Monash COVID Safe Strategies

1. Come to campus well
2. Physical distancing
3. Face coverings
4. Personal hygiene
5. Increased cleaning
6. Well ventilated spaces
7. Positive case management
8. Work arrangements
9. Vaccinations

Introduction

The health and safety of the Monash community is the highest priority. Monash is committed to protecting the Monash community from the transmission of COVID-19 and has developed a nine-pillar risk control strategy, in line with the government’s advice and Pandemic Orders, issued under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008. Monash University understands its responsibilities and obligations under the Pandemic Orders.

The nine strategies work together to protect the staff, students, contractors and visitors to the University and are applied to the diverse range of spaces and activities the University undertakes. The Monash COVID Safe Plan has been developed under the direction of the Monash Chief Medical Officer and in consultation with staff from across the University to ensure it is fit for purpose. The plan is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the changing nature of the pandemic and pandemic orders. Version 22 of the plan is designed to support the reactivation of our campuses for Semester 1 2022 and is cognisant of community transmission of the Omicron variant. The plan introduces further key control measures to support our Monash community.
Strategy 1. Come to campus well

Victorian Government, WorkSafe and Department of Health requirements & guidelines relating to Monash:

- You must support workers to get tested and stay home even if they only have mild symptoms.
- You must follow Department of Health (DH) instructions regarding visiting exposure sites or returning from interstate or international travel zones.

Monash Actions

Communication

- Consistent with the Government’s health messaging Monash has communicated to all staff, students, contractors and visitors to only attend Monash University locations, including campuses and offices, if they are well.
- All persons attending Monash University locations including staff, students, contractors and visitors are expected to continually monitor themselves for symptoms.
- Monash University continues to reinforce this message by communicating with:
  - All staff and students. In order to protect the Monash community, it will be essential that all staff and students who are feeling unwell and showing even the mildest symptoms of COVID-19, do not attend any Monash University locations and instead get tested for COVID-19. Faculties and Divisions reinforce this message in all COVID related correspondence with staff and students.
  - Members of the public and contractors. It is essential that visitors who are feeling unwell and showing even the mildest symptoms of COVID-19 do not attend any Monash University locations. This may include research participants, persons attending Monash functions or utilising the campus facilities. The Monash personnel arranging or coordinating the visits reinforce this message in correspondence with members of the public who may be due to attend a Monash University location.

Absence from University

- The University has changed the staff leave entitlements to incorporate COVID-19 leave provisions.
- The University will utilise alternative student learning methods and assessment activities so as not to disadvantage students if they are unable to attend campus due to illness.

Rapid Antigen Testing (Monitoring)

Rapid Antigen Tests for monitoring purposes will be provided by Monash University, subject to supply, for use in the following situations for a 4 week trial period at the commencement of Semester 1, 2022.

- The use of RATs for monitoring purposes is voluntary.
- Monash University will ask persons involved in the trial to provide results and feedback.
- Note: if any person tests positive to COVID-19 using a RAT, they must notify Monash University and quarantine for 7 days with their household contacts as per the current Government requirements.

Decisions regarding which individual staff will be offered RATs for monitoring purposes are to be made by the head of the Faculty/Division or their delegate, unless otherwise noted, in accordance with the following framework.

The four week trial provision of RAT for monitoring will include:

- Community facing Monash University staff who interact with a significant number of different people each day. Community facing staff includes:
  - Reception/front counter staff
  - Technicians who interact with a significant number of people
  - Staff interacting with a large number of students, including lecturers
  - University Health Services staff
- Monash University staff who are potentially interacting with persons who are positive to COVID-19:
- University Health Services health practitioners
- Monash Residential Services staff (where contact with students in quarantine)
- Monash University staff working in hospital precincts
- Monash University research personnel (staff or student) working with research participants who may be particularly vulnerable to COVID-19
- Monash University staff in critical work areas with specialised workforce, including:
  - Critical research activity
  - Critical maintenance activity
- Provision of RATs to take on a field trip or camp in the event that a participant (staff or student) developed symptoms during the trip.

