

29 April 2021

COVID-19 asymptomatic testing programme for college students

Dear Student,

I am writing to let you know about the new College Asymptomatic Testing Programme, which is being put in place as part of the package of COVID-19 risk reduction mitigations in college/HEIs across Scotland, and to give you more information about how the programme will operate in our college setting.

I am also enclosing a privacy notice and consent form with this letter. If, after reading this letter, you wish to participate in testing, please ensure that the attached consent form is completed and brought with you when you come to pick up your test kits. Copies of the consent form will also be available on the day if you cannot print these out in advance.

Why is our College participating in the programme?

Along with the other protective measures we are implementing, regular testing of staff and students will help to further reduce risks in the college environment. It will do so by helping to identify asymptomatic individuals in college environments at the earliest opportunity, and asking them and their close contacts to self-isolate, thus minimising the likelihood of them passing on the virus.

Who can take part?

The regular testing is open to all staff and students who are regularly attending the college premises.

Does everyone have to take part?

Testing is voluntary. No-one who is otherwise permitted to come to college will be prevented from doing so just because they do not wish to participate. However, we are strongly encouraging all college staff and students who are attending college to participate wherever possible, in order to contribute to the wellbeing of our college community.

However, if staff or students are working or learning from home, they should not participate. This is because the programme is intended specifically to reduce risks in the college environment.

If you wish to take part, please read the attached privacy notice carefully, and sign and return the consent form, or if you cannot print one out you can sign a consent form on the day.

What will the testing involve?

Our college has been provided with a supply of Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test kits by the Scottish Government and the UK Department of Health and Social Care for use at home.

We will give each participating staff member and student a supply of these test kits to take home, together with the 'Instructions for Use'. Each staff member and student will be asked to sign for these in a log at the point of handover. Completion of this test kit log is a regulatory requirement.

We will then ask individuals to test regularly at home, twice a week (every three to four days, ideally in the morning before coming to college).

The tests supplied do not require laboratory processing and can provide a quick result in around 30 minutes. Comprehensive guidance on conducting self-testing is contained in the 'Instructions for Use' leaflet which will be provided with the test kit.

The college will provide you with the most up to date 'Instructions for Use' leaflet along with your test kits. You should ensure you use these, and not the ones that are pre-packaged in the test kits.

There is a useful video showing participants how to administer the test here:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLvaBZskxS7tzQYIVg7lwH5uxAD9UrSzGJ>.

Once the test has been conducted individuals must log the test result – whether positive, negative or void – online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result. Tests are free of charge and will be provided by the college.

NB: It is important to note that this regular testing is only for individuals without symptoms. Those with symptoms must continue to follow the usual guidance. They must self-isolate and book a PCR test at a test centre or via a home test kit at the earliest opportunity. People with symptoms must not rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend college.

NB: A negative test result must not be taken as leave to relax or ignore physical distancing or other measures intended to reduce transmission – testing is an additional intervention that contributes to reducing risk.

When will it start?

We intend to start distributing test kits to staff and students from Monday 3 May 2021. Students can go along to Room 031 in the Brahan Building between 10am and 12 noon to pick up test kits.

Each test kit holds 7 tests, so should last 3.5 weeks with tests carried out twice a week with 3-4 days between each test. Details on the specific test kit given to each student is logged on a central register and details of how long we will hold that data is in the privacy notice.

Please ensure you observe physical distancing and wear face coverings when attending for these purposes.

Staff and students should then begin regular testing as soon as possible.

We will continue to support and communicate with our staff, students and college communities as we implement this programme. Please let us know if you have any

questions. In the meantime, some Frequently Asked Questions can be found in the annex to this letter.

Yours faithfully,

Deborah Lally
Head of Student Experience and Safeguarding Lead

Annex – Frequently Asked Questions

How will my child know how to use the tests?

The college/HEI will provide those participating with the most up to date Instructions for Use along with their test kits. Participants will be asked to ensure they use these, and not the ones that are pre-packaged in the test kits.

The Instructions for Use set out clearly how to use the test kits, or how to support someone to do so. They also provide a number to call if there are any problems with the test kits.

Are the tests safe and accurate?

LFD tests have been widely and successfully used to detect COVID-19 in asymptomatic individuals. No test is perfect, but the speed and convenience of LFD tests supports detection of the virus in asymptomatic individuals who would not otherwise be tested. They are clinically approved and are crucial in the fight against the virus. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has approved the use of these at-home tests for these purposes.

LFD tests are very accurate, which means that only a very small proportion of people who do not have coronavirus will receive a positive result (false positive). The tests are better at picking up true positive cases when a person has a higher viral load and is more contagious. There is a risk of returning a false negative result when viral loads are low (e.g. in the early stages of infection). This is why Public Health Scotland recommend two LFD tests 3 to 4 days apart, or regular testing, to enhance detection by picking up any cases which were not detected during the first test and to catch any new infections.

If someone tests positive using an LFD, it is likely that they are infectious at that moment, whereas people testing positive on a 'Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR)' test could be in the less infectious early or late stages of disease. This means that by using the LFD, we can identify people with a high viral load who are the most likely to spread the virus further.

What happens if there is a problem with the tests?

Any incidents that could potentially impact the quality or safety of testing should be reported to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

For incidents occurring in a home setting, please report any issues (for example: something damaged, or missing or difficult to use in the kit, you are unable to log a result) to **0300 303 2713**.

If there is a clinical incident which led to, or has the potential for, harm (e.g. swab breaks in the mouth, bleeding, allergic reaction on using the kit etc.) please report it on <https://coronavirussyellowcard.mhra.gov.uk>.

This is not for seeking immediate medical care. Medical care should be sought through the usual route of contacting 111 or 999.

What happens if my child tests positive?

If your child receives a positive result on your Lateral Flow Device at home, they must report the result online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result, self-isolate and book a confirmatory PCR test. This can be done via <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>. We advise visiting a community or drive-through test site as this is the quickest way to get tested, or you can order a home test kit.

It is important that your child begins self-isolation immediately after they receive the positive result from the LFD test, and does not wait until the result of their PCR test.

What happens if my child tests negative?

They must report the result online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result. Individuals who test negative will be able to stay in college/HEIs and resume their activities as normal.

What happens if the test result is “void”?

This means the test has not run correctly. Your child must report the result online at www.gov.uk/report-covid19-result. They will need to take another test. Use a new test kit, and do not reuse anything from the first kit.

What if my child has been in close contact with someone who tests positive?

If a student or member of staff has tested positive, they will have to self-isolate as per government guidelines. The student or member of staff should also inform the college/HEI of their absence, and are strongly encouraged to report a positive case to their college/HEI to support contact tracing activities.

Both Test and Protect and, once informed, the college/HEI will get in contact with staff members and students who were in close contact with a positive case to inform them that they need to self-isolate.

What if my child develops symptoms?

This testing programme at college/HEI is for people with no symptoms. If your child develops symptoms at any time (such as a high temperature; a new, continuous cough; or a loss or change to their sense of smell or taste) they must immediately self-isolate, and book a test by calling 0800 028 2816 or visiting <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>. People with symptoms must not rely on a negative LFD result to continue to attend college/HEI.

Can staff/students’ families get tested too?

No, this asymptomatic LFD testing is aimed at staff and students only. The tests will be handed to staff and students for personal use and should not be used for anyone else. Family members of staff or students taking part are not eligible for this programme.