

Keeping COVID-safe at College

This document sets out some guidelines and requirements that we all need to follow to keep College as safe as possible.

In providing this information, we're guided by the fact that we need to be doing what we can, as a community, to keep transmission of COVID in the College to an absolute minimum: we want to protect you all, to protect the wider community, and to ensure that we can go ahead with Welcome Week training and events as normally as possible.



We're really fortunate that we have access to each other, and access to the gym and great outdoor spaces within the College grounds. But we need to ensure that we act safely, and in compliance with the SA Health guidelines. To keep infection rates down we all need to be doing the right thing, both in our day-to-day actions within and outside College, and in those instances where we are exposed to the virus.

So, what does this mean?

We've set out some **General Guidelines** below, followed by a series of **FAQs on Testing and Isolation**. These are based on [SA Health Guidelines](#) that we are required to follow.

We hope that many of these requirements will be a temporary measure, and that as restrictions ease things can get back to normal.

Section 1: General Guidelines

General

- At all times act as if you may have the virus, and as if those around you may have the virus.
- Maintain 1.5m social distancing where possible; wash your hands properly; use hand sanitiser; get tested if you have symptoms; and wear a mask (ideally an N95 mask or a surgical mask) in shared indoor spaces – more info on these points is set out below.
- Subscribe to the [SA Health Facebook page](#) for regular updates relating to COVID restrictions and guidelines, as these change often.

Masks

- Please wear a mask (ideally an N95 mask or a surgical mask) in all shared indoor spaces in College, apart from the exceptions noted below.
- This means you need to wear a mask:
 - in Downer House;
 - in Hall unless you're seated and eating or drinking (so that includes while you're queueing and being served);

- in the Academic Centre and Learning Commons (unless you're presenting at a whiteboard and can maintain 1.5m distance).
- We encourage you to wear a mask in spaces such as student corridors, in particular if you are visiting a floor you don't live on.
- You don't need to wear a mask while you're exercising in the gym, but you do need to have a mask with you and to wear it when you're not exercising, e.g. when taking a break between sets.
- SA Health also advises that you wear a mask when outdoors if you are unable to socially distance.
- Cloth masks are generally [not good protection against the Omicron strain](#). We're providing each of you with a disposable N95 mask which should see you through a few days so long as the mask isn't wet. The key thing to remember with masks is that they need to fit well, create a seal around your nose and mouth, and not gape at the sides – check out the guidance we've provided with your mask.

Social distancing and density requirements

- It might feel as if we're in a safe bubble here in College, but we aren't: COVID can spread here as quickly as in the wider community (arguably more quickly, given we all live so closely together) so we need to act sensibly.
- When you are outside College, please avoid close contact with others as much as possible, and follow the requirements of the environment you are in (e.g. masks on public transport).
- When you are on College grounds please maintain social distancing as far as possible. Please also abide by density requirements in shared rooms around College, including tutorial rooms – there are notices up setting out the caps.
- The risk of transmission in indoor spaces is very high with Omicron, so please be aware of the [SA Health definition of a close contact](#) when having guests in your room, and that if one of you tests positive for COVID it is likely that you will **all** need to get tested **and** isolate for 7 days. We therefore encourage you to socialise outdoors as much as possible for the time being (while also noting that this isn't risk free – see below).

It would also be a wise precaution to limit any guests in your room to people who live on your floor or in your flat.

- We know that the virus can spread fast if you're in close proximity to other people, and this is the case even if you're outdoors; if you're sharing drinks with a friend, laughing with them, hugging them, and it turns out they have COVID, then you have a very good chance of catching it from them whether you are indoors or outdoors, so please be sensible.

Social events

- [Planned events](#): We want to go ahead with our Welcome Week program as fully as possible, though we recognise that what we currently have planned may need to change at short

notice. All College and Committee events have been through a thorough risk assessment before they have been approved (huge thanks to the Committee for their adaptability and creativity). Some events we'd hoped to have in Welcome Week will instead be held later in the semester, assuming restrictions ease.

Please abide by the requirements that are in place for each event.

- Impromptu parties: It is always the case that parties and events in College require permission from the Dean (see p.72 of the Handbook), and this is even more important if we want to reduce the spread of Omicron.

We can't permit impromptu parties at the moment, because we won't be able to run a risk assessment. Please contact the Dean, at least 48 hours in advance, if you wish to hold a planned event – and please understand that your request may not be approved under the current circumstances.

- This doesn't mean you can't play sport, or can't have some beers outside with your mates – that's all fine, though we would still ask you to maintain social distancing as far as possible for the reasons given above. But if it looks or feels or sounds like a party or an event, it's not okay.

Please don't go looking for loopholes – we need to be sensible here, and we need to be able to trust that you'll act sensibly and respectfully for everyone's sake.

