



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

## GUIDANCE

# Guidance for safe operation from September 2020 (version 2.6)

A guidance document setting out the arrangements for the safe delivery of learning from 1 September 2020 in the further education, work-based learning and adult learning sectors.

First published: 31 July 2020

Last updated: 21 December 2020

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

# Contents

## Introduction

---

## Planning for the safe return of learners and staff

---

## Safeguarding vulnerable learners and staff

---

## Protective measures

---

## Provider operations

---

## Arrangements for the winter exams

---

## Version control

---

## Introduction

This guidance sets out arrangements for the delivery of learning from 1 September 2020 onwards in the further education, work-based learning and adult learning sectors. It is part of our overall COVID-19 **Resilience Plan** for post-16 learning; we have also published our “**Renew**” **strategic framework** for post-16 learning from September onward, which sets out overall principles and expectations for the sector.

This guidance is national guidance that applies across Wales. At all **COVID-19 alert levels**, colleges and other post-16 learning providers can remain open for blended learning, as set out in this guidance. Providers will be notified of any additional restrictions, such as national “firebreaks”, which could involve closing for face-to-face delivery except for defined priority groups of learners.

All post-16 learners are entitled to expect a high-quality learning programme. For

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

most, this will involve a “blended learning” model which combines elements of face-to-face and remote learning; our strategic framework and **blended learning guidance** set out more information on the key underpinning principles. The balance of face-to-face and remote learning will vary to meet the diverse needs of learners and their qualifications, with learning providers having flexibility to determine how this is managed in each case.

While remote and online delivery models can be of great benefit in delivering rich learning experiences, face-to-face learning is a vital part of the learner experience. It helps learners to develop team-working and social skills, gives them structure and routine, and ensures that every individual has the support they need to progress towards their learning goals. Learners will vary in their ability to work independently and to stay motivated, so for many that routine will be vital to staying engaged.

We recognise that learning providers will have to strike a balance between meeting the educational needs of learners, and ensuring the health and safety of both learners and staff. We expect providers to follow the protective measures in this guidance and to prioritise actions that will help to minimise the transmission of COVID-19. For colleges and some other learning providers, this means applying a hierarchy of controls that will be different for different types of learning and learners.

It is not possible, even with the most careful planning, to eliminate the risk of operating learning settings. However, all workplaces and premises open to the public must take all reasonable measures to **minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19**. In planning their delivery, providers should follow the principle of ensuring that robust control measures are in place, so that learners and staff are not exposed to a greater risk of COVID-19 in their learning setting compared to the ongoing background risk of COVID-19 in their local community. Following this guidance, and complying with their statutory health and safety duties, will help providers to identify and mitigate risks as far as they can. Providers should proactively inform learners, parents and staff of the measures they are taking, and be prepared to discuss individual concerns.

Some aspects of this guidance relate specifically to learning which takes place on college campuses, or in other learning centres (including community-based

adult learning, “off the job” elements of apprenticeship programmes, and centre-based delivery of employability programmes). In these cases, learning providers have control over the learning environment and are responsible for ensuring that it is safe for learners and staff. For employed learners, including apprentices, whose learning takes place in the workplace, the responsibility for the safety of the learning environment rests with the employer; but the learning provider must satisfy itself of the safety of its staff who are undertaking workplace delivery. Where providers are arranging work placements for learners, they must carry out checks to help ensure the learners’ safety.

## Planning for the safe return of learners and staff

Each individual learning provider must put a plan in place for a return to face-to-face learning if it is safe and appropriate for the learner to do so. Providers must be able to articulate their approach to managing risks, and how it complies with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020. Based on subject-level risk assessments, if it is not safe for an individual learner to return to face-to-face learning, the provider must put a plan in place for them to access their programme of learning remotely. We do not expect providers to undertake risk assessments for every individual learner (with the exception of Independent Living Skills learners, as set out in this guidance), but to give learners and staff the opportunity to identify their own risks and to discuss any concerns with their provider.

We expect providers to:

- undertake and publish a full risk assessment and implement arrangements to manage health and safety risks, in order to ensure that workplaces are COVID-secure before learners and staff are asked to return (see guidance below on risk assessments) and refer to the [Health & Safety Executive’s guidance](#)
- consult with staff, unions and stakeholders
- develop communication plans for staff, learners, parents/carers and employers, including clear ways for them to ask questions and raise concerns
- for campus or centre-based learning, consider how the learning

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

environments and communal areas are prepared to meet the “minimising contact” requirements set out in this guidance

- for work-based learning, undertake a health and safety review of employer premises to assess whether it is safe for provider staff to undertake visits
- for adult learning, undertake a health and safety review of community venues used for teaching and learning, following the Welsh Government’s [guidance on the safe use of multi-purpose community centres](#)
- consider how learning areas can be further ventilated to ensure circulation of fresh air where possible
- clearly communicate expected behaviours to learners including [social distancing requirements](#); hygiene requirements such as regular and thorough hand-washing; what to do if they feel unwell; what to do if they have concerns or anxiety; and what would happen if they do not comply with requirements
- for programmes directly linked to a workplace setting, including apprenticeships, confirm with employers that appropriate hand washing and respiratory hygiene and social distancing arrangements are in place and that they accord with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020
- consider how social distancing and handwashing and respiratory hygiene requirements should be reflected in disciplinary policies and ensure that learners are made aware of any consequences of non-compliance with social distancing requirements
- consider travel to and from learning centres, referring to the Welsh Government’s [guidance on travel](#) and [guidance on face coverings on public transport](#) and [guidance on public use of face coverings](#).
- determine cleaning and disinfection requirements and issues such as reconnection of water supplies prior to and after re-opening, referring to the UK Government’s [guidance on decontamination in non-healthcare settings](#) and the [Health & Safety Executive’s guidance on legionella risks](#)
- consider requirements to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) to learners and/or staff in line with the provider’s risk assessments (refer to Section 6 below)
- consider timetabling, including staggered opening hours and break times, as well as breaks for learners and staff during remote learning sessions to avoid

screen fatigue

- plan and prepare blended learning programmes, following the key principles in our [Renew framework](#) and [blended learning guidance](#)

## The use of face coverings

Face coverings should be worn by staff and learners in all areas outside of the classroom, where it is difficult to maintain social distancing. This includes when moving around the premises, such as in corridors and communal areas where social distancing cannot easily be maintained. This should form part of a provider's risk assessment recognising that in communal areas such as corridors the physical layout means that contact groups cannot remain separated to the same degree and where it is difficult to adhere to other control measures. Face coverings should also be worn on dedicated transport.

Face coverings should be worn by other visitors, including parents, to any site (whether entering the building or otherwise), including at drop-off and pick-up points.

Considering the wellbeing of learners is critical to any consideration of the use of face coverings. Face coverings may need to be provided to certain groups of learners who may be unable to obtain them through other means, if they are recommended locally. Providers should be sensitive to the needs of those who may have exemptions, such as people who have disabilities or other complex needs which means that they cannot correctly use a face covering, or those who are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who is deaf or has any level of hearing loss.

