

# **GMIT COVID-19 Response Plan**

**Revision 3.  
October 2021**



**#HOLDFIRM**

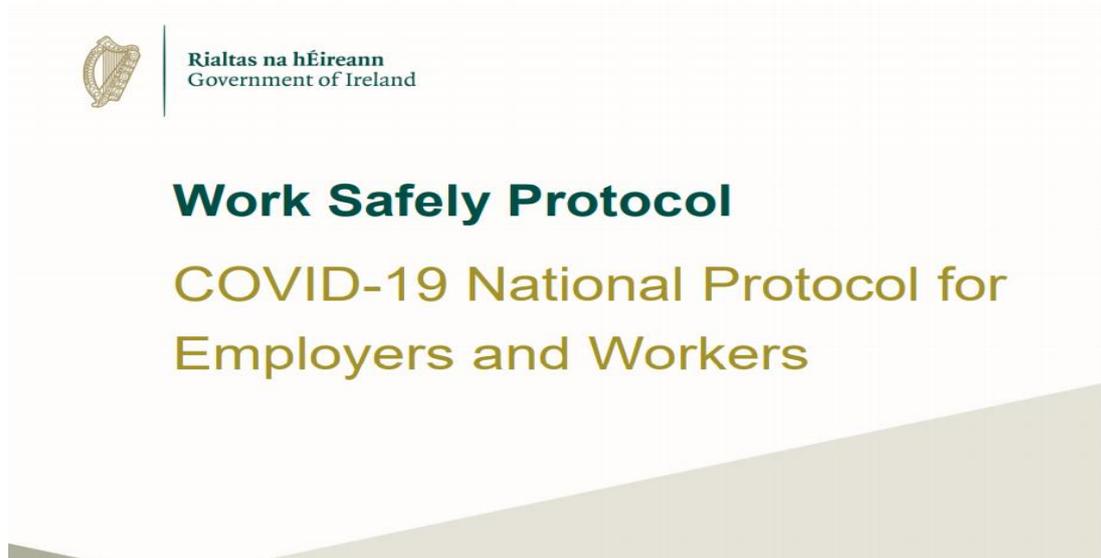
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The GMIT Return-to-Campus Plan was first produced in the summer of 2020 and later renamed as GMIT COVID-19 Response Plan (August 2020). The purpose of the plan was to provide information and guidance to staff, students and members of the public on GMIT’s plans and protocols for returning to campus. The return to work activities in GMIT was followed by the [Government’s Resilience and Recovery Plan Living with COVID-19 2020-2021](#) (September 2020) and superseded by the [Work Safely Protocol](#) (November 2020) which was updated in May 2021 with Ventilation and Vaccination measures included and again on October 2021 to reinforce prevention measures of mask wearing, ventilation, vaccination etc. In August the “Reframing the challenge Continuing our recovery and reconnecting plan” was launched with easing of restrictions set out in line with the continued monitoring of hospitalisation of cases.



This GMIT COVID-19 Response Plan is aligned with national public health guidance and takes into account the [Government’s Resilience and Recovery Plan Living with COVID-19 2020-2021](#) and the [Work Safely Protocol \(updated September 2021\)](#) and reflects measures outlined in the Government’s publication, [‘Reframing the Challenge: Continuing our Recovery and Reconnecting’](#).

The first iteration of the Response Plan covered the return to campus and semester 1 of academic year 2020-2021. This revision was completed at the end of semester 1. A review of how the Institute performed in Semester 1 with respect to the COVID-19 pandemic shows that while we did have several cases of students who developed COVID-19 symptoms shortly after being on campus and who subsequently were diagnosed as COVID-19 positive, there was no evidence of transmission of virus on campus. GMIT liaised with Public Health in such cases, and in all cases except one the classmates of the infected person were identified as casual contacts only, and no further action was required.

The key message needs to be repeated frequently, namely that the simple actions we take have been proven to prevent the spread of virus on campus, and we must continue to follow these procedures diligently. These procedures are:

- **Mask wearing** – everyone must wear a mask all the time, except when eating or working alone.
- [Daily Health Check Form](#) when on campus, everyone must complete the daily health

check form.

- **Physical distancing** – is less strict in a situation where mask wearing is undertaken.
- **Ventilation of spaces** sets out the capacity of the area but everyone is encouraged to maintain a physical distance from others where possible.
- **Sanitisation** – everyone must sanitise their hands upon entry to GMIT and frequently throughout the day, and everyone must sanitise their shared work / study space before and after works/study.

With regard to teaching activities on campus , the key prodecures to follow include:

- **Reduced capacity** per room in line with minimum ventilation flow rate of 10 L/s/pp.
- **Ventilation** – Review of mechanical ventilation systems to adhere to [CIBSE Ventilation Guidance V.5 undertaken over summer 2021 and maintenance/ retrofitting undertaken.](#) In naturally ventilated rooms every window to be open by at least 30 cm in all rooms at all time and door ajar.
- **Student attendance**, showing name and seat number to be recorded.

Several COVID-19 related policies have been produced; these are:

- [GMIT Face Covering Policy](#)
- GMIT Public Health Measures for Duration of COVID-19 Pandemic (part of the Student Code of Conduct)
- GMIT Return to Campus Post-Quarantine Policy
- Guidance for staff and students who become unwell with possible COVID-19.
- Field trips protocol during the COVID-19 pandemic
- GMIT Policy on International Travel for Students and Staff during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Other documents have been produced including:

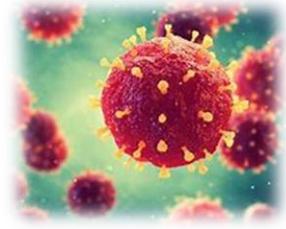
- [Key actions required when attending campus – students.](#)
- [Key actions required when attending campus – staff.](#)
- FAQ documents for [Staff](#) and [Students](#)

This GMIT COVID-19 Response Plan outlines the measures to prevent spread of COVID-19 and the individual responsibilities to ensure the safety and health of all.