Strategy 2. Physical distancing

Victorian Government, WorkSafe and Department of Health requirements & guidelines relating to Monash:

- You must comply with density quotients and signage requirements as specified in the Pandemic Orders.
- You should provide information to workers on physical distancing expectations while working and socialising.

Monash Actions

- Monash University monitors the Health Department Pandemic Orders and implements density quotients as specified. At the time of writing there are specific density requirements for food & drink premises.
- Keeping 1.5 metres distance where possible remains a recommended control measure. Physical distancing between workstations has been assessed and adjustments made to maintain 1.5 m ‘head to head’ distancing between people in staff work areas where possible.
- Where there are local (‘split systems’ or window, wall and ceiling mounted air conditioning systems) or no ventilation systems in place, Monash may reduce occupancy in these spaces.
- Floor markings have been installed in areas where staff and students may congregate including queues for service desks, retail outlets, lifts and kitchens.
- Physical distancing is included in the University’s ‘How to Stay Safe’ posters and messaging.
- Monash staff and students have training resources available including a “Monash COVID Safe Practices” video, which includes physical distancing as one control measure.
- Monash security, Monash COVID Marshals and the safety network are used to monitor compliance with physical distancing requirements on campus.
Strategy 3. Face coverings

Victorian Government, WorkSafe and Department of Health requirements & guidelines relating to Monash:

- All persons must carry a face covering at all times.
- All persons aged 8 and over must wear a face covering, unless they have a valid reason to not do so (eg medical condition) in all indoor settings, whilst on public transport, at an airport or on a commercial aircraft.
- Any person who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has been diagnosed with COVID-19 must also wear a face covering if they are outdoors in a public setting (for example if they leave home to seek medical attention).
- A face covering is not required to be worn by a person while they are broadcasting, lecturing or teaching, nor while eating or drinking or completing strenuous exercise.
- It is strongly recommended that a face covering is worn whenever it is not possible to physically distance, even when outdoors.
- You should provide training, instruction and guidance on how to correctly fit, use and dispose of PPE.
- Types of face covering which are permitted for use by the Victorian Department of Health include 3 layer cloth, surgical and N95.
- The current Victorian Department of Health guidance for healthcare settings where workers are treating patients working with non-covid patients is a surgical mask worn with eye protection.

Monash Actions

- The requirement to wear a face mask on Monash campuses and buildings, in accordance with the Victorian Government requirements, has been communicated and implemented in all areas of the University.
- A face mask must be worn indoors unless the person has a lawful exemption such as a medical reason.
- Staff and students will be provided surgical masks to wear on campus.
- If during a class students are not correctly wearing a mask, in accordance with the instructions provided by the DVC (Education) the lecturer should ask the students to wear their mask correctly. If this instruction is not followed, cease teaching and leave the room.
- The requirement to wear a face mask when travelling on University transport (inter-campus buses, shared Monash vehicles) has been communicated.
- ‘How to Stay Safe’ posters and digital displays have been used to reinforce the wearing of a mask when in Monash buildings and outside when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- To provide respiratory protection, P2/N95 respirators will be supplied to staff and students working directly on campus with positive COVID case persons. Appropriate instruction and fit testing will be provided.
- To reduce transmission, P2/N95 respirators will be provided to community facing staff working with the public and students and staff working with susceptible groups. Instruction will be provided to staff on appropriate respirator fit checking.

1 COVID-19 - A guide to the conventional use of personal protective equipment (PPE) | health.vic.gov.au
Strategy 4. Practice good personal hygiene

Victorian Government, WorkSafe and Department of Health requirements & guidelines relating to Monash:

- You should make soap and hand sanitiser available for all workers and customers at the workplace and encourage regular handwashing.

Monash Actions

- Monash University has deployed hand sanitiser stations across all its campuses and buildings to ensure all staff and students have multiple opportunities to hand sanitise when entering a building or workspace. This may include stations at the entry to buildings, entry and exits of lifts and main stair landings.
- Hand sanitiser is provided in teaching spaces, office, workshop and laboratory areas to encourage regular hand sanitising throughout the day.
- Good hygiene and ‘how to stay safe’ posters and online OHS inductions have been used to reinforce the key health and hygiene messages.
- The University cleaning team is ensuring adequate soap is available in all bathrooms.
- Posters have been displayed in bathrooms, lunch areas and above hand sanitiser stations showing the correct method of washing or sanitising hands.