Face coverings are not a replacement for more effective controls such as social distancing and hand hygiene. Where a decision is made to use a face covering we would encourage that individuals use recyclable/multi use face coverings and use them correctly, covering the mouth and nose, ensuring hand hygiene before putting on and following removal. The World Health Organization recommends that **face coverings** should be made up of three layers but do not need to be medical-grade face masks. Guidance on types of face covering, and how to use, wash and dispose of them safely as appropriate to their type is included in the

## face coverings guidance.

In the event of a rise in transmission rates locally, or if there is a cluster of cases at a college, advice will be provided by the Environmental Health Team and Public Health Wales on whether any additional measures are required, including the use of face coverings.

Where providers run any facility which is open to the public, such as a café or salon, face coverings are mandatory for staff, learners, customers and visitors using the facility. **Guidance for these facilities** is available. Learners on work placements and visiting tutors must abide by the rules in place at those workplaces.

If anyone wishes to wear a face covering for personal reasons anywhere in the college, they should be permitted to do so. This may help support wider wellbeing, reduce anxiety and provide additional reassurance for some individuals alongside other mitigating measures. Regardless of their provider's policy, learners and staff may choose to use face coverings to help minimise the risk to themselves and others, and should be encouraged to do so if this helps them to feel more confident about attending their college or learning setting.

## Safeguarding vulnerable learners and staff

### Extremely vulnerable or previously 'shielding' learners and staff

People who are extremely vulnerable to COVID-19, because they have particular existing health conditions, will have previously received a letter that advised them of the need to "shield". Shielding was then paused from 16 August, but on 23 October, the Chief Medical Officer for Wales wrote again to those individuals advising that whilst there is no requirement to re-start shielding there is **advice available** to those individuals on how they can keep themselves safe.

Where a staff member falls into the extremely vulnerable (ex-shielding) category



there is a need to consider working from home as their default position, regardless as to whether national or local **health** protection measures are in place. This will be the most appropriate mitigatory measure in order to take account of their vulnerability. Providers and employers should undertake full considerations, taking account of all reasonable measures to minimise the risks of exposure to coronavirus in the workplace setting. The Welsh Government recommends that risk assessments be made on an individual basis for such individuals, taking account of their individual needs and circumstances. For example, where an extremely vulnerable member of staff **is willing to** return to the work place and undertake face-to-face duties, they should be enabled to do so as far as is reasonably practicable, **taking all reasonable measures** into **account** and subject to additional mitigatory measures based on their individual risk assessment. In some cases, such as some supporting and technical staff, it will not be possible to work from home, so it is particularly important that up to date risk assessments are in place, and all reasonable measures have been considered and put in place. It is also important that all staff and learners in this category have opportunities to discuss any **concerns** they may have before they return to the education/work setting, and consideration should therefore be given to arranging a meeting with individuals to allow for these discussions to take place.

The Welsh Government's **workforce risk assessment tool** can be used by staff to undertake a self-assessment. There are also a number of models which can be used to support managers during discussions with their teams about an individual's personal risk factors when returning to, or remaining in, the workplace. The aim is to help enable good quality conversations between managers and colleagues about any personal circumstances which may increase their risk from coronavirus, and to agree any actions which need to be carried out. **"Talking with your workers about working safely during the coronavirus pandemic"** is guidance from the Health and Safety Executive on how employers may approach this conversation with staff.

For both learners and staff who were previously shielding and then return to the education setting/college/learning centre/work setting, it is important that extra care be taken to ensure that those individuals in particular, and those around them, adhere to **strict social distancing guidelines** and **workplace guidance**,

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).



respectively.

If in doubt about whether an individual's health condition means they should not be attending their workplace or learning provider, staff, learners, parents and carers should take advice from their GP or hospital doctor. They may wish to discuss the risks of attending with their doctor and their provider before making a decision, and this may result in their doctor providing a medical certificate to indicate that they should not return at this time.

We would not expect any staff who are at increased risk but who are attending the workplace to be placed with learners who cannot reasonably adhere to the social/physical distancing measures.

Pregnant women are specifically advised to work from home after 28 weeks' gestation. Guidance for both pregnant women and employers is available from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists [website](#).

## **Learners or staff at 'increased risk'**

Individuals at '[increased risk](#)' are at a greater risk of severe illness from COVID-19. This category includes people aged over 70, those who are pregnant and those who have a range of chronic health conditions.

The advice to this group is the same as it is to the wider population. Learners and staff in this category can attend their college or centre, as long as safety measures are in place as set out in this guidance and the [reasonable measures guidance](#). Where possible, staff should be offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to maintain social distancing. Providers may wish to encourage individuals to undertake their own risk assessments, and offer to meet with the individual to discuss their concerns.

If in doubt about whether their health condition means they should not be attending their provider, staff, learners, parents and carers should take advice from their GP or hospital doctor. They may wish to discuss the risks of attending with their doctor and their provider before making a decision.

We would not expect any staff who are at increased risk but who are attending the workplace to be placed with learners who cannot reasonably adhere to the social/physical distancing measures.

Pregnant women are specifically advised to work from home after 28 weeks' gestation. Guidance for both pregnant women and employers is available from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists [website](#).

## **Living with an extremely vulnerable (formerly shielding) person**

If a learner or staff member lives in a household with someone who was previously **shielding**, they should closely adhere to the social distancing measures when they attend their college or learning centre, and the learner should be able to understand and follow those instructions. This may not be possible for learners without the capacity to adhere to the instructions on **social/physical distancing**. In those instances, we do not expect those learners to attend and they should be supported to learn at home. This should, however, be considered in the light of the most current advice around **shielding**.

## **Learners and staff who are anxious about returning to face-to-face learning**

All other learners and staff should be expected to attend in line with their provider's own attendance policy and staff employment conditions. We would expect learners to be made aware of the requirements of their course when enrolling, including expectations around attendance at college or centres, and that in enrolling they are signing up to attend unless they are unwell.

Providers should bear in mind the potential concerns of learners and staff who may be reluctant or anxious about returning and put the right communications and support in place to address this. This may include those who have themselves been shielding previously but have been advised that this is no longer necessary, those living in households where someone is at increased risk, or those concerned about the comparatively increased risk from COVID-19,

including those from BAME backgrounds or who have certain conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

If learners or staff with significant risk factors (or learners' parents or carers) are concerned, we recommend the provider discuss their concerns and provide reassurance of the measures they are putting in place to reduce the risk of attending. It may be possible for providers to put arrangements in place for remote learning for some programmes.

Our [workforce risk assessment tool](#) can be used by staff in all education settings, to carry out a self-assessment of known COVID-19 risk factors and to plan mitigating actions.

## **Learners with additional learning needs (ALN)**

Our goal is to ensure that learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are not disadvantaged compared to their peers.