## 2. CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

### WHAT IS CORONVIRUS?

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect lungs and airways. It is caused by a new (novel) Coronavirus called CoronavirusSARS-CoV-2. Current variants are significantly more infectious than the flu that circulates every winter. Viruses can be easily spread to other people (during speech, cough, or sneeze) and patients are normally infectious until all the symptoms have gone. Some people have no symptoms yet can spread the virus.



### SYMPTOMS

Common symptoms may include a fever (high temperature - 38 degrees Celsius or above) - including having chills, dry cough, fatigue (tiredness), loss or change to your sense of smell or taste, nasal congestion (runny or blocked nose), conjunctivitis (also known as red eyes), sore throat, headache, muscle or joint pain (aches and pains), different types of skin rash, nausea or vomiting, diarrhoea, chills or dizziness.

Regular updates can be found on the HSE website: [COVID-19 Symptoms](#)

### HOW IS CORONAVIRUS SPREAD?

You could get COVID-19 if you:

- Primarily if you come into **close contact** with someone who has the virus. The virus spreads from droplets from the nose and mouth e.g. someone who is talking, singing, coughing, or sneezing ([HSE](#))
- **“Airborne transmission** is the spread of a virus in very tiny respiratory particles. This can happen over a longer distance and persist for a longer time than droplets, such as within a room. To Protect yourself, keep indoor spaces well ventilated (aired out) by opening windows and doors if possible.” ([HSE](#))
- **Infected surfaces** that are touched which someone who has the virus has coughed or sneezed on and bring your unwashed hands to your face (eyes, nose, or mouth). “That’s why it is important to wash your hands properly and often (HSE)
- **Warning: if infected you can spread the virus without having symptoms for this reason people are asked to behave as though they are infected.** Please refer to the HSE for further guidance: [How COVID-19 is spread - HSE.ie](#)

### 3. NATIONAL PROTOCOL ROADMAP

When planning the return to campus in September 2020, GMIT complied with the Government National Protocol Roadmap for Reopening Society and the [Further and Higher Education Roadmap for the return of further and higher education](#).

The policy of GMIT for the academic year 2020-2021 was to deliver most lectures online, with students attending for a number of consecutive days each week for practical classes and changed subject to public health guidelines for higher education.

The Government Roadmap for reopening society has been replaced with the “Resilience and Recovery 2020-2021: Plan for Living with COVID-19”. This policy provides for five phases of restrictive measures that may be applied in response to the pandemic.

A summary of the rules with respect to higher education in each of the five phases is provided below:

Item	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
<b>Schools, Early Learning and Childcare Services, Adult and Higher Education</b>					
<b>Schools, Early Learning and Childcare Services &amp; Higher and Adult Education</b>	Open with protective measures		Schools and creches open with protective measures Further, higher and adult education to escalate all appropriate protective measures and limit congregation as far as possible	Further, higher and adult education moves primarily online with appropriate protective measures in place for essential attendance on site	Recommendations based on precise situation and evidence at time.

GMIT is implementing the framework for return to substantial onsite provision under the [Safe Return Plan](#) and the [Practical Guidance for Further and Higher Education for Returning to On-site Activity in 2020](#) [last updated [14/09/2021](#)] in accordance with and the updated [Reframing the Challenge: Continuing our Recovery and Reconnecting](#).

#### 4. COVID-19 POLICY STATEMENT

##### **COVID 19 Policy Statement Revision 2**

Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology is committed to providing a safe and healthy campus for all our staff, students, and visitors. To ensure this, we have developed the following COVID-19 Response Plan. All staff, students, visitors, and contractors are responsible for the implementation of this plan and a combined effort will help contain the spread of the virus. The continued actions include:

- inform all staff, students, contractors, and visitors of essential masking, ventilation and hygiene /respiratory etiquette requirements.
- adapt all campuses to facilitate enhanced ventilation.
- intensify cleaning in line with government advice.
- have all staff, students and contractors undergo an updated familiarisation briefing.
- keep a contact log to help with contact tracing.
- continue to monitor our COVID-19 response and amend this plan in consultation with our community.
- provide up to date information to our community on the Public Health advice issued by the HSE and Gov.ie regarding
- display information on the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and correct hand-washing techniques.
- trained Lead Worker Representatives undertake compliance inspections-and put in place a reporting system.
- procedure to be followed in the event of any stakeholder showing symptoms of COVID-19 while on campus or engaged in GMIT activities.

All staff and students will be consulted on an ongoing basis and feedback is encouraged on any concerns, issues, or suggestions.

This can be done through the Lead Worker Representatives or by emailing [covidofficer@gmit.ie](mailto:covidofficer@gmit.ie).

Signed:



Date: October 26<sup>th</sup> 2021

## 5. COVID-19 RESPONSE TEAMS IN GMIT

Dr Seamus Lennon is the designated GMIT COVID19 Officer ([covidofficer@gmit.ie](mailto:covidofficer@gmit.ie)).

GMIT has established several Teams to respond to the COVID-19 evolving situation, as outlined below:

### 5.1 Business Continuity Team (BCT)

The BCT comprised the Executive Board (EB) and additional personnel including the Head of Department Business & Accounting, the Head of Department Nursing & Health sciences, the Computer Services Manager, the Building & Estates Manager, the HR Manager, the Marketing Officer, the Institute Health and Safety Officer, and the President of the Students Union.

This team, chaired by the President, met daily throughout March reducing to twice weekly meetings in April and May, and fortnightly meetings from June to September. It reconvened in late December as 3<sup>rd</sup> wave began. This team was responsible for the overall institutional response to the COVID-19 pandemic and continues to maintain a strategic oversight remit.

