



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
A College of Queen's University Belfast

bulletin

staff

Issue 4 August 2020



**Opening up of offices
and services from 1
September**

**Enhanced cleaning
regime in College
buildings**

**Procedures, provisions &
personal responsibility
to mitigate risks**

**Health and wellbeing of
staff and students as
they return to College**



The College campus has been open for almost a month following the lockdown due to the COVID-19. This has given staff the opportunity to become familiar with the COVID-19 restrictions that are in place, such as the one-way system in Central Building. This is important as we prepare to welcome students back to campus, especially our first year students who will be coming to the College for the first time.

The students arriving on campus in September represent the COVID-19 cohort. Many of them will have had to face days of anxiety because of the regrading of 'A' level and BTEC results. They start their university career in the new 'normal'; an environment dominated by COVID-19 restrictions. We have a professional and moral responsibility to welcome and support them as they arrive on campus. With students on campus and in halls from September, a vital part of our preparation is the opening of all offices and services across the College to ensure the full provision of services.

Opening Up Offices and Services - 1st September

From the **1st September** all offices and services should be open across the College and **normal office hours** should be in operation. To facilitate this in a safe and flexible way, while COVID-19 restrictions remain in place, a staff rota arrangement may be put in place with the agreement of line managers. This will facilitate a combination of remote and office based working while mitigating the risks associated with COVID-19. These arrangements will be kept under review.



We would commend the work of the Academic Registry team who have been working hard to address the issues arising due to the recent decisions on 'A' level and BTEC grading, and the invaluable input from professional support and academic staff. Staff should note that discussions are ongoing with relevant government departments as to how we manage the implications of these decisions.



Principles of Planning

As already stated in previous Bulletins the College planning for the 2020-21 academic year is being shaped by 3 key priorities:

- the health, welfare, and safety of our College community.
- the continued provision of a high-quality learning and teaching experience for all students, and the maintenance of quality standards.
- the continued provision of a high-quality broad all round educational experience for all students.

Arrangements will be kept under review in the light of government guidance. Risk assessments also have been conducted in consultation with staff and union representatives. Staff should keep in mind that risk assessments are dynamic documents which are subject to ongoing review.

Update - Enhanced Cleaning Regime in College Buildings

The College has established a set of guiding principles to safeguard the health and wellbeing of all campus users during the ongoing pandemic. Minimising the risk of COVID-19 is a collective effort.



To ensure the workplace is as clean as possible:

- the College has agreed with our cleaning contractor that COVID-19 prevention controls are the highest priority in regard to the daily cleaning service.
- daily cleaning routines have been reconfigured to focus on high traffic areas, with increased cleaning of bathrooms, kitchens and touchpoints, such as desks, telephones, door handles, light switches, lift call buttons etc.
- the cleaning regime in toilet areas is clearly documented and on display.
- we are liaising regularly with the contractor to ensure that the cleaning regime is adhered to and monitored.
- all cleaning operatives have been trained in the use of new equipment and procedures to minimise the risk of contamination; for example, pulse mops and disposable cloths are now used and each floor within buildings has dedicated cleaning equipment and consumables to prevent potential cross contamination.

However, we all have a personal responsibility for reducing the potential for COVID-19 transmission and everyone can contribute to this effort by:

- maintaining a clear desk policy to ensure desks, PCs, phones etc. can be cleaned
- using the disinfectant wipes provided in communal areas such as shared kitchens to wipe down equipment before and after each use.
- ensure that food and drinks are not permitted in teaching rooms.

Please note: daily cleaning activities are normally completed by lunchtime, although a reduced cleaning service is provided until 5pm. We are also working with our cleaning contractor to provide additional cleaning staff who will be on duty in the afternoons. If staff have a specific cleaning requirement outside the normal times for their building, please contact the Estates helpdesk on ext. 297 or estates@stran.ac.uk and Estates will make arrangements with the on duty cleaner to attend, if deemed necessary.

Provision for Cashless Payment

As a means of mitigating concerns about the spread of COVID-19, the College is reviewing all of its payment procedures and the use of the ATM machine. Where possible we will be moving to touchless payment through card terminals or mobile devices. Staff will be kept informed of these changes.

Paperless Processes

The College is reviewing all of its processes and procedures in order to move to paperless systems where possible, as a means of mitigating the risk of spreading the COVID-19. Paperless systems are already in place in some areas and others will be introduced in due course.