Learners with ALN will benefit from face-to-face learning and support, and this should be part of their learning programme unless risk assessments indicate that it is not safe for individual learners to return at this time. Where learners with ALN, including those on discrete Independent Living Skills programmes in FE, are unable to benefit from a blended learning approach, providers should plan to deliver a full programme of face-to-face teaching. Providers must make reasonable adjustments to meet learners' needs in line with their statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010.

In planning for the safe return of learners, providers need to consider that learners with ALN may struggle with:

- returning to face-to-face learning after a long period away. Providers should work with learners and their families to put suitable arrangements in place to prepare them for the transition, which may include a phased return over the first few weeks of term, visits to college, and social stories
- changes to their learning environment or routines, where the provider has made adjustments (for example, by reconfiguring classrooms or reducing

furniture or equipment)

- social distancing. Where possible, learners should be supported and encouraged to maintain distance and not touch staff and other learners. This may not be possible for some learners with complex needs or at all times. Colleges should ensure that learners on ILS programme are kept in their contact groups and avoid mixing with other cohorts. Staff who provide close or contact support to learners should undertake risk assessments and be provided with PPE if the risk assessment shows that it is needed (refer to Section 6 below). Providers should provide guidance and information such as posters in accessible, “easy read” and visual formats, and make this available to learners and parents before they return so that they know what to expect
- following hand washing and respiratory hygiene requirements and the “catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands” protocol. Providers should consider what frequency of hand washing is best for learners, and incorporate time for this in timetables, with supervision if required. Increasing the frequency and thoroughness of hygiene routines will help to mitigate the risks of contact between learners. Some learners may also require personal care such as help with toileting; in these cases, PPE should be used as set out elsewhere in this guidance
- articulating their symptoms if they are feeling unwell.

Specialists, therapists, clinicians and other support staff for learners with additional learning needs can visit and provide interventions as usual. These visitors should be given clear **guidance** on site safety requirements including social distancing and hand washing and respiratory hygiene.

## Independent Living Skills

Our expectation is that learners studying Independent Living Skills (ILS) programmes in colleges should return to a full programme of face-to-face learning from September. This is because this cohort is not sufficiently able to learn remotely without significant family or carer support, and needs the structure and support that the college environment provides in order to flourish and progress.

We recognise that this brings practical challenges for colleges, given that some ILS learners have underlying health conditions and that it may not be possible to fully maintain social distancing for this group. Learners may have difficulties in understanding and complying with distancing requirements, and some may require personal care such as help with toileting. We expect colleges to do all they can to mitigate and manage risks, in line with this guidance. This may include increasing the number of rooms available for ILS, and adapting the structure of learning programmes in order to help ensure learners' safety (for example, by scheduling activities that involve more physical contact to a later stage of the programme). ILS learners who were previously shielding (see above) should not attend college at this time if they are not able to understand and comply with social distancing requirements.

Where learners are able to follow a blended learning programme, with appropriate support from staff and with the agreement of their parents or carers, colleges can deliver on this basis. This may be possible, for example, for learners on Entry Level 3 programmes. We would expect the majority of the programme to be delivered face-to-face and for learners' progress, engagement and wellbeing to be closely monitored, so that the pattern of delivery can be adjusted if required.

## Protective measures

Learning providers must continue to follow the system of controls set out below.

Prevention:

1. Minimise contact between individuals wherever possible.
2. Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have COVID-19 **symptoms**, or who have someone in their household or extended household who does, do not attend their college or training centre.
3. Clean hands thoroughly, more often than usual.
4. Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands' approach.
5. Continue **enhanced cleaning**, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach.

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

6. Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE).

Response to any infection:

7. Comply with the Welsh Government's and NHS' **Test, Trace, Protect strategy** and under GDPR rules staff and parents, carers, guardians will need to be informed of the learning providers' obligations under the TTP strategy.
8. Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice.

## Prevention

### Minimise contact between individuals wherever possible

We know that minimising contacts and mixing between people reduces the transmission of COVID-19. The diversity of the post-16 sector, in terms of the learning environments, provision and learners involved, means that in order to reintroduce face-to-face teaching a tailored, risk-based approach needs to be adopted; this is why our guidance differs from the operational guidance for the schools sector, but we have aligned it as far as possible for similar groups of learners. A key aim of this guidance is to ensure that there is clarity on how providers may resume face-to-face teaching for different groups of learners.

We have worked with Public Health Wales to outline requirements for different types of learning and groups of learners, as set out below. These reflect the higher transmission rates for COVID-19 in adults compared to children; the need to ensure parity between similar types of learning in different settings; the practicalities of limiting contact between individuals; and the relative risks of learners and staff moving between different settings. The overarching principle to apply across all groups is to reduce the number of contacts between individuals.

Outside classrooms and other teaching environments, colleges and other providers should avoid large gatherings and must apply the required social distancing measures of two metres. This applies to communal areas such as refectories, sports halls and reception areas. Staff should also maintain social

distancing in their interactions with one another, including in staff meetings and non-teaching environments. If this is not possible, then appropriate **mitigating measures** should be put in place such as screens, reorganising work areas, staggering start and finish times, and/or industry-standard PPE. This is because staff-to-staff transmission risks widespread transmission throughout the institution, putting colleagues at risk.

Staff are required to strictly observe social distancing from learners and their colleagues at all times, irrespective of whether they move between different contact groups.

Individuals who are part of the same household or extended household do not need to social distance from one another unless there are **local lockdown restrictions** in place, which should be adhered to for all groups.

### **Full-time learners in FE colleges**

This cohort of learners, including those studying A level, vocational and Access programmes, should be assigned to contact groups. This approach is consistent with that for schools, and should help colleges to ensure that the experience for young people in colleges is equivalent to that in schools.

As learners will be studying a number of different subjects, it is likely that COVID-19 clusters in many colleges will be large (if they occur) – potentially the size of the entire cohort studying AS levels and A2 levels respectively on a campus. Nonetheless, restricting contact to within A level cohorts and minimising contact with other learners and staff will help to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

For vocational programmes, colleges must comply with any appropriate **workplace guidance** for the relevant industry to ensure that their workplaces are COVID-secure when planning and managing delivery. In particular, for “close contact” industries like hairdressing or care, where learners require physical contact with clients or with one another in order to learn skills and carry out assessments, industry-standard PPE must be worn. Learners must have training on the safe use of PPE. Where learners are based in any workplace and if tutors visit, they must adhere to the rules on **wearing face coverings** in indoor



public places as appropriate to the **workplace**.

Social distancing remains the most effective way of reducing transmission, and therefore even within contact groups, where distancing of two metres can be achieved through classroom reconfiguration, it should be implemented.