### 5.2 Blended and Online Transformation (BOLT) Team

Sponsored by the Registrar, and chaired by Dr Seamus Lennon, the role of the BOLT team was to bring together the various institute-wide digital-learning resources and harness these resources to provide the necessary digital training and upskilling for all staff and students. A reduced BOLT committee now manages a number of projects in this area.

### 5.3 Lead Worker Representatives (LWR's)

Lead Worker Representatives (LWRs) work across each campus to assist in implementation and monitoring of adherence to COVID-19 requirements.

LWRs help work towards compliance of protocols and safeguards put in place to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

The role of LWRs includes carrying out [regular checks](#) that COVID-19 control measures are in place, reporting any problem areas or non-compliance issues, listening to the concerns and suggestions of colleagues and raising such concerns/suggestions on their behalf with the Covid Officer.

Lead Workers undertake [inspections](#) of areas to monitor compliance lead by the Health & Safety Officer. Non-compliance is reported and addressed by the Covid Officer.

## 6. CONTROL MEASURES BY INDIVIDUALS TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

GMIT is implementing the following control measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in line with the [national guidance](#) (Biological Agents Regulations amendment) and [public health protocols](#).

### 6.1 COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures Assessment

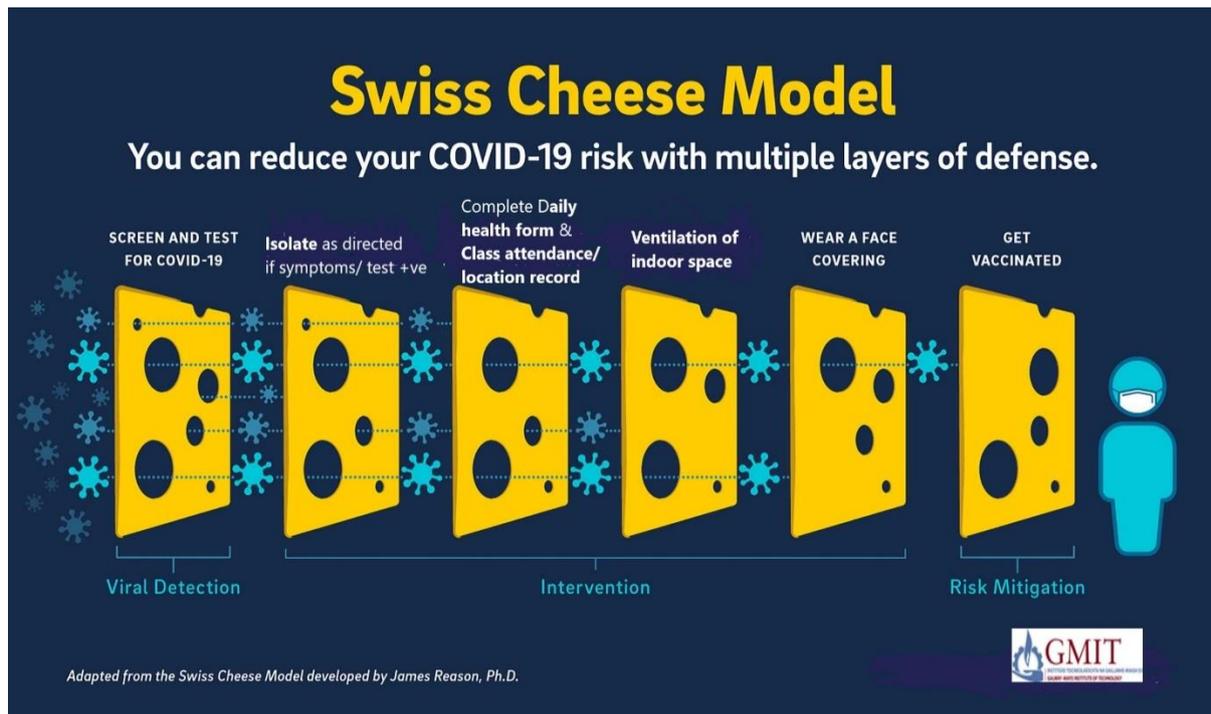
The hazards associated with the transmission of COVID-19 are recorded on the COVID-19 Risk Assessment Form. This assessment considers a range of important factors when assessing work areas and activities. Each work area must review their individual risk assessments and ensure that they are implementing the necessary controls identified. These will be monitored and kept under regular review.

### 6.2 Infection Prevention and Control

It is advised to follow the HSE guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Please refer to the following HSE link for up-to-date guidance: [How to protect yourself and others from COVID-19](#)

**Personal responsibility measures are the primary prevention measure through daily actions and behaviour.**

Each measure acts like a layer of swiss cheese to enhance safety for all.



### 6.3 Minimising Contact – Remote Working and Learning

In line with the [current public health advice](#), a phased return to work has commenced. GMIT staff commenced remote working in March 2020 and their return to work on campus was on an *essentially required* basis. With changes in restriction levels this will alter from time to time. For the academic year 2020/2021, there was a hybrid of onsite and online learning. In the 2021-22 academic year persons will continue to work and study remotely where necessary, with phased return to on-campus activities from September 20<sup>th</sup> dependant on the

ventilation /capacity of the work area (lecture room). Dependant on public health advice an increase in on-campus activities is planned from October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

#### 6.4 Physical Distancing

During the acute surges it was vital that spread was minimised as far as possible through distancing. Wearing of face coverings and the use of ventilation indoors gives added controls to prevent disease spread. As strict rules around physical distancing is removed staff, students, visitors, and contractors where possible practice physical distancing and minimise direct contact with others. Use a partition screen in the canteen when unmasked.

