

## **Preamble**

The unprecedented events that swamped our very existence these past two years have left an indelible mark on the very fabric of our schools and Institutes. They have led us to re-think our structures and frameworks and find novel ways of dealing with the pandemic whilst ensuring we deliver to our students.

COVID-19 has once again led us to change our modus operandi for the forthcoming academic year, but we find ourselves more learned and prepared in so many ways. Within the context of the Guidelines issued by the Health Authorities entitled *Guidelines to the educational sector for Post-Secondary Schools/Institutions and Tertiary Institutions in Malta and Gozo*, published in September 2021, the post-compulsory sector has sought to develop mechanisms which are tailor-made to its specific needs, simultaneously respecting the diversity of every educational entity within in.

***A cautious step-by-step return to normality for face-to-face teaching and learning on Campus with all mitigation measures possible being adopted, is the policy this sector is embracing.***

## **General Set-Up**

The State Educational Entities within this sector, namely Giovanni Curmi Higher Secondary School, GEM 16+ and Sir M.A. Refalo Sixth Form shall abide by all Guidelines set by the Health Authorities (in the document as indicated above) to mitigate against the spread of Covid-