Colleges do not need to differentiate their approach for groups aged 16-19 and those aged 19 and over. However, older learners joining groups which are predominantly made up of 16-19 year olds, such as A levels, are likely to readily adhere to social distancing requirements and may wish to use face coverings in order to help protect themselves from infection, and they should be supported in doing this. The decision about whether face coverings should be worn and where, will be a local decision for the college to make, depending on their assessment of the risk and in the context of local circumstances.

### **Part-time learners and employed learners on college- or centre-linked programmes, including apprentices**

Learners in this category will have a wider range of contacts with colleagues and customers, which are beyond the providers' control. This means that the contact group model is not sufficient to control the risk of transmission.

Providers must undertake risk assessments at subject level and put appropriate safety requirements such as PPE, recognising the increased risks around delivering "close contact" subjects. Social distancing should still be used as the primary control measure where this is possible in addition to all reasonable measures to **minimise the risk of exposure to COVID-19**.

Learners who are interacting with clients or in a "hands-on" way with one another to practice techniques, and learners who spend time on employer premises, are at greater risk of contracting and transmitting COVID-19 and this should be reflected in risk assessments and ensuing actions.

Colleges must comply with any appropriate **workplace guidance** for the relevant industry when planning and managing delivery as well as the reasonable measures guidance. Where learners are based in any workplace they must adhere to the rules on **wearing face coverings** in indoor public

places as appropriate to the **workplace**.

Assessors may undertake workplace visits to apprentices, subject to the risk assessment requirements set out in this guidance. Assessors must maintain a two-metre distance from other people during visits and wear a face covering if the workplace visited requires it under rules for indoor public places.

### **Adult learners in community settings**

Adult learners must maintain social distancing of two metres. Where this is not possible because of insufficient space or other constraints, face-to-face learning should not resume at this time. Where learners are based in any community setting they must also adhere to the rules on wearing face coverings in indoor public places as appropriate to the workplace. In a college setting, the decision about whether face coverings should be worn and where, will be a local decision for the college to make, depending on their assessment of the risk and in the context of local circumstances.

### **Learners on Independent Living Skills programmes**

Learners in this group are likely to interact with relatively high numbers of teaching and support staff, and the nature of the cohort and of their learning means that distancing is unlikely to be an option. Colleges should operate contact groups for ILS learners and should avoid them mixing with learners from other cohorts at this time. Colleges should consider undertaking individual risk assessments for learners to identify their specific health and safety risks and needs, and should liaise with parents and carers to help them decide whether learners with complex health needs should return to college at this time. Separate **guidance** is available for vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, (which although is for a different age group), provides information on managing social distancing and PPE in the context of people with additional needs.

### **Traineeships**

For traineeship learners who are fully centre-based, providers can operate a contact group model as set out in (a) above.

Traineeship work placements that have been disrupted as a result of COVID-19, and new placements, can commence from 1 August, subject to up-to-date health and safety and risk assessments being carried out. The provider must be assured the workplace is safe and the employer is complying with regulations and relevant sector workplace and reasonable measures guidance. The employer's safe working practice policy should be considered as part of health and safety checks. The provider should make sure the learner understands safe working practices around social distancing and hand washing and respiratory hygiene, and that they know to inform the provider if they have any concerns about safety in the workplace.

Under no circumstances should a learner, or an employer, feel under any pressure to commence a work placement if they have health, safety or well-being concerns. As part of the regular progress review that the provider will hold with each learner, the provider should check the learner's understanding of safe working practices, and where possible the work placement provider should be involved in the review.

Trainees whose programme comprises a mix of centre-based and work-based provision should maintain social distancing of two metres, both in their centre and workplace. Where this is not possible, and before commencing centre based activity, providers must undertake a risk assessment and put mitigating measures in place accordingly. Work placements must not be arranged where the provider cannot meet these requirements.

Where trainees are based in workplaces that are included within the rules of **face coverings in indoor public places**, they must comply with these rules unless they have an exemption. Visiting tutors or assessors must also comply with wearing a face covering whilst on the **workplace** premises when relevant.

### **Higher education students in FE institutions**

FE institutions should apply the same approach to their HE students as set out for other groups of learners in this guidance, ie contact groups for full-time learners and social distancing for part-time learners.

For all groups of learners, enrichment and extra-curricular activities can be

delivered where that is possible within the guidance on minimising contact set out above. For activities such as sports academies the relevant governing body and Sports Wales guidance should be consulted and followed. There is also **guidance** issued by Welsh Government on a phased return to sport, recreation and leisure activities.

Where providers are holding indoor events, they must comply with Welsh Government **guidance on leaving your home and seeing other people**. They must also comply with the rules on wearing face coverings in indoor public spaces.

## **Minimise contact with individuals who are unwell by ensuring that those who have COVID-19 symptoms, or who have someone in their household or extended household who does, do not attend their college or training centre**

Under no circumstances should learners or staff attend their college, training centre or workplace if they:

- feel unwell and have any of the identified COVID-19 **symptoms**. If this is the case, they must **self-isolate** immediately and book a COVID-19 **test**;
- have tested positive to COVID-19
- live in a household with someone who has symptoms of COVID-19, or has tested positive for COVID-19 (in which case they should be aware of the need to self-isolate immediately)
- have been asked to self-isolate by the NHS Wales **Test, Trace, Protect** service.

Providers should have a clear escalation policy and procedures in place if learners or staff begin to show symptoms of COVID-19 while at their college or centre. These need to be fully understood by staff, learners (where able) and parents/carers.

Surfaces that learners or staff with symptoms have come into contact with

should be carefully and thoroughly cleaned according to this [guidance](#).

Anyone displaying symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home and [self-isolate](#) while also making arrangements to be tested. The Welsh Government's [self-isolation guidance](#) sets out the actions to be followed and the periods of isolation required for those with possible or confirmed cases of COVID-19, and their household/extended household members, and this should be read carefully and adhered to.

## **Clean hands thoroughly, more often than usual**

Washing hands thoroughly and frequently with soap and running water or hand sanitiser is an effective way of minimising the risk of contracting COVID-19. Providers should, via messages, signage and notices, remind all learners of the need to clean their hands regularly, including when they arrive, when they return from breaks, when they change rooms and before and after eating. More information on correct handwashing procedure is included in the social distancing [guidance](#). Regular and thorough hand cleaning is going to be needed for the foreseeable future. Points to consider and implement include:

- whether the site has enough hand washing or hand sanitiser 'stations' available so that all learners and staff can clean their hands regularly
- supervision of the use of hand sanitiser given the risks around ingestion. Learners with complex needs should continue to be helped to clean their hands properly
- building these routines into the organisational culture, supported by behaviour expectations and helping ensure everyone understands the need to follow them.

## **Ensure good respiratory hygiene by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands' approach**

The 'catch it, bin it, kill it, wash your hands' approach continues to be very important, so providers must ensure that they have enough tissues and bins available to support learners and staff to follow this routine. As with hand

cleaning, providers must ensure that learners with complex needs are helped to get this right, and all learners understand that this is now part of how your provider operates.

