Monash COVID Safe Strategies

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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 other persons including visitors to the University. They are applied to the diverse range of spaces and activities the University undertakes. The University has carefully assessed the Department of Health’s latest Pandemic Orders, which included the easing of numerous restrictions due more than 70% of Victorian adults having received their third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine¹.

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 27 of the plan supports the 2022 activation of our campuses and is cognisant of community transmission of variants, including the Omicron variant. The plan introduces further key control measures to support our Monash community.

¹ COVID-19 vaccine rollout update – 24 May 2022 | Australian Government Department of Health
Strategy 1. Come to campus well

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

- Employers must support workers to get tested and stay home even if they only have mild symptoms.
- Employers 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 anyone who is feeling unwell and showing even the mildest symptoms of COVID-19, does 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 for persons who test positive to COVID-19. See here [https://www.intranet.monash/hr/policies-and-agreements/covid-19](https://www.intranet.monash/hr/policies-and-agreements/covid-19) for further information.
- 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.
- Persons who are close (household) contacts to a person who has tested positive to COVID-19 are strongly encouraged to work or study from home where possible. Further information may be found in Strategy 7, below.

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. Initially this was for a 7 week trial period at the commencement of Semester 1, 2022. This voluntary monitoring program has been extended until 18/11/22, subject to supply availability.

- 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 as per the current Government requirements.
- Note: If you have been diagnosed positive with COVID-19 during the last 12 weeks you are advised not to participate in the monitoring trial.

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 voluntary RAT monitoring program includes:

- 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) develops symptoms during the trip. Further information may be found in the Information Sheet – COVID Safe Measures Excursions & Camps, https://www.monash.edu/__data/assets/pdf_file/0009/2886174/COVID-Camps-Excursions-Field-Trips-Info-Sheet.pdf

A limited supply for RATs will also be available through Faculties/Departments for distribution/use as needed.

**Strategy 2. Physical distancing**

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

- Employers must comply with density quotients and signage requirements where specified in the Pandemic Orders.
- Employers 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 no density quotients specified for higher education, entertainment or 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 choose to 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.
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 (e.g. medical condition) in the following situations:
  - People on public transport, in taxis and rideshare, on planes, and indoors at an airport
  - People working or visiting hospitals or care facilities, and indoor areas at healthcare facilities
  - Any person who has symptoms of COVID-19 or has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is a close (household) contact must also wear a face covering if they need to leave their home (for example if they leave home to seek medical attention).
- Face coverings are strongly recommended:
  - In all other indoor settings
  - For workers serving or facing members of the public, such as if you are in a reception role, meeting guests or serving customers
  - When it is not possible to physically distance.
- 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.
- Employers 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.

Monash Actions

- Where it is a requirement to wear a face mask on Monash campuses and buildings, in accordance with the Victorian Government requirements, this is communicated and implemented.
- Face coverings must be worn when required by the Pandemic Orders, including when travelling on public transport, in taxis and rideshare, on planes, and indoors at airports, unless the person has a lawful exemption such as a medical reason.
- Face coverings are strongly recommended to be worn in all other indoor settings. In particular this applies to where people are serving or facing members of the public or where it is not possible to physically distance.
- Staff and students will be provided surgical masks to wear on campus, if they choose to do so.
- Monash Security and Monash COVID Marshals are used to monitor compliance with mask wearing requirements where it is a requirement to do so in the Pandemic Orders. Supervisors also monitor their team members. If there is non-compliance this should be raised with your Supervisor, Safety Officer or Health & Safety Representative.
- The requirement to wear a face mask when travelling on University transport (inter-campus buses, shared Monash vehicles) has been communicated.
- Where persons are working within a hospital precinct, but within a Monash teaching wing must comply with the Monash University requirements, following confirmation from the hospital precinct operator.
- ‘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. Monash University will continue to provide strong messaging regarding the recommendation to wear face masks in indoor settings.
- 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.

2 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:

- Employers 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, ‘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, with a method provided to dry hands.
- 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:

- Employers 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\(^3\). 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 – with a cleaning/disinfectant product. The use of a cleaning/disinfectant product also meets the requirement for spaces where a positive case has attended.
  - Engaging an extra team of daytime cleaners to continue regular cleaning of the high touch surfaces in higher risk public/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 plus doors, taps and hand dryer buttons at toilet facilities. The ‘high touch’ cleaning team is outfitted in pink high-visibility vests. The high traffic areas identified at Clayton for additional daytime cleaning are Monash Sport, Secret Garden, Hargreaves Library, Matheson Library, Campus Centre, Chancellery, LTB and Woodside. At Caulfield, the Library, Graze on the Green and S Building. At Peninsula, the Library and Building A. At Parkville, the Library and building common areas.
- Additional cleaning materials (eg alcohol wipes) 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 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.

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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.
- Additional COVID safe measures are being applied to buildings or spaces with no ventilation system 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/s
  - 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. Monash will continue to review outside spaces to make them suitable for winter use (eg outdoor heater installation).
- Other inclusive options may be considered other than face to face gatherings, for example to celebrate a team achievement.