Strategy 5. Increased Cleaning

Victorian Government, WorkSafe and Department of Health requirements & guidelines relating to Monash:

- You must frequently and regularly clean and disinfect shared spaces, including high-touch communal items such as doorknobs and telephones.

Monash Actions

- Monash has developed a new campus cleaning regime increasing the cleaning on all campuses and sites to incorporate the DH cleaning guidelines. This includes
  - Modifying the normal routine (early morning) cleaning to incorporate the wipe down of high touch surfaces in all areas - faculty/division and common areas.
  - Engaging an extra team of daytime cleaners to continue regular cleaning of the high touch surfaces in common areas. The extra daytime cleaning includes wiping down of high touch points which may include light switches, door handles, lift buttons, stair balustrades, flat table surfaces in the retail and public spaces.
  - Toilet facilities receive additional cleaning during the day with the doors, sinks and hand dryer buttons cleaned.
- The ‘high touch’ cleaning team is outfitted in pink high-visibility vests.
- Additional cleaning materials are provided to allow staff and students to wipe down their furniture and equipment before and after work/study or exercise.
- Monash has secured sufficient supply of all cleaning products and has increased the products held on site to manage peak demands.
- The new cleaning regime is provided on the University’s internet for staff and students to understand the new cleaning standards and frequencies.
- Inspections are undertaken to ensure the quality of the cleaning is maintained.
- Following the notification of positive case on campus areas are identified for additional cleaning in line with the Health Department directions.
Strategy 6. Well ventilated spaces

Victorian Government, WorkSafe and Department of Health requirements & guidelines relating to Monash:

- Optimise fresh air flow in air conditioning systems.
- Enhance airflow by opening windows and doors.
- Move activities outside if possible, including meetings, tea and lunch breaks.

Monash Actions

- The University has undertaken a comprehensive assessment of all of its buildings to ensure the ventilation systems are effectively providing sufficient outside air and do not represent an increased COVID transmission risk. Monash is ensuring the ventilation systems are meeting or exceeding Australian Standard 1668.2 and regular monitoring and maintenance of the systems is in place.
- The ventilation systems supporting all central teaching spaces have been reviewed and where appropriate upgrades completed to ensure teaching can be conducted at normal room occupancy.
- The outcomes of the ventilation review will be provided on the Monash COVID safe website.
- Additional COVID safe measures are being applied to buildings or spaces with no ventilation systems or areas supported by local ‘split systems’ or window, wall and ceiling mounted air conditioning systems (that primarily recirculate the air in the room). This includes measures such as:
  - Activities involving large groups in small spaces with no or local ventilation systems being scheduled to other well-ventilated spaces
  - Reducing room occupancy
  - Installing a portable air purifier unit
  - Opening windows and doors to provide outside air into the room and using fans and recirculating systems to create air movement
- Staff and students are encouraged to undertake activities outside if possible. Meetings, discussion groups etc which do not require technology are ideally undertaken outside if weather permits. The room scheduling system allows booking of outside spaces.
Strategy 7. Positive Case management

Victorian Government, WorkSafe and Department of Health requirements & guidelines relating to Monash:

- Workers and students who receive a positive COVID-19 result and have attended an indoor space on campus during their infectious period must notify Monash University.
- You must support workers to get tested and stay home even if they only have mild symptoms.
- You must develop a management plan to manage positive cases.
- You must identify any exposed persons (‘workplace close contacts’) and provide instruction.
- You must keep records of all people who enter the workplace for contact tracing.

Monash Actions

Business Continuity

- The University’s business continuity plan is frequently revised and is actively being used to guide the University’s COVID-19 response and the campus reactivation strategy.

Positive Case Management

- Processes have been developed for a positive case of COVID-19, which include
  - Reporting procedures for staff and students
  - Establishment of a case management team
  - Care of the affected staff member or student
  - Engagement with the Department of Health local Public Health Unit
  - Management of internal communications, cleaning and building access

- Recording attendance - scanning the Service Victoria QR code is required every time upon entering a building. Monash has developed a range of strategies to record the attendance of staff, students, contractors and other visitors to our campuses and sites. This includes door swipe access recording and online contractor sign in/out systems. This information is utilised to determine and advise workplace close contacts and assist DH to identify close contacts.