Some learners with complex needs may find it difficult to maintain good respiratory hygiene effectively. This should be considered in risk assessments in order to support these learners and the staff working with them, and is not, on its own, a reason to deny these learners face-to-face education.

## **Continue enhanced cleaning, including cleaning frequently touched surfaces often, using standard products such as detergents and bleach**

Providers should follow the latest [cleaning guidance](#) for non-healthcare settings. Points to consider and implement include:

- putting in place a cleaning schedule that ensures cleaning is generally enhanced and includes:
  - more frequent cleaning of rooms/shared areas after they have been used by different groups
  - frequently touched surfaces being cleaned more often than normal
  - consideration of providing cleaning products and encouraging learners to clean their own desks before and after use
- where possible, providing separate toilets for different contact groups. Where this is not possible, using hand sanitiser before entering the toilet and ensuring toilets are cleaned regularly will help. Learners must be encouraged to clean their hands thoroughly after using the toilet.

## **Where necessary, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE)**

It is important to remember that social/physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene (catching a cough or sneeze in a tissue or covering the mouth and nose with an elbow or sleeve then washing your hands) remain strongly evidenced to be the most effective ways to prevent the spread of

coronavirus. There is therefore no need to use PPE when undertaking routine educational activities in colleges or centres. Exceptions are set out below.

Since 14 September 2020, the wearing of face coverings in indoor public places has been made mandatory across Wales. [Guidance is available here](#) and covers exceptions.

## **Suspected cases of COVID-19**

- Gloves, aprons and a fluid-resistant surgical mask should be worn if someone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 and needs direct personal care.
- Eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting.
- Gloves and aprons should be used when **cleaning** the areas where a person suspected of having COVID-19 has been.

## **Intimate care**

- Gloves and aprons should continue to be used when providing intimate care to a learner. This can include personal, hands-on care such as washing, toileting, or first aid and certain clinical procedures such as assisted feeding.
- Fluid-resistant surgical masks and eye protection should also be worn if a risk assessment determines that there is a risk of splashing to the eyes such as from coughing, spitting, or vomiting.
- Gloves, fluid repellent gowns, FFP3 masks and eye protection are indicated when undertaking aerosol generating care procedures such as suction.
- Gloves and aprons should be used when cleaning equipment or surfaces that might be contaminated with body fluids such as saliva or respiratory secretions.

## **Vocational learning**

As set out in Section (1) above, providers should carry out risk assessments for

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).



vocational and work-based delivery and should use appropriate industry-standard PPE to help reduce the risk of infection. This will be necessary for “close contact” industries in particular, and for employed learners such as apprentices. Learners and staff must have training on the safe use of PPE as appropriate for their industry. Where learners are based in any workplace and if assessors visit, they must adhere to the rules on wearing face coverings in indoor public places as appropriate to the workplace.

The use of PPE by staff within providers should be based on a clear assessment of risk, taking into account needs of the individual learner. Following any risk assessment, where the need for PPE has been identified, it should be readily available and provided. Further information has been provided by the **Health and Safety Executive**. All staff should understand how to put on or remove PPE in the right order, safely dispose of the waste and use correct hand hygiene steps to reduce the risk of onward transmission of infection. In any case, hand washing should always be practiced before putting on and after removing PPE.

## Response to any infection

### Engage with the Test, Trace, Protect scheme

The **Test, Trace, Protect strategy** published on 13 May was implemented across Wales from 1 June.

Test, Trace, Protect works by:

- testing those people who have coronavirus symptoms, asking them to isolate from family, friends and from their community, or requiring that they, their household and extended household self-isolate while they take a test and wait for the result. People with symptoms can apply for a test for themselves, or someone in their household with symptoms can apply for a test. This includes adults and children including the under 5s. Information and **guidance** for staff and how to apply for a test can be found **the Welsh Government website**
- tracing those people who have been in close contact with people that have

tested positive for the virus, requiring them to take precautions through **self-isolation**. Further information on contact tracing and how it operates can be found **on the Welsh Government website**

- ensuring that if the symptoms are not due to coronavirus, individuals and their contacts can get back to their normal routines as soon as possible
- providing advice and **guidance**, particularly if the person who has symptoms or their contacts are in the 'shielding group' or the **increased risk** group

By reducing transmission in our communities, and quickly identifying and isolating those at risk of developing COVID-19 following their close contact with a positive individual (e.g. a known contact or family member) we will support the wider opening of schools, colleges and early years settings.

Providers should reinforce these messages and in particular, remind all those who show any of the virus symptoms to self-isolate immediately and book a test. Those living with someone showing symptoms should also self-isolate.

In the event of a positive test, a contact tracer will contact the person tested to help identify potential contacts. A second contact tracer will then get in touch with those contacts and advise them to self-isolate. These people will only be required to take a test if they develop symptoms.

Where staff have maintained social/physical distancing rules and adhered to hand washing and respiratory hygiene measures during work and where required have used personal protective equipment (PPE) or worked behind an appropriate screen or partition, it is unlikely that they would be regarded as part of a contact tracing exercise for these purposes. It is important, however, to remember that even where a provider has all of the appropriate controls in place, employees may not always remember incidences where they have failed to follow these controls.

A positive test on site does not require closure of that site. The process of testing and contact tracing is part of the 'new normal' and where providers follow these guidelines carefully, there is no cause for alarm. The latest information on contact tracing and testing in educational settings can be found on the **Welsh Government website** and should be read in conjunction with this section.

The Welsh Government has published **guidance** on keeping records on staff, customers and visitors, in order to help track COVID-19 infections and contain outbreaks. This applies to certain sectors including hospitality, tourism and leisure, close contact services, and facilities provided by local authorities. Colleges and training providers are not required to keep these records, but the guidance **does** apply to some services run by colleges which are used by the public, such as hairdressers, beauty salons, leisure facilities and restaurants, which should follow the sector guidance to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

## **Contain any outbreak by following local health protection team advice**

Building upon the Disease Outbreak Plan for Wales (2020), Public Health Wales has provided **specific advice** regarding the investigation and management of clusters and outbreaks of COVID-19 in educational settings. The advice outlines what steps should be taken to protect individuals and communities where outbreaks are occurring, as well as reducing spread to other communities.

## **Provider operations**

### **Risk assessments**

Providers must take all **reasonable measures** to protect staff, learners and others from COVID-19 within their sites.

As part of planning for full return in the autumn term, it is a legal requirement that providers should revisit and update their risk assessments by building on the learning to date and any practices they have already developed. This will enable them, to consider the additional risks and control measures to put in place for delivery in the autumn term.

Individual campuses, centres and specialist areas may require their own risk assessments, or a COVID-19 focused update to existing risk assessments. Risk

assessments should be published either on the provider's website, staff intranet or shared drive.

For guidance on carrying out risk assessments, see the [Health & Safety Executive's website](#).

Learning providers are subject to and must follow the requirements of the [Management of Health and Safety in the Workplace Regulations 1999](#).