Gym

- We're really keen to keep the gym open, but this is of course a prime place for the virus to spread so we need to be extra careful.
- The basic requirements for gym use are as follows:
 - no more than 8 in the gym at any one time;
 - maintain 1.5m distance (ideally have an empty piece of equipment between you and other gym users);
 - bring two towels – one to sit on when using equipment, one to wipe sweat off you; and
 - wipe down equipment with disinfectant thoroughly before and after use, using the spray provided.
- You don't need to wear a mask while you're *exercising* in the gym, but you do need to have a mask with you and to wear it when you're *not exercising*, e.g. when taking a break between sets, chatting to a friend, etc.

Visitors

- We're keen to keep visitors to a minimum – so please don't invite groups of friends into College, and for the time being guests are not permitted at meals or at College events.
- All visitors to the College must be fully vaccinated. It's your responsibility to ensure that any guests entering College grounds have been fully vaccinated, and abide by any QR code sign-in requirements in place.

Vaccines

- As you're aware, only people who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 are permitted on College grounds. Fully vaccinated means that you're up-to-date with all boosters as well as the initial two jabs.

Wellbeing

- We know this is tough. Please continue to check in with each other. You've been doing an awesome job of this so far and we're really grateful and happy to see the very best of our community manifest at these times.
- Do contact one of us if you're struggling, or if you're worried about someone else.
- Take the time to support your friends in iso – this is when they need you for distraction, and to know they're loved and not forgotten!
- You may also want to check out the online support available on this page, which includes apps and other online resources, and helplines: www.stmarkscollege.com.au/wellbeing-2/

Section 2: FAQs on Testing and Isolation

These FAQs are split into two parts. Part A focuses on Testing, and Part B focuses on Isolation.

Part A: FAQs on Testing

1. What do I do if I'm experiencing COVID symptoms?

COVID-19 symptoms include: fever or chills; cough; loss of taste or smell; sore throat; tiredness; runny or blocked nose; shortness of breath; nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea; headache; muscle or joint pain; loss of appetite.

If you are experiencing symptoms, you must:

- get a PCR test immediately (not a RAT);
- inform the Dean (or in his absence the Director of Wellbeing); and
- isolate until you receive a negative result.

Contact details for the Dean and Director of Wellbeing are at the end of the FAQs.

2. What do I do if I test positive while I'm in residence at College?

If you test positive you must:

- isolate for 10 days from when your test was taken;
- inform the Dean (or in his absence the Director of Wellbeing); and
- inform your close contacts.

The Dean and Director of Wellbeing will ensure that you get the support you need while you are quarantining in isolation. Their contact details are at the end of the FAQs.

3. What do I do if I'm a close contact?

If you are a close contact you should inform the Dean (or in his absence the Director of Wellbeing) so we can ensure you are supported while in isolation.

SA Health states that anyone who is a close contact of a confirmed case must:

- immediately isolate for 7 days from exposure (date of exposure is day 0);
- take a rapid antigen test on day 1, 3, 5 and 7 from exposure (close contacts can [register on the SA Health website](#) to collect a free kit of four rapid antigen tests from a RAT Collection Point); and
- [report your results](#) to SA Health.

However if as a close contact you develop symptoms then SA Health says you must:

- get a PCR test (even if your most recent RAT test is negative);
- get a further PCR test on day 6 after exposure, and this day 6 test needs to be negative before you can leave isolation.

Of course, if you receive a positive test result then you need to follow the procedure for a COVID positive case (see FAQ 2).

Once you have received a negative test and have left isolation, SA Health requires you to be rigorous about wearing a mask and maintaining physical distancing from days 8 to 14 after exposure.

4. How do I know if I'm a close contact?

A close contact is defined by SA Health as a household member or intimate partner, or someone who has had close personal interaction with a COVID-positive person during their infectious period. The full definition is [here](#).

People with COVID are considered infectious from two days prior to experiencing symptoms.

5. What if I've been exposed to a positive case, but don't meet the SA Health definition of a close contact?

There may be a situation in which you're not technically a close contact – for example, you were hanging out on the tennis courts for a couple of hours with a group of friends without masks, and the friend you were sitting next to for an hour has now tested positive.

In circumstances such as these, even though the interaction was outdoors, you should get tested. We know that the Omicron strain is highly transmissible, even if the risk of infection is reduced outside.

In other words, even if you don't fall within the letter of the SA Health guidelines on close contacts, please be sensible and get tested if you think there's a realistic chance you've been exposed to the virus, and please let the Dean know. Our aim is to keep as tight a lid as possible on the spread of the virus within the College community, and these are basic steps we can all take to assist with that.

6. What if I'm waiting for a PCR test result to come through?

Inform the Dean (or in his absence the Director of Wellbeing), and isolate until you receive a negative result. If it's a positive result, see FAQ 2 above.

7. How do I know what sort of test to get – RAT or PCR?

If you have COVID symptoms you are required by SA Health to get a PCR test – these are free, and you can find PCR testing centres [at this link](#).

If you are a close contact, and are not experiencing any symptoms, you should take a rapid antigen test (close contacts can [register on the SA Health website](#) to collect a free kit of four rapid antigen tests from a RAT Collection Point).