#### 6.5 Hand Hygiene

In accordance with HSE guidelines on [How to clean your hands](#)

- Wash or sanitise hands before leaving home and on arrival on campus. Ensure you are familiar with and follow hand hygiene guidance.
- Use hand-sanitising stations at campus entrances.
- Use an alcohol-based hand rub/sanitiser or wash hands regularly with soap and water (after arriving, before and after eating and drinking, after coughing or sneezing, after using toilet facilities).
- A 20 second minimum contact time of suds or solution is necessary to render the virus inactive.
- Avoid touching your eyes, mouth, or nose with unclean hands.
- Do not share objects that touch your mouth e.g., bottles, cups, pens.

#### 6.6 Face Coverings and Respiratory Hygiene

##### Face Coverings

The Institute requires all persons (staff, students, visitors, and contractors) to wear face coverings indoors at all times other than when eating or alone in a room not previously occupied (as the virus can remain for several hours in unventilated air). The [GMIT Policy on Face Coverings](#) can be found in

[APPENDIX 2 – GMIT FACE COVERING POLICY.](#)

In addition, the health advice also acknowledges that face coverings (3 layer fabric or Type 2 disposable surgical mask or FFP2 mask) may not be suitable for all individuals, for example those following medical advice with certain breathing problems or with special needs.

**Medical certification in these circumstances is required.** Visors are not shown to be an efficient protection alone. Persons who attend campus without recommended face protection risk either contracting or spreading the virus to others.

Advice on the [safe use of face coverings](#) is available from the Department of Health.

##### Respiratory Hygiene

- Adopt good respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette.
- Cover nose/mouth with a tissue when coughing/sneezing and dispose of used tissue (If no tissues are available, cough or sneeze into the inner elbow rather than into the hand).
- Keep contaminated hands away from the eyes and nose.
- Carry out hand hygiene after coughing or sneezing.

### 6.7 Cleaning

Staff and students are requested to sanitise/wipe down their own workspaces and shared equipment before and after use. Disinfectant wipes are provided for this purpose. Waste may be disposed of through the normal waste streams.

### 6.8 Vaccination

Vaccinations are a useful supplement to existing IPC measures but do not replace them.

## 7. CONTROL MEASURES OF GMIT FACILITIES TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COVID-19

### 7.1 Access and Egress

Access areas in each campus have hand-sanitizing facilities provided.

### 7.2 Signage

Appropriate signage and procedures have been installed to highlight the public health compliance.

Signage will also remind staff, students, and visitors to **KEEP RIGHT and KEEP MOVING**.

Signage is expected to change as the national guidance evolves.

### 7.3 Air Quality Ventilation & Heating

Ventilation is an essential control to rid the air of airborne virus ensuring a safe space. All teaching areas have been assessed for air quality to ensure a minimum of 10L/s/pp air flow in accordance with WHO recommendations as set out in the [GMIT Ventilation Guidance](#).

#### **Natural Ventilation**

GMIT uses natural ventilation and cross ventilation (where possible) through the introduction of fresh air into the building laboratories, workshops offices and canteen e.g., opening doors and windows. All persons are advised to wear clothing layers during winter and colder temperatures.

#### **Mechanical Ventilation**

Additionally, mechanical ventilation through the use of HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) systems are used to provide comfortable environmental conditions (temperature and humidity) and clean air in indoor settings. Air intake fans are installed in rooms to enhance room ventilation.

#### **Carbon Dioxide Monitor**

CO2 monitors have been installed to validate the ventilation level in some laboratories and shared workspaces. These will indicate the real time level of CO2 in a space. Levels will fluctuate as persons walk past the sensors or if a small number of exhaled breaths directly onto a CO2 sensor can also trigger an alarm reading. However, in line with best practice guidance the aim is to keep the CO2 levels at or below 1,000 ppm as much of the time as possible.

Remember, CO2 levels do not indicate the presence or absence of COVID material in a space, they are a way of validating one of the control measures (i.e. ventilation) that is used to help reduce the risk from COVID. The wearing of masks in indoors significantly reduces the amount of COVID-19 in the air by trapping any of the droplets and aerosols produced by the wearer preventing them entering the air breathed by others.

### Action to take if a CO2 alarm exceeds 1000 ppm / a red status is shown

A CO2 alarm is an indicator of exhaled air in the area around the CO2 sensor. It is not indicative of COVID levels in a space nor does a CO2 alarm render a space as unsafe to work in.

In the event that a local CO2 monitor indicates a high CO2 reading (or shows a red reading) the Lecturer should:

- Ensure that persons have not congregated close to the sensor
- Wait for short period of time to see if the alarm clears (returns to amber or green)
- If the monitor remains in alarm (red) make sure windows are open fully and the door is ajar.

If a CO2 alarm is persistently activating then contact Building & Estates who will review the alarm ASAP to ensure that it is working properly. A CO2 alarm is not a reason to end a class, however if the alarm persists then the Building & Estates department may request that the class be ended early so that a review can be carried out. If elevated levels of CO2 are found on a consistent basis in a space then the use and occupancy of that space will be reviewed and if necessary modified.

### **Hand Dryers**

Hand dryers have been switched off in rest room facilities to manage the risk of airborne COVID-19. Air purifiers based on HEPA-filter technology may be used in rooms deemed difficult to ventilate.

## **7.4 Campus Cleaning and Maintenance**

### **Cleaning**

Cleaning is conducted at regular intervals, particularly at identified high touch point areas, which is in line with the national public health guidelines. Further information on cleaning in relation to COVID-19 is available from the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) at: [ECDC COVID-19 Cleaning Advice4](#)

The HSA provided a checklist for COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfection. The cleaning schedule includes the following:

- Daily Office Cleaning: The recommended cleaning schedule will be carried out in offices.
- Contact/Touch Point Cleaning: common contact/ touch point cleaning in common areas is carried out at least twice daily. Records are held in Building & Estates of the completed cleaning schedules which can be referred to as part of our internal cleaning

audit checks.