For learners, including apprentices, whose learning takes place in the workplace, the responsibility for the safety of the learning environment rests with the employer; but the learning provider must satisfy itself of the safety of its staff who are undertaking workplace delivery. Apprenticeship providers must undertake a health and safety review of employer premises to determine how assessors can safely undertake visits, and must confirm with employers that appropriate hygiene and social distancing arrangements are in place that accord with the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) (Wales) Regulations 2020. Where providers are arranging work placements on behalf of learners they must carry out a risk assessment and assure themselves that the workplace is COVID-secure.

Learning providers should work with staff, parents/carers, learners and employers so that there is clarity on what and how the revised arrangements will work in practice and have active arrangements in place to monitor that the controls are:

- effective
- working as planned
- updated appropriately, considering any issues identified and changes in public health advice.

## Workplace learning

The latest Welsh Government [guidance for staying safe at work](#) is available. This includes guidance for some specific industries, which is being expanded and updated as more sectors reopen for business.

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Workplace assessors visiting employers should familiarise themselves with any guidance for their sectors, to ensure that they understand what employers should be doing to keep their staff safe.

If a learner reports concerns about their safety in their workplace, or if an assessor observes unsafe practices (such as poor hygiene, or failure to observe social distancing in enclosed spaces), the provider should escalate these concerns to the employer. Assessors and other staff involved in workplace delivery must **not** be required to visit workplaces if the provider is not sure that they are safe.

Learners or assessors can report an issue relating to protecting people from COVID-19 in the workplace to the Health & Safety Executive:

- on 0300 790 6787 (lines are open Monday to Friday 8:30am to 8pm)
- online using their [working safely enquiry form](#)

## Ventilation

Providers should ensure adequate levels of ventilation. Where centralised or local mechanical ventilation is present, re-circulatory systems should be adjusted to full fresh air. If this is not possible systems should be operated as normal. Ventilation should commence ahead of the start of the day and continue after classes have finished. Where ventilation units have filters present enhanced precautions should be taken when changing filters. Ventilation systems should be checked or adjusted to ensure they do not automatically adjust ventilation levels due to differing occupancy levels. Providers can consult [HSE guidance on ventilation systems](#).

Where providers rely on natural ventilation including opening windows and doors to provide a supply of fresh air, this practice should continue to improve ventilation. It is however recognised that there will be a need to optimise the amount of fresh air entering a classroom whilst balancing this with thermal comfort (maintaining a reasonable temperature) and the risks associated with open windows. The Fire Safety Risk Assessment should always be reviewed before any internal doors are held open.

Windows and doors do not have to remain fully open to obtain the levels of fresh air required to provide good ventilation, they can be partially opened. Staff may need to be advised how to achieve the most appropriate ventilation in any setting. Additional ventilation can be achieved by ventilating classrooms more fully between classes and uses.

Whilst improving ventilation is a key control providers should continue to ensure that the wider controls of social distancing, personal hygiene and enhance cleaning are implemented and maintained.

## Ventilation in Winter

Welsh Government guidance has highlighted the importance of good ventilation and more recently wearing face coverings in indoor public places to keep the contaminant concentration to a minimum level and reduce the risks of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Evidence indicates that the virus is spread primarily through larger droplets and smaller aerosols, which are expelled when we cough, sneeze, laugh, talk or breathe. Indoor transmission is therefore more common than outdoor transmission, as a result of increased exposure and decreased dispersion rates for droplets and aerosols.

As winter approaches the need for ventilation remains an important strategy for reducing our risk of exposure to the virus and it will be important to maximise airflow through the use of vents, windows and doors whilst maintaining a comfortable working or educational environment. Opening windows in the morning before people come into work or before classes start for at least five minutes and in the evening when everyone has gone home will allow air to circulate. If at all possible, open all windows for a few minutes in the working/college day to allow for cross ventilation; that is for stale air to flow out and fresh air to come in.

## Air conditioning

Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings, or you are unsure, advice should be sought from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.

For fully mechanical centralised air-conditioning systems, which both deliver and extract air from multiple rooms it is best practice to avoid recirculation of air. All centralised mechanical ventilation systems should have the facility to turn off recirculation and use only a fresh air supply.

For mechanical systems in individual classrooms, where recirculation modes enable higher rates of supply of **fresh air** to be provided to a space, for example by the prevention of cold draughts, then these devices should be allowed to operate.

Fans would obviously recirculate the current air, so wouldn't be advised.

Checking whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.

There is advice available for building services, particularly around ventilation of buildings, both in use and when returning to buildings which have been closed. It can be accessed from the [Health and Safety Executive](#), the [Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers](#), [The Building Engineers Services Association](#), and [REHVA](#).

Welsh Government guidance has highlighted the importance of good ventilation and more recently wearing face coverings in indoor public places to keep the contaminant concentration to a minimum level and reduce the risks of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Evidence indicates that the virus is spread primarily through larger droplets and smaller aerosols, which are expelled when we cough, sneeze, laugh, talk or breathe. Indoor transmission is therefore more common than outdoor transmission, as a result of increased exposure and decreased dispersion rates



for droplets and aerosols.

As winter approaches the need for ventilation remains an important strategy for reducing our risk of exposure to the virus and it will be important to maximise airflow through the use of vents, windows and doors whilst maintaining a comfortable working or educational environment. Opening windows in the morning before people come into work or before classes start for at least five minutes and in the evening when everyone has gone home will allow air to circulate. If at all possible, open all windows for a few minutes in the day to allow for cross ventilation – that is for stale air to flow out and fresh air to come in.

Some additional lines on Air conditioning and ventilation you may wish to consider working in:

- Most air conditioning systems do not need adjustment, however where systems serve multiple buildings, or you are unsure, advice should be sought from your heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) engineers or advisers.
- For fully mechanical centralised air-conditioning systems, which both deliver and extract air from multiple rooms it is best practice to avoid recirculation of air. All centralised mechanical ventilation systems should have the facility to turn off recirculation and use only a fresh air supply.
- Employers are required to ensure an adequate supply of fresh air through natural or mechanical ventilation and this has not changed.
- Workplaces such as warehouses, however, tend to be open spaces and beyond the typical general ventilation that the size of warehouses bring, we would not require specific controlled ventilation to manage the virus.
- In some cases, general ventilation can be improved by opening doors etc. but HSE is not proposing to issue additional guidance on the subject. Those in control of premises retain a legal duty (see <https://www.hse.gov.uk/pUbns/priced/l24.pdf> - Regulation 6 covers ventilation) to ensure effective ventilation
- For mechanical systems in individual rooms, where recirculation modes enable higher rates of supply of **fresh air** to be provided to a space, for example by the prevention of cold draughts, then these devices should be allowed to operate.

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

- Fans would obviously recirculate the current air, so wouldn't be advised.
- Checking whether you need to service or adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels due to lower than normal occupancy levels.
- Maintaining good ventilation in the work environment. For example, opening windows and doors frequently, where possible..

