitise your hands, remove using the strap behind your ears, without touching the front of the mask.

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- As you remove the mask pull it away from your face, place in a re-sealable bag for re-use or to be laundered. Clean your hands by washing or sanitising at the stations provided.

How to put on a FFP2/KN95 facemask:

- Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser before touching the mask.
- Remove a folded mask from the box and make sure there are no obvious tears or holes in it. Open the mask with the inside facing you.
- Position the face mask to the face, with the nose strip at the top.
- Place a loop around each ear.
- Once in position, ensure the mask is adjusted to completely cover the nose and mouth.
- Use both hands to mould or pinch the stiff edge to the shape of your nose.
- Clean your hands again with soap and water or hand sanitiser before touching the mask.

How to remove a FFP2/KN95 facemask:

- Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser before touching the mask.
- Avoid touching the front of the mask. Only touch the ear loops.
- Hold both of the ear loops and gently lift and remove the mask from your face.
- Dispose of the mask in the bin.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or hand sanitiser.

Whom does this apply to?

The guidance applies to all staff, students, contractors and visitors aged 11 and over to all University Buildings.

All contractors, suppliers and third parties to the University will be informed by the Department engaging their services of the University's guidance on face coverings.

How should I care for my reusable face covering?

If you are using a reusable face covering, store it in a clean re-sealable bag until you can wash it. The face covering should be washed at least once a day. Wash it in line with manufacturer's instructions at the highest temperature appropriate for the fabric. You can use your normal detergent and you can wash and dry it with other laundry.


Do not share or give it to someone else to use; and you must dispose of your face covering if it is damaged.

Make sure you clean any surfaces the face covering has touched using normal household cleaning products.

How can I dispose of single use face covering responsibly?

Remove the face covering carefully – do not touch the front of the face covering or the part of which has been in contact with your mouth and nose.

If you are not at home, place your face covering in a litter bin or take it home in a re-sealable bag and put it in your bin. Do not litter as it can damage the environment. If you are at home, put it in your household waste bin. Do not put single use face coverings in the recycling bin, as they cannot be recycled.

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You do not need to put them in an extra bag or store them for a time before throwing them away.

Please remember to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser immediately after removing your face covering and throwing it away.

Can I wear a visor/shield instead of a face covering?

Transparent face visors or shields are not an equivalent alternative in terms of virus transmission and are not considered a face covering under this guidance. They may protect the wearer against droplet spread but are unlikely to be effective in preventing the escape of smaller particles when used without an additional face covering.

We appreciate that some people speak for a living and have difficulty making themselves heard when wearing other types of face covering. However, visors are designed to protect the eyes from airborne droplets and are not as effective as face coverings, so extra precautions must be taken when using visors for speaking purposes. If this is not possible, a face covering should be worn.

Monitoring and review

We will continue to monitor our position on face coverings, informed by public health guidance.

Additional sources of information

[Royal Society DELVE Initiative, Report on Face Masks for the General Public – An Update](#)

[Government Guidance to the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies](#)

<https://gov.wales/face-coverings-guidance-public>

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An EIA has been completed, if you have any queries regarding the EIA please contact divstaff@aber.ac.uk.