- Washrooms: washrooms such as toilets are cleaned at least twice daily. All toilets and wash areas will have enough hot water, paper towels, sanitisers, etc. to provide for safe hand hygiene. An increased number of handwashing stations have been put in place across the campus to encourage good hand hygiene practices.
- Cases/Suspect cases cleaning requirements: Where confirmation of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified, the Covid Officer, in consultation with the relevant Head of Department and/or Head of School will decide on the appropriate response with respect to any extra cleaning of the relevant area that may be recommended.
- Stocks/Supplies: Stocks of essential consumables (e.g., sanitiser fluids, paper towels, etc.) will be held on campus to ensure a sufficient supply is maintained.

Sanitisers and cleaning materials will be distributed as required for use in offices and work areas. Requests are made to [covidppe@gmit.ie](mailto:covidppe@gmit.ie) and copy to line manager for ongoing supplies.

### **Maintenance**

All statutory and emergency maintenance continues as normal throughout the pandemic. General maintenance activity can be notified to [buildingrepairs@gmit.ie](mailto:buildingrepairs@gmit.ie) (Dublin Road/CCAM) or [mayobuildingrepairs@gmit.ie](mailto:mayobuildingrepairs@gmit.ie) (Mayo Campus/Letterfrack) in the normal manner.

### **7.5 Shared Spaces**

Maximum capacity numbers that can be safely accommodated considering the ventilation level have been set for each office, workshop, lab and meeting room. This estimation pays particular attention to, ventilation capacity, shared areas, circulation areas, Fire Safety, Emergency Evacuation and First Aid.

Most shared spaces in GMIT have been assessed for occupancy rates in compliance with ventilation requirements. In addition, localised risk assessments identify control measures associated with mandatory mask wearing, circulation, ventilation, visitor access and cleaning; and control measures are put in place, such as rotas/timetables/bookings for shared-space use.

### **7.6 Reception/Face to Face Contact Points**

Physical barriers/screens have been introduced at all reception areas and other face-to-face contact points across all campuses. Persons behind screens are still advised to wear a mask if the space is shared with others.

### **7.7 Offices, Classrooms and Meeting Rooms**

All classes and essential in-person meetings should be carried out with COVID-compliant protocols (ventilation, masking and cleaning) applied for the use of meeting rooms and classrooms where necessary. Staff returning to offices are encouraged to [Risk Assess their workspace](#) and seek advice from Building & Estates or Health & Safety Officer if necessary.

### 7.8 Laboratories/Workshops

Technical staff have assessed the laboratory and workshop layouts in the past to introduce physical distancing and have subsequently been inspected for air ventilation rates which now allows full occupancy of the space. See 7.3

### 7.9 General Circulation Areas

General circulation areas include corridors, stairways, entrances, lobbies, etc. Controls have been introduced in all such areas by wearing of masks and ventilation Flow management such as “Keep Right” or “One-way” circulation has been introduced where possible, particularly on stairways.

### 7.10 Catering Facilities

Where catering facilities are available:

Occupancy level is monitored and maintained below limit set.

Hand sanitisation stations are available at the entries with voice recorded reminder to adhere to measures.

Physical distancing is to be observed, barriers erected and enhanced Respiratory Protective Equipment to be worn by staff. Seating has been reduced and re-organised to provide for physical separation in accordance with ventilation rates and access, egress and circulation areas are being given consideration where appropriate, including the introduction of one-way systems.

Student break times are staggered to reduce congestion. Outdoor, external vendors or off-site dining facilities are available on campuses.

Advice is provided in induction training on safe-eating practices (preferably outdoors or indoors limit time without mask, use screen provided).

The cleaning regime in the canteen area has been reviewed in line with recommendations with the cleaning protocols set out by the HSA. All canteen staff have received COVID-19 specific training on how to protect themselves and others.

Payments should be taken by contactless card wherever possible.

The Campus Catering Manager issues regular communication on food offerings and adjustments of protocols as the situation evolves.

Staff canteen or staff room spaces are areas where ventilation is necessary and reduced capacity is encouraged. Staff are encouraged to limit the time without masks worn during break time.

### 7.11 Toilets

Controls, including signage, have been introduced in all shared toilets to ensure physical distancing and good hygiene practices are observed. Cleaning in toilets is being carried out in accordance with National Protocols, and as per above.

### 7.12 Drinking Water Dispensers

Persons using water dispensers should run the water before placing their container under the tap – taking care not to touch the tap. Water dispensers are included in the touchpoint cleaning schedule.

### 7.13 Showers

Legionella management plans have been implemented and sufficient cleaning will ensure that low use does not introduce additional risks. Cleaning in showers is being carried out in accordance with [National Protocols](#), and as per above.

### 7.14 Changing rooms

Measures to prevent inhalation of virus in changing rooms include natural ventilation or mechanical ventilation. Wear a mask when changing in changing rooms.

## 8. RETURN TO CAMPUS PROTOCOLS / LIVING WITH COVID-19

### 8.1 General Responsibilities

Controlling the spread of COVID-19 requires action on the part of every individual to assess their risk and take the necessary personal precautions to aid in prevention of contracting the virus in addition to prevention of spread of the virus to vulnerable persons.

All staff and students must keep themselves updated on the latest advice from [Government](#) and the [HSE](#). They must also co-operate in maintaining the control measures put in place to prevent the spread of the virus and report issues or concerns that they may have to their line manager/ lecturer or [covidofficer@gmit.ie](mailto:covidofficer@gmit.ie).

### 8.2 Staff and Student Responsibilities

All staff and students must self-monitor for signs and symptoms of COVID-19.

#### **Staff COVID-19 Return to Campus Form and Induction**

Before returned in September, they were obliged to comply with the GMIT Return to Campus Protocol, which included:

1. Staff Return September 2021 Covid Update video and Student Attending College Health & Safety video.
2. Completion of the [Daily Campus Access Health Declaration form](#).
3. Communication with their relevant manager about visiting GMIT/returning to campus and completion of the Health Declaration Return to Campus Form.