There is advice available for building services, particularly around ventilation of buildings, both in use and when returning to buildings which have been closed. It can be accessed from the [Health and Safety Executive](#), the [Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers](#), [The Building Engineers Services Association](#), and [REHVA](#).

Welsh Government guidance has highlighted the importance of good ventilation and more recently wearing face coverings in indoor public places to keep the contaminant concentration to a minimum level and reduce the risks of transmission of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

Evidence indicates that the virus is spread primarily through larger droplets and smaller aerosols, which are expelled when we cough, sneeze, laugh, talk or breathe. Indoor transmission is therefore more common than outdoor transmission, as a result of increased exposure and decreased dispersion rates for droplets and aerosols.

As winter approaches the need for ventilation remains an important strategy for reducing our risk of exposure to the virus and it will be important to maximise airflow through the use of vents, windows and doors whilst maintaining a comfortable working or educational environment. Opening windows in the morning before people come into work or before classes start for at least five minutes and in the evening when everyone has gone home will allow air to circulate. If at all possible, open all windows for a few minutes in the working/ school day to allow for cross ventilation – that is for stale air to flow out and fresh air to come in.

## Transport

We have published separate [guidance for further education institutions on planning and managing dedicated college transport for learners](#).

The latest advice and [guidance in relation to public transport](#) is available and is regularly updated. [Guidance on the use of face coverings on public transport](#) is available. [Guidance on the mandatory requirement for wearing face coverings in indoor public places](#) is available.

Local authorities are required to assess the travel needs of learners who are aged under 19 in their area. This includes those who they are legally required to provide transport for and those for whom they may wish to provide discretionary transport when assessing travel needs. An authority is also required to have regard to:

- the needs of disabled learners and learners with learning difficulties
- any particular needs of learners who are 'looked after' or formerly looked after by a local authority
- the age of a learner
- the nature of the route that the learner is expected to take between home and the places where they receive education or training. In assessing the travel needs of learners, local authorities must take into account the fact that travel arrangements they make in light of the assessment must not cause unreasonable levels of stress, take an unreasonable amount of time or be unsafe.

## Contact

Any questions or comments on this guidance should be sent to [FEAD.COVID-19@gov.wales](mailto:FEAD.COVID-19@gov.wales).

## Arrangements for the winter exams

This addendum sets out additional public health arrangements that schools,

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

colleges and other exam centres should implement when delivering exams in winter 2020 exam series to enable them to progress in a coronavirus (COVID-19) secure way.

The guidance below is supplementary and serves as a clarifier to the operational guidance already provided for **schools** and **post-16 providers**. It applies specifically to the conduct of exams in November 2020 and January 2021 (the 2020 winter series).

The addendum is for:

- school and college senior leaders
- heads of other types of exam centre offering GCSEs, A/AS level or vocational and technical qualification (VQ) exams in autumn 2020
- exams officers and other staff involved in exam delivery
- local authorities.

It applies to all types of exam centre, including:

- state-funded schools
- further education institutions
- independent training providers
- independent schools
- adult and community learning providers
- private exam centres.

## Exam contingencies

### When exams will run

The WJEC GCSE Welsh Language, English Language, Mathematics and Mathematics Numeracy November timetable runs from 2 November to 11 November. The January timetable runs from 5 January to 14 January. It is possible that during the exam period, some areas will experience local lockdowns or restrictions of differing degrees including a 'fire-break' will be in place. It is our expectation that where schools and colleges are open, even if this

is for smaller student groups, the exam series will run.

We also expect schools and colleges in areas under local restrictions to run exams. Where candidates are travelling to or are within an area under local restrictions to take exams, they should refer to the [local restrictions guidance](#).

Candidates should expect to be able to travel for the purpose of taking exams, including travel within, into and out of areas subject to local lockdowns, except if they have tested positive, have symptoms or are a confirmed case of a positive contact.

## Candidates who miss exams in the winter series

Provided candidates have taken the minimum necessary assessments for their subject, their school or college can apply for 'special consideration' to be awarded.

The minimum necessary assessments needed for special consideration to apply vary by qualification. For GCSE, AS and A levels, provided candidates have completed a minimum of 25% of the assessments in the subject in the autumn series, they will be awarded a grade (please note for A levels 25% of the assessment must be completed with at least one unit at A2 completed).

It is possible that some candidates will, unfortunately, be unable to attend some or any of their exams. Those candidates who take less than the minimum necessary assessments and therefore cannot be awarded a grade in the winter series will have the option to be awarded a grade in the summer series.

## Preparing for and running the winter exam series

### Engagement with Test, Trace, Protect strategy

You must ensure that you understand the [Test, Trace, Protect strategy](#) and that you have read the [guidance for educational settings](#) (also see [operational guidance section 7 - Engage with the Test, Trace, Protect](#)

**strategy under Protective measures**).

Your school or college will need to collect and keep contact information for candidates and invigilators so that this can be shared with Test, Trace, Protect if required. This is particularly important for any external visitors, including for any non-school staff assisting with exams, and candidates not on roll at the school or college. Every exam will have a seating plan to which names of the invigilators can be added and cross referenced to the contact details you hold for candidates and invigilators.

## **Arrival and departure of candidates**

As candidates arrive before the scheduled start time of exams, you will need to ensure this is managed alongside the arrival of other students at the school or college, in order to keep exam candidates separate from other students.

You should also ensure social distancing measures are followed for any candidates who arrive late for the exam.

You will need to ensure that there is a plan to manage candidates entering and leaving the examination room and site, particularly as exams may finish at different times. As part of this, you will need to take account any candidates who require additional time in exams.

## **Cleaning**

The published **guidance for cleaning non-healthcare settings** is signposted in our operational guidance for schools and post-16 providers. This sets out advice on general cleaning alongside advice on cleaning settings when there has been a suspected case of coronavirus (COVID-19).

There is no requirement for rooms to be left vacant for a period between exams, provided the cleaning outlined above takes place between exams.

## Set up of the exam room

For GCSE, AS and A level exams, the minimum distance in all directions from centre to centre of candidates' chairs must be 1.25 metres, as per JCQ's '[Instructions for conducting examinations](#)'. This distance is the minimum which must be maintained for students within a contact group. For VQ exams, you should follow the guidance specified by the relevant awarding organisation.

All other candidates, whether in different contact groups, private candidates or those returning to school or college take exams, should be seated 2 metres apart from each other. These candidates can be seated in the same room but 2 metres distance should be maintained between candidates in different contact groups. Provided candidates in different contact groups remain 2 metres apart at all times, then this should not count as a contact for the purposes of test and trace.

There is no overall limit on the number of candidates who can sit in a room, provided desks are correctly spaced. The upper limit to the number of candidates who can take an exam in a room together is dictated by the desk spacing requirements.

As detailed in the main operational guidance, it is important to ensure good ventilation and maximise this wherever possible.