If you are a close contact and have had a negative RAT but subsequently develop any symptoms, you should get a PCR.

If you are not a close contact and you don't have symptoms, but would like to get tested anyway (eg if you think you may have been exposed), you can purchase RATs in supermarkets and pharmacies.

SA Health information about testing can be found [at this link](#).

Part B: FAQs on Isolation

8. How does isolation work in College?

If you need to isolate for whatever reason, you should contact the Dean (or, in his absence, the Director of Wellbeing) as quickly as possible.

The Dean will have a few things that he'll run through with you to ensure he has the necessary information about your situation.

Isolation takes place in your room (unless you have already moved off-site – see FAQ 12 below).

If you're likely to be in isolation for more than a few hours, the Dean will arrange for you to get an isolation pack which will contain items such as face masks, anti-bacterial spray or wipes, door notices, and info about access to shared bathrooms, wellbeing support, etc.

The Dean will also ask you to identify one or two friends in College who will be responsible for collecting meals from Hall for you. (You may want to have a chat with your friends now and agree with them that you'll be a meals-buddy if one of you ends up in isolation.)

The Director of Wellbeing will also get in touch with you to check in with you, and to ensure you have the support you need.

9. How do I get meals if I'm in isolation?

As noted above, the Dean will ask you to identify one or two friends in College who will be responsible for collecting meals from Hall for you. They'll bring them to you and leave them outside your room.

If you don't have anyone who can help with this, please let the Dean know and he will put in place alternative arrangements.

When you collect your meals or other supplies from outside your bedroom door, don't forget to (1) wear your mask, and (2) wait for the person to move away from the door before collecting your items.

You'll be provided with information in your isolation pack about how to dispose of used takeaway containers and other items of rubbish.

10. How does shared bathroom use work if I'm in isolation?

You'll be provided with instructions about this in your isolation pack.

The approach we take is based on the [advice on the SA Health website](#), adjusted where necessary to reflect the College residential context.

11. Can I go outside if I'm in isolation?

Unfortunately not if you're isolating in College. Our outdoor spaces are all common spaces, so you can't use them if you're in isolation.

12. Can I go home / off College grounds to isolate?

The SA Health guidelines are clear that you shouldn't move around while you're waiting for a test result, or if you've tested positive: once you're in isolation you need to stay in that location.

So, while you can isolate away from College if you wish, you will need to decide this in advance and get organized before you go for your initial PCR test. You'll then need to take what you need for your period of isolation with you when you go for your test (e.g., clothes, laptop, etc.), and after your test go directly to your isolation location. You can't come back to College between taking the test and going to your off-site isolation location.

Please inform the Dean if this is what you're doing so we know we don't need to sort out meals etc for you.

13. What can I do to help my friends who are in iso?

It's tough, and boring, being in isolation, and the more we can all support each other the better.

Things that would be really helpful are:

- Practical support: offer to collect meals and any other supplies, such as toiletries, that your friend needs.
- Distractions: check in with your friend at least once a day, and try to come up with some distractions such as puzzles you can play together online, skills you can try to learn at the same time via video chat (e.g. juggling), movies you can watch in sync ...
- Wellbeing support: it's easy to feel very alone in isolation, and as if you're missing out on things. Being kind and tactful with any friends in iso is therefore extra important. If you're worried about someone who's in iso, please let Stuart (Director of Wellbeing) know.

14. What happens if I become very sick while in isolation?

You'll be given information in your isolation pack about how to keep yourself as healthy as possible while you're isolating.

If you start to feel very unwell, please contact the Dean or Director of Wellbeing (contact details below). You can also contact the State's COVID-19 Response Care Team on 1800 272 872.

If you have worsening symptoms such as difficulty breathing or chest pain, or any other medical emergency, call 000 (triple zero) and ask for an ambulance and let them know you are in isolation. Please also contact the Dean or Director of Wellbeing.

15. What if I'm struggling academically while in isolation and/or unwell?

Please contact the Director of Learning (contact info below) and she will arrange to talk with you and help you figure out how to get back on track.

16. What financial help can I get if I can't work due to being in isolation?

The Federal and State governments provide support under certain circumstances to those isolating who are unable to work. Information is provided [at this link](#).

17. What wellbeing support can I get if I'm in isolation?

Please reach out to friends, family, or any College staff if you are struggling and need support.

There's a lot of online support available – for example, there are resources on [this page of the St Mark's website](#), including apps, workbooks, and helplines. There's also a good set of resources on the [SA Health website](#).

If you need support urgently, please contact the Director of Wellbeing (contact details below).

College contact details

Dean (Dr Andrés Villamizar):

- Mobile: 0407 701 061
- Email: andres.villamizar@stmarkscollege.com.au
- Facebook messenger

Director of Wellbeing (Mr Stuart Meldrum):

- Mobile: 0422 072 252
- Email: stuart.meldrum@stmarkscollege.com.au
- Facebook messenger

Director of Learning (Dr Katrina Stats):

- Landline: 8334 5614
- Email: katrina.stats@stmarkscollege.com.au