The Induction process was completed for all staff in September 2020, and new staff were obliged to comply with this protocol as they join. In September 2021 an updated [staff video](#) was provided. **Staff returning in September 2021 who had been in an at 'higher risk' group or cocooning are required to discuss with their line manager and if necessary be referred to HR for Occupational health assessment if they are returning on campus.**

#### **Student COVID-19 Return to Campus Form and Induction**

This programme is being managed by Student Services since 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020. It is accessed during the registration process.

#### **'At Risk' Groups**

If you are unsure whether or not you are in an at higher risk from COVID-19 category, please check the information listed in People [At Higher Risk](#). **It is your personal responsibility** to protect your health by complying with the public health medical advice and Institute control measures.

Where a staff member falls into the "risk groups" then a specific assessment will be carried out for them by their line manager in relation to their concerns in accordance with national protocols. Such an assessment will consider factors such as the type of office accommodation involved, the ability to adequately ventilate the office, compliance with mask quality and fit, the approximate number of interactions with other staff or students. The risk assessment may identify further mitigating actions required for the safe return to work of staff in the 'risk groups.'

Where a student falls into the “risk groups” then a specific assessment will be carried out for them in relation to their concerns in accordance with Student Services protocols. Such an assessment will consider a range of factors including - the timetabled activities, the ventilation of any rooms to be used, the types of activities that will be involved. The risk assessment may identify further mitigating actions in addition to masking required for the safe attendance on campus of students in the ‘at risk groups.’

Personnel living with “risk groups” as defined by the HSE, must consider if there is a heightened risk from attending work and ensure strict compliance with infection prevention measures.

### Daily Actions

Each day before attending campus activities all persons must ensure that they are free of any ill health symptoms. DO NOT ATTEND CAMPUS IF ILL. Should a person have concerns of ill health they should:

- **not attend campus.**
- **immediately self-isolate or restrict their movements if they display any signs or symptoms of COVID-19.**
- **seek medical advice (GP/Student Health Unit)**
- **inform their Institute contact (line manager, lecturer, or supervisor as relevant, and the Covid Officer ([covidofficer@gmit.ie](mailto:covidofficer@gmit.ie))).**
- **follow the medical and Institute advice.**

### Actions if exposed / confirmed with COVID-19.

In addition, all persons attending GMIT (students, staff, and visitors) must notify GMIT immediately by emailing [covidofficer@gmit.ie](mailto:covidofficer@gmit.ie) or phoning 091 742708 / 085 209 2713 immediately if:

- A positive test outcome for COVID-19 has been issued by any healthcare provider and they are required to self-isolate.
- Or if they have been identified by public health as a contact and must restrict your movements for 14 days.

After the Covid Officer has been notified that a student / staff member / visitor has tested positive for COVID-19, contact tracing will be conducted to determine if there was exposure to other members of our community so that GMIT can assist Public Health to take appropriate next steps to mitigate further spread of the virus.

Staff confirmed with COVID-19 should notify HR by e-mailing [leaveandbenefits@gmit.ie](mailto:leaveandbenefits@gmit.ie) as well as notifying their line manager. Consistent with [GDPR](#) governing patient confidentiality, the Institute will not share any patient’s private medical information.

- Prior to arriving in GMIT, staff and students are required to complete a [Daily Health Check and Attendance Form](#). Note this form will also serve to record your presence on campus which may be used for any subsequent contact tracing work. Thus, it is important that this form is completed for every day of attendance at GMIT.
- Students are required to complete a [Class Attendance and Location Record](#).

### 8.3 Travel To/From/For Institute Activities

Where staff or students exhibit any signs of COVID-19 or have been exposed to a confirmed case, they should not travel to campus.

Where possible, car sharing should be avoided. Face coverings should be worn when car sharing and car ventilation on without recirculation.

Where public transport is the only option for staff or students, then [guidance](#) (outlining how to reduce the possibility of infection should be considered.

All non-essential Institute travel is prohibited. Travel for Institute business within Ireland is permitted on an as-needed basis and subject to the normal prior approval.

Persons returning or arriving to the island of Ireland should refer to GMIT Policy on International Travel and to the current [national advice](#) issued by the HSE / the Department of Foreign Affairs.

International students should comply with the [GMIT Pre Arrival information for International Students](#).

Persons travelling as part of a GMIT activity or on the GMIT mini-bus must adhere to the physical distancing and face-covering requirements.

### 8.4 Working from home.

GMIT Staff and students who are currently work from home in accordance with the [public health restriction measures](#). Equipment has been provided for staff and students where necessary. The use of home as a work environment presents hazards in relation to musculo-skeletal disorders. In order to identify and address this GMIT provides a [Staff Workstation Risk Assessment](#) and [Student Workstation Risk Assessment](#) for remote working in accordance with [Health and Safety Authority guidance](#). This is managed and advice given by the GMIT Health & Safety Officer.

Staff and students are encouraged to take breaks and to collaborate and meet using virtual coffee breaks.

Protecting personal data when working remotely is outlined in the [National](#) and [GMIT procedures](#).

## 9. CONTACT LOGS TO FACILITATE TRACING

Contact tracing is carried out by the Health Service Executive to control and limit the spread of infection following a confirmed case.

Following recommendations from the Department of Education and Skills, institutions are required to keep records to facilitate contact tracing.

To do this:

- GMIT strongly recommends that all staff and students download the [COVID-19 Tracker App](#)
- Prior to arriving in GMIT, staff and students are required to complete a daily health check and attendance form which will also record attendance. This form is available here: [Daily Health Check and Attendance Form](#)
- Library and computer room bookings will be required.
- Timetables must be accurate.
- Attendance at class is recorded by completion of the [CLASS ATTENDANCE AND LOCATION RECORD \(office.com\)](#)



## 10. COMMUNICATION

### 10.1 Policy

A Return To Campus (RTC) Communications Strategy (with communications protocol) outlines how the contents of this document and other associated controls are being communicated to all stakeholders through an onsite information campaign (signage, posters, campus TV screens & audio points), a designated Institute webpage (<https://www.gmit.ie/general/coronavirus-advice>), local and regional press, social media, and emails to internal and external stakeholders.