Invigilators may walk up and down aisles between desks, but there must also be points in the room where an invigilator can stand at least 2 metres from the nearest desks and can see all the candidates in the room. If an invigilator passes close to a desk but spends the majority of time elsewhere, e.g. at the front or outskirts of a room, that does not make them a contact.

## Face coverings

You should read the section on [use of face coverings for health purposes](#) in the operational guidance. Candidates do not need to wear face coverings while taking exams. Invigilators also do not need to wear face coverings during exams. However, candidates and invigilators may wear face coverings if they



wish to.

Settings should take a risk assessed approach to determine if face coverings should be recommended for candidates and invigilators in communal areas where it is not possible to maintain 2 metre distancing. Please see advice on [face coverings](#).

Everyone should follow [requirements](#) for wearing face coverings if using public transport to travel to exams.

## Invigilators

Your school or college will have protocols in place for visitors and temporary staff. Invigilators can move between different schools and colleges. They should ensure they minimise contact and maintain social distancing from other staff.

You will need to ensure that invigilators are fully briefed ahead of the exams about what the expectations are for them to minimise contact and maintain as much distance as possible from other staff.

There is no requirement for invigilators to wear gloves when collecting exam scripts from candidates but they should wash their hands thoroughly and more frequently than usual and particularly after handling exam papers.

## Maintaining distance between staff and candidates

You should advise invigilators and other staff to stand alongside candidates when interacting with them rather than face to face.

For prolonged encounters of over 15 minutes, for example when scribes/readers or other individuals are providing support to candidates, staff should maintain a 2 metre distance where possible, for example using separate rooms from other candidates to accommodate this. Where this is not possible, they should avoid close face to face contact and minimise any time spent within 1 metre of others.

These arrangements may not be possible when working with some candidates

who have complex needs, in which case these candidates' educational support should be provided as normal during exams. For additional information you should refer to the [guidance for supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged learners](#).

## Candidate health

The [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infections](#) applies throughout.

## School and college action

Schools and colleges must take swift action when they become aware that a candidate entered for the winter series exams has tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19). They must follow the guidance outlined in the [guidance on testing and contact tracing in education settings](#)

## Candidates with symptoms

Any candidate with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) must stay at home for 10 days from the onset of symptoms and must not leave their homes.

Candidates will be unable to take exams during their period of isolation. If the candidate is not tested for coronavirus (COVID-19), they must isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms.

## Where candidates are isolating in line with public health advice

Where a member of the candidate's household is symptomatic, the candidate must follow the latest [self-isolation guidelines](#). They cannot take exams during the self-isolation period.

This also applies if the candidate is asked to isolate following contact with someone with the virus. Candidates cannot take exams during their period of

isolation.

Candidates in quarantine following certain foreign travel must not attend exams during their period of quarantine. See guidance on [travel corridors](#) for an up to date list of countries where quarantine is not required in Wales.

## **Where a candidate has a negative test**

Candidates should follow the guidance on engaging with the Test, Trace, Protect strategy about their [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) test result](#) when they receive a negative test. The guidance sets out the circumstances where candidates do not need to self-isolate. They can attend exams in these circumstances.

## **Candidates who are clinically extremely vulnerable from coronavirus (COVID-19)**

Candidates who are clinically extremely vulnerable should refer to the [shielding guidance](#).

## **Reasonable adjustments**

Schools and colleges must, under their Equality Act obligations, continue to make reasonable adjustments for candidates with special educational needs and disabilities.

JCQ, on behalf of its exam board members, publishes extensive guidance about how schools and colleges can support candidates with special educational needs and disabilities who may need reasonable adjustments in order to take their GCSE, AS or A level exams. JCQ has published [supplementary guidance](#) to cover the winter 2020 exam series.

The support that candidates would have had in place for summer 2020 exams will roll forward until the end of the winter exam series. Timescales have been published for reasonable adjustment applications for those candidates whose circumstances have changed or new needs have arisen.

The special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) will need to ensure that the access arrangement is still appropriate, practicable and reasonable.

In the event of a candidate's circumstances changing, the SENCo may (where required) need to produce evidence and process an online application.

## Version control

### Version 2.6 (21 December 2020)

---

Reference to alert levels added

---

### Version 2.5 (26 November 2020)

---

Revised wording on use of face coverings

---

New section added on ventilation in winter

---

### Version 2.4 (16 November 2020)

---

Section on the use of face coverings updated, to recommend the use of face coverings in all communal areas and on dedicated transport. Lines also added to recommend that any visitors, including parents, to the site wear face coverings

---

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

## Version 2.3 (26 October 2020)

---

Section on safeguarding vulnerable learners and staff updated, to recommend working from home as the default position for extremely vulnerable staff

---

Ventilation and air conditioning guidance added

---

## Version 2.2 (28 September 2020)

---

References to local restrictions added

---

More detail added on face coverings, including references to wellbeing, recommended types and use of face coverings, and facilities open to the public

---

Added references to wearing face coverings in indoor public places where appropriate to the workplace, for work-based learning staff visiting workplaces

---

Simplified references to TTP and self-isolation to link to separate guidance where possible

---

Additional/updated links added to guidance on face coverings, self-isolation, and sport and recreation

---

## Version 2.1 (2 September 2020)

---

New section added on face coverings

---

## Version 2 (20 August 2020)

---

New paragraph added, indicating that providers should follow the principle of ensuring that robust control measures are in place, so that learners and staff are not exposed to a greater risk of COVID-19 in their learning setting compared to the ongoing background risk of COVID-19 in their local community

Link added to the guidance to [minimising the risk of exposure to COVID-19](#).

---

Link added to the [guidance on the safe use of multi-purpose community centres](#)

Link added to the latest guidance on [social distancing](#)

---

Update and clarifications to sections on shielding and “increased risk” individuals, including:

- Clarified wording on staff working from home and on medical certificates for staff who should not return to work at this time
  - Clarification around social distancing requirements for learners and staff in “increased risk” groups
  - Clarification that there are no special social distancing requirements for those living with someone at “increased risk” (as opposed to shielding)
  - Added link to the new [workforce risk assessment tool](#)
  - Link added to [guidance](#) from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Guidance for pregnant women and employers.
- 

Clarification that Independent Living Skills who were shielding, and who cannot

---

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

---

understand and comply with social distancing, should not attend college

Clarification regarding blended learning for Independent Living Skills learners at higher levels

---

Added reference to staff not moving between contact groups (unless they have strictly observed social distancing)

Added clarification that members of the same household do not need to social distance

---

New category added for HE learners in FE institutions

---



## About this document

This document is a copy of the web page [Guidance for safe operation from September 2020 \(version 2.6\)](#) downloaded.

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

This document may not be fully accessible, for more information refer to our [accessibility statement](#).

Get [information on copyright](#).

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://gov.wales/guidance-safe-operation-september-2020-version-26-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).