Personal Responsibility

As well as putting health and safety measures and systems in place, we must all exercise personal responsibility during the pandemic. The College is supplying all staff with a starter pack of 2 reusable facemasks, bottle of hand sanitiser and pack of wipes to ensure that good hygiene becomes part of the daily routine. Other PPE, such as face visors, disposable gloves and aprons, are also available should staff feel that they need them. In this way we will help to protect ourselves and others. A remote training session for all staff is planned for 3 September, which will cover the use of PPE. It is also recommended that all staff and students download the NI Track & Trace App.

Provision of Hospitality

- the Refectory Kitchen is undergoing a major refurbishment and temporary catering arrangements will be put in place until the project is complete.
- when the refurbishment is complete, Chatz will be arranged to comply with social distancing guidelines and will be the main hospitality venue, with Craiganlet and other areas opened up as necessary.
- staff should follow the COVID-19 restrictions notices associated with the various kitchen areas provided in each building.
- Betty's Coffee Shop will remain closed for the foreseeable future but the matter will be kept under review.
- in order to mitigate the risk of spreading COVID-19, the College has **decommissioned ALL vending machines and water fountains** until further notice.

College Meetings

- Microsoft Teams should be used to conduct meetings unless this is not possible or there are exceptional reasons.
- where larger face-to-face meetings are essential, the **Conference Hall** or **Board Room** in Main Building, which are set up as socially distanced meeting spaces, can be booked.
- there will be no conferencing or other activities on campus that involve large groups of people.



Teaching & Learning

Teaching in Semester One will commence as follows:

PGCE students

Monday 7 September

Returning students

Monday 21 September

New undergraduate students

Wednesday 23 September

- timetabling for the first 6 weeks of Semester One will be a 'Covid -19 timetable' involving some face-to-face teaching in rooms where social distancing rules apply, supported by online learning.
- where classrooms are used for more than one session per day, they will be cleaned between classes.
- the **Library** will begin a phased re-opening on Tuesday, 1 September. Opening hours will be 10.00-16.00, Monday to Friday until further notice.



Health & Wellbeing

The College recognises that the prospect of returning to work and dealing with change may be unsettling for some and it is important that we look after our mental wellbeing at this time. If you have any concerns or issues, please raise these with your line manager. Staff are reminded of the innovative resources available on the Inspire Support Hub including:

- guided self-assessment via 'Chatbot'
- self-help programmes and digital intervention tools
- searchable '5 ways to wellbeing' map
- digital counselling tools
- wellbeing information library and Bibliotherapy

The resources can be accessed at: <https://www.inspiresupporthub>

In order to further support the health and wellbeing of all staff, the College is planning to roll out the administration of vaccines at the beginning of the influenza season in October/November 2020. The flu vaccines will be free of charge to staff, subject to availability.

Use of Face Coverings On Campus

As we look forward to the new academic year, the health and wellbeing of our staff, students and the wider Stranmillis community, and supporting a safe return to campus, is our top priority.

Following the recent announcement by the Northern Ireland Executive, it is mandatory to wear a face covering “*in any indoor public space where it is not possible to maintain social distancing*”. This will be applied to the College campus and we would ask that this is adhered to by all staff and students.

Hand Washing

It is important to emphasise that the wearing of a face covering does not reduce the importance of hand washing, good personal hygiene and social distancing, which are recognised as the most effective way of avoiding COVID-19.

Provision of Face Coverings

To facilitate this, as part of the PPE pack for staff, the College is supplying 2 reusable face masks. Should they require them for College-related activities, 2 reusable face masks will

When do I need to wear a face covering?

Study spaces, such as those in the library, and work areas and office spaces, have already been set-up so that social distancing can be maintained. It is therefore **not** mandatory for face coverings to be worn when you are at your work or study station, unless normally required as part of your role (for example in a lab).



STAY ALERT > CONTROL THE VIRUS > SAVE LIVES

Similarly, with one way systems and other appropriate measures in operation, it is not a requirement for face coverings to be worn when moving along corridors and in stair wells.

However, if you are in communal spaces where social distancing of 2m is not possible, such as lobby areas, social spaces and shared facilities where people tend to gather, **it is mandatory to wear a face covering**. The only exceptions specified by the NI Executive are: when eating and drinking, exercising indoors or for specific personal or health reasons.

also be provided to students. These will be available from 7 September. Until then, a supply of disposable face masks are available at the main reception areas in each building.

Personal Choice

It is appreciated that many staff and students will choose to wear a face covering beyond those areas where it

is mandatory and the College fully supports this position. You should also bear in mind that for personal and health reasons that are not visible, some members of our community will not be able to wear a face covering. All staff and students are expected to respect each other's choices in this regard.