Providing induction to staff and students in advance of their return to campus will be essential to ensuring that controls are effective.

The GMIT COVID-19 Response Plan 2020-21 is being made available to all staff and students and is available on the GMIT website (<https://www.gmit.ie/coronavirus>).

Queries or concerns are addressed by the GMIT Covid Officer [covidofficer@gmit.ie](mailto:covidofficer@gmit.ie)

### 10.2 Visual and auditory communications

Signage has been installed on campuses stating that access is only for:

- Staff
- Students who have a timetabled activity or an appointment or booking
- Visitors who have an appointment.

Posters and audio messages are in place to reinforce the compliance required (hand hygiene, distancing, daily health declaration).

## 11. VISITORS, CONTRACTORS AND DELIVERIES

### 11.1 Visitors

Visitors are welcome on campus and must complete, in advance of attending GMIT, the [Daily Health Check and Attendance Form](#) and comply with mask wearing requirements.

### 11.2 Contractors

The host of the contractor is responsible for them and their activities while on campus and control measures must be followed upon entry to campus. These control measures include but are not limited to masking, maintaining their own contact log, hand hygiene and sanitisation processes.

Controls are being put in place to ensure that all maintenance and service engineers and contractors coming to site comply with the COVID-19 control measures. Buildings & Estates will ensure that the following minimum controls are in place:

- All contractors are required to provide a Risk Assessment / Method Statement in respect to COVID-19.
- Site visits will be scheduled for pre-agreed dates and times.
- Prior to arrival they must complete the [Daily Health Check and Attendance Form](#)
- A staff member will be assigned responsibility and will be on site to oversee the work from start to finish.
- Any contractor arriving on site without pre-notification will not be permitted to carry out work on campus.

### 11.3 Deliveries

Delivery protocols are as follows:

- No personal deliveries should be arranged for any GMIT campus.
- All deliveries must be non-contact to enforce physical distancing.
- Delivery personnel will not normally be permitted to enter the premises beyond the designated set-down point.
- Departments procuring class materials are responsible for liaising with suppliers and agree a delivery protocol with suppliers at time of ordering.
- Departments are responsible for receipt of deliveries such as chemicals, equipment, machinery, and other class materials.
- Deliveries will be planned with allocated times where possible.
- Caretakers and/or reception will receive deliveries and keep handling to a minimum. Departments can then collect deliveries from reception or arrange for caretaker transfer.
- Arrangements will be made where possible with suppliers for paperless delivery acceptance and acknowledgements to ensure materials management and material reconciliations are accurate.
- Hand sanitising facilities are available convenient to set down and goods inwards locations.

## 12. CAMPUS COMPANIES AND SHARED FACILITIES

### 12.1 Campus Companies

The Campus Companies generally work from the iHub buildings on the Galway and Mayo campuses. The iHub buildings have implemented internal procedures for companies with recommended control measures.

Each campus company must provide evidence to GMIT of compliance with the national COVID-19 protocols prior to returning to iHub buildings.

### 12.2 Shared Facilities with 3<sup>rd</sup> Party/External Organisations

In some cases, GMIT facilities – including access, library, welfare, and canteen facilities - are shared with 3<sup>rd</sup> party/external organisations. In these circumstances, risk assessments have taken place and control measures put in place as outlined in this document.

Co-operation with these external parties is also required to comply with their COVID-19 protocols.

## 13. UPDATES TO EXISTING SAFETY PROCEDURES

### 13.1 FIRST AIDERS

Due to the nature of First Aid activities, the First Aider may come into close contact with suspected cases of COVID-19 or may on occasion need to assist a person with other conditions. Follow your training ([PHECC Clinical Practice Guidelines](#)) for assessment and abide by the [COVID-19 and First Aid provision in the workplace](#) guidance. As far as possible maintain distance, wear respiratory protective equipment, and ventilate the space ensuring thorough hand washing and hygiene etiquette.

First Aiders are alert to the guidance and updated awareness training is available to first aiders.

### 13.2 FIRE SAFETY/FIRE DRILLS

Fire safety measures will continue to be applied and at least one drill will be held. When evacuating the wearing of face coverings is necessary outdoors and ensure physical distancing is maintained, e.g., increased space at assembly points.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - in particular situations specific PPE is required in accordance with guidance [PPE - Health Protection Surveillance Centre \(hpsc.ie\)](#)

## 14. SUSPECTED OR CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID-19

### 14.1 Suspect COVID-19 Case at Work

If a member of staff or a student experiences any COVID-19 symptoms while attending campus, they are required to remain masked and self-isolate immediately and inform their line manager or head of department by phone or email. If possible, the staff member or student should go directly home, but not without first notifying their line manager or head of department.

Travel home should be by private transport where possible. The affected staff member or student should ring their GP for further medical advice.

Where the affected member of staff or student is not able to go home then they will be assisted to present at the nearest [designated isolation room](#), or to remain in their current location, depending on the situation. A window in the room should be opened. Their GP should be contacted for medical advice. A decision will be made by the affected person's GP on whether to call an ambulance or to allow the person await collection for transport home. In the case of an international student this advice will be provided by the Student Health Unit medical personnel.

There will be a kit of protective equipment provided for both first aider and the affected staff member/student which will include mask, tissues, face mask, gloves, disposable apron, face shield/eye protection, hand sanitiser and bin.

Where confirmation of a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified, the Covid Officer, in consultation with the relevant Head of Department and/or Head of School/Function will decide on the appropriate response with respect to any extra cleaning of the relevant area that may be recommended.