Strategy 7. Positive Case and Close (Household) Contact Management

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

- Workers (including contractors) who receive a positive COVID-19 result and have attended an indoor space on campus during their infectious period must notify Monash University.
- Students and other persons who receive a positive COVID-19 result and have attended an indoor space on campus during their infectious period should notify Monash University.
- Workers (including contractors), students and other persons who are close (household) contacts and intend to attend a Monash premises for work, study or other activity must comply with the specified requirements, including notifying Monash University and undertaking daily RATs.
- Employers must support workers to get tested and stay home even if they only have mild symptoms.
- Employers must develop a management plan to manage positive cases.
- Employers must take reasonable steps to notify workers who attended the work premises at the same time a positive case in their infectious period attended.
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 (DH) local Public Health Unit, as appropriate
  - Management of the Monash Exposure Locations website and cleaning
- Persons who test positive for COVID-19 must not attend the workplace and must quarantine for 7 days in accordance with the current Government requirements.
- Recording attendance - Monash has also developed a range of strategies to record the attendance of staff, students, contractors and other persons attending our campuses and sites. This includes door swipe access recording and online contractor sign in/out systems. This information may be utilised to communicate with people who have attended the workplace.
- Staff present when a person attends during their infectious period – If staff have any symptoms they must get tested. It is strongly recommended that social and workplace contacts source five rapid antigen tests via a Government test centre, to use one per day as an early-detection measure.
- Identification of contacts in teaching environments – students and staff have access to information about any classes they have attended where a person who was positive to COVID-19 in their infectious period attended. The links to this information may be found here [https://www.monash.edu/news/coronavirus-updates/exposure-sites](https://www.monash.edu/news/coronavirus-updates/exposure-sites).
- 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 the Department of Health defined infectious period, the effected locations are communicated via the Monash University Exposure Location webpage [https://www.monash.edu/news/coronavirus-updates/exposure-sites](https://www.monash.edu/news/coronavirus-updates/exposure-sites).
- Cleaning - Monash has engaged two specialised cleaning companies to undertake cleaning in response to a result of a positive COVID case, in accordance with the Department of Health requirements.

Close (Household) Contact Management

- Persons identified as Close (Household) Contact of a person who has tested positive to COVID-19 are required by the Pandemic (Quarantine, Isolation and Testing) Order No. 8 to self-quarantine for 7 days. Persons are strongly encouraged to work/study from home in this circumstance. Where this is not possible and there is a particular business need (for example, staff shortages in a specialised work area), the close (household) contact will follow the latest Victorian Government requirements, [https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-contacts](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/checklist-contacts), and with approval may attend a Monash University location. The following requirements must be complied with:
  - Notification - The person must inform Monash University of their status as a close (household) contact and seek approval if they intend to attend a Monash location. For workers (including contractors), this includes discussing their intent with their Supervisor or Monash contact prior to any proposed attendance.
  - Location - The location intended to be visited must not be a sensitive location (for example, a hospital or aged care setting). The Head of a Faculty/Division or their delegate may also nominate additional sensitive locations where attendance of close (household) contacts at a Monash University location is not permitted, for example critical work areas with specialised workforces.
  - Health - The person must not have any flu-like symptoms immediately prior to or during their intended attendance.
  - Test - The person must complete a COVID-19 rapid antigen test and receive a negative result immediately prior to attending the Monash University location (ie complete a negative RAT shortly before leaving home). This is required even where a person has already completed the ‘five tests in 7 days’ currently required in the Pandemic Orders.
- **Mask** - The person must wear a mask at all times while attending the Monash University location, including while lecturing or teaching and whether indoors or outdoors. Where a person needs to remove their mask briefly, for example to eat, drink or take medication, this must be completed 1.5 metres away from other persons and preferably outdoors.

**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. If close to a University Health Service centre, contact the triage nurse on 9905 3175 to discuss that they are ‘developing symptoms and need to obtain a RAT’, then wait OUTSIDE the UHS location for the RAT to be provided to you. Note: persons must not attend campus to obtain a RAT. Anyone who is off campus and needs access to a RAT should attend a government test centre or source through a retailer.

### 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.
- For team communication, online formats are recommended as additional means, where appropriate.
- Events are undertaken in accordance with the Government requirements, including ensuring vaccination requirements are met. Event Risk Management Plans are required to be completed considering all nine of the COVID safe strategies. A list of attendees is required to be available in the event that an outbreak was detected.
- Where catering is being arranged, the Monash COVID Safe Catering Guidelines should be supported wherever possible, including provision of single serve options without sharing food, drinks or crockery between people. [https://www.monash.edu/ohs/health-and-wellbeing/nutritional-health/monash-catering](https://www.monash.edu/ohs/health-and-wellbeing/nutritional-health/monash-catering)
Strategy 9. Vaccinations

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

- Mandatory vaccination requirements are set out in the Pandemic (Workplace) Order.
- All workers (including contractors) attending higher education premises aged 12 years and 2 months or above must have an up-to-date vaccination status, as noted in the current Pandemic Orders.
- Students and other persons (for example visitors) attending Monash University locations are no longer required to present evidence of their vaccination status, except where there is a particular requirement (for example, attending a healthcare setting).

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 requirements to attend a Monash University location:
  - Workers - The University is collecting vaccination information from workers (including staff and contractors) in order to comply with vaccination requirements to be double vaccinated with an approved COVID-19 vaccine or have a medical exemption. Worker swipe-card access is not activated until suitable evidence of vaccination or medical exemption has been provided. Workers includes anyone employed at the University, whether in academic/Faculty roles or other support roles (eg BPD).
  - Students – The University is no longer collecting student vaccination evidence, except where this is a Government requirement (for example a student attending a placement in the hospital sector must be triple vaccinated). Vaccination remains strongly encouraged for all students.
  - Other persons– are no longer required to present evidence of their vaccination status to enter a Monash location.
- Note: particular workplaces require different COVID-19 vaccination standards, for example workers and students completing placements in the healthcare sector are required to be triple vaccinated.
- The University is completing both random and formal compliance checks of people on site to ensure they are meeting the vaccination requirements.

6 August 2020  Original Date
25 June 2022  Modified Date