- Identification of exposed persons – workplace close contacts identified as having been potentially exposed to a person who is positive to COVID-19 in their infectious period are provided with written communication regarding the requirements to monitor for symptoms. If any symptoms appear they must get tested and provide Monash the test result. It is recommended that workplace close contacts who are identified source five rapid antigen tests via a Government test centre, to use one per day as a prevention measure. Monash collects, records and stores a list of persons who have been notified that they have been exposed and the result of their PCR testing.

- Reporting - The University COVID case management team keeps a record of the cases reported to the University. Where an outbreak is detected this is reported to the Department of Health in accordance with their reporting requirements.

- Communication - Where a positive case attends a Monash University work location during their Health Department defined infectious period affected locations are noted on the Monash University Exposure Location webpage. Individuals identified as workplace close contacts by the Monash University Contact Tracing Team will be contacted individually, as noted above.

- Cleaning - Monash has engaged two specialised cleaning companies to undertake cleaning in response to a result of a positive COVID case. The two companies have trained personnel and have site inspected the key areas of the University to understand the size and complexity of some of our buildings/spaces in preparation for deep cleaning should it be required. The current Health Department guidance requires deep cleaning only where an outbreak is detected (five or more linked cases at the same location within a seven day period). If a location is required to be closed for deep cleaning, the University’s Chief Medical Officer, in conjunction with the Department of Health as appropriate, will determine when the relevant workplace is safe to reopen.

Rapid Antigen Testing (Diagnostic)

- **Rapid Antigen Testing for diagnostic purposes supplied by Monash University may be utilised in the following situations:**
  - Diagnosis of symptomatic persons who present at the University Health Service.
  - Diagnosis of symptomatic persons who reside at a Monash Residential Service location.
  - The supply of one rapid antigen test, where available, to a staff member or student who becomes symptomatic whilst at a Monash work location.

**Strategy 8. Work Arrangements**

Victorian Government, WorkSafe and Department of Health requirements & guidelines relating to Monash:

- Activities permitted at our workplaces during restrictions will be in accordance with the Pandemic Orders issued under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008.

Monash Actions

- Monash has implemented a “hybrid” work strategy and has established a range of HR procedures and resources to support staff working from home.
- Where a person has a medical condition which may leave them more susceptible to COVID-19 symptoms, alternative work arrangements may be established.
- Where applicable, work schedules for critical work functions have been developed and implemented to reduce the interaction of staff between shifts and/or teams.
- Online formats are utilised for team communication, where appropriate.
- Events are undertaken in accordance with the Government requirements, including check in and vaccination requirements and the use of COVID Check-in Marshals. Event Risk Management Plans are required to be completed considering all nine of the COVID safe strategies.
Strategy 9. Vaccinations

Victorian Government, WorkSafe and Department of Health requirements & guidelines relating to Monash:

- Mandatory vaccination requirements are set out in several Pandemic Orders which apply to Monash.
- All workers attending higher education premises aged 12 years and 2 months or above must be fully vaccinated.
- These include requirements applying to adult education or higher education premises under the Pandemic (Open Premises) Order.

Monash Actions

- Monash has implemented leave provisions to provide time for staff to get vaccinated during work hours.
- The University Health Services are providing COVID 19 vaccinations and boosters to eligible groups.
- The University is assisting Monash Health to provide pop-up vaccination and booster clinics.
- Persons attending Monash University locations with underlying health conditions are encouraged to speak with their GP and ensure they are fully vaccinated (currently four vaccine doses).
- The University is collecting vaccination information from staff and students in order to comply with vaccination requirements.
- The University is permitting people to access campus if they meet the Monash University vaccination requirements.
- The University is completing both random and formal compliance checks of people on site to ensure they are meeting the vaccination requirements.
- COVID Marshals and security will be stationed on open buildings to ensure staff, students and visitors QR code or swipe into the building to demonstrate their vaccination status and record their attendance.

6 August 2020       Original Date
11 February 2022     Modified Date