The identified isolation rooms are listed in APPENDIX 3 - DESIGNATED ISOLATION ROOMS.

**Persons who have shared space or come into contact with a suspected case need not take any action unless the case has been confirmed as positive or they experience symptoms, as per the HSE guidelines.**

### 14.2 Contact with a Confirmed Case

If a confirmed case is identified, those who have had close contact will be identified by the HSE, required to restrict their movements for 14 days from the last time they had contact with the confirmed case. However, if vaccinated, no restriction of movements are required (unless told to restrict movements by the HSE contact tracers).

All affected staff and student cases will be followed up by the COVID Officer and the relevant Department subject to public health protocols.

### 14.3 Human Resource Procedures For COVID-19 Cases

Human Resources have developed [procedures](#) for staff availing of COVID-19 special leave with pay in accordance with the [Guidance on working arrangements during covid for the civil and public service](#) .

### 14.4 Student Health

Students who contract COVID-19 can receive medical care from the Student Health Service and should be aware of their academic entitlements via the [FAQ section on the GMIT website](#). Any student who has a concern or suggestion regarding the procedures put in place by GMIT to manage the COVID-19 situation should contact their class representative and/or the Students Union.

The social aspect of the normal GMIT college experience has been impacted by the pandemic, and our Student Services, Clubs and Societies are all working to develop appropriate compliant activities and events for students.

### 14.5 Mental health and Wellbeing

The changing environment of living remotely can lead to isolation. GMIT endeavours to provide online social events such as the staff and student choir and Healthy Campus physical activities. The effects of the pandemic may cause suffering from anxiety or stress. Remote working and study require time management and discipline. Legislation is proposed (The [Working from Home \(COVID-19\) Bill](#)) to support the changing working week.

Staff and students are encouraged to seek advice on concerns that relate to their campus activities that may affect their mental wellbeing.

A staff Employee Assistance Service is available from Spectrum Life, and it may be contacted through the confidential helpline number (1800 814243) or the [HR Portal](#).

A service to text 'GMIT' to 50808 connects students with a trained volunteer for a free 24/7 anonymous text support service. [GMIT Student Services](#) provides counselling service which can be accessed remotely. There is a comprehensive programme for health and wellbeing support, full details can be found at: [GMIT Student HUB \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

15. Document Control:

Revision number	Date Issued	Changes
Revision 1	25/08/2020	<a href="#">National Protocol for Returning to Work Safely</a> , <a href="#">NSAI COVID-19 Workplace Protection and Improvement Guide</a> , and the <a href="#">Guidance for Further and Higher Education for Returning to On-site Activity in 2020: Roadmap and COVID-19 Adaptation Framework</a>
Revision 2	05/02/2021	<a href="#">Government’s Resilience and Recovery Plan Living with COVID-19 2020-2021</a> September 15 2020 Updated December 8 <sup>th</sup> 2020  <a href="#">Work Safely Protocol</a> (revised) issued 20 <sup>th</sup> November 2020 <a href="#">COVID-19 Workplace Protection and Improvement Guide</a> <a href="#">Guidance on Working from Home for Employers and Employees</a>
Revision 3	26/10/2021	<a href="#">Work Safely Protocol</a> Updated 16 <sup>th</sup> September 2021 & 22 <sup>nd</sup> October 2021 <a href="#">‘Reframing the Challenge: Continuing our Recovery and Reconnecting’</a> <a href="#">Data Protection – Work Safely Protocol</a> Last updated 13 <sup>th</sup> September 2021

Appendix 1 Risk Assessment

Risk Assessment Template

Project / Activity:		Location:		Date:	Review date:
Assessor(s):					
Documents / information consulted in preparing this risk assessment:					
Consents required to conduct this project / activity:					
List of the hazards based on the sequence of work / structural environment & equipment:					
Description of: Hazard; Associated risks; and, Persons/entities at risk	Potential severity (High, Medium, or Low)	Probability of occurrence (High, Medium, or Low)	Control measure(s)	Person(s) responsible	Safe work practice sheet or New procedure required? Yes/No
			•		
			•		
			•		
			•		
			•		
			•		
			•		

## APPENDIX 2 – [GMIT FACE COVERING POLICY](#)

[gmit-face-covering-policy-revision-5-sept-21.pdf](#)

### GMIT Face Covering Policy

At GMIT the safety and health of students, staff, visitors, and contractors is a priority, and in our response to the COVID-19 pandemic we are deploying a range of mitigating actions that will act to reduce the spread of Coronavirus.

Airborne spread of COVID-19 is now recognised and this is why the wearing of face coverings indoors is particularly important.

Face coverings must cover your nose and mouth with no visible gaps and will act to minimise the scattering of droplets from the mouth and nose and reduce the risk of airborne virus.

**Therefore, the wearing of a three-layer face covering or a medical grade disposable mask (which should be changed daily) by everyone (staff, students, and visitors) is mandatory at all times in GMIT, except when eating and when working alone.**

Face shields and visors are generally not an appropriate type of face covering but people who might have difficulties breathing or a disability may forward to the Covid Officer a medical certificate to this effect, and in such cases permission may be given to wear a face shield or visor instead of a face covering.

The reusable face coverings should be made as per [guidelines](#) and consist of **three** layers.

GMIT commends the GMIT community compliance with this policy, and in doing so, our efforts to reduce to spread of COVID-19.

Revision 5  
Date: 16/09/2021

**APPENDIX 3 - DESIGNATED ISOLATION ROOMS**

GMIT Dublin Road Campus	Room 153 (ground floor, old building) and Room 1034 (first floor, new building)
GMIT CCAM Campus	Room 128 (ground floor).
GMIT Mayo Campus	Room B004 (ground floor).
GMIT Letterfrack	Meeting Room 1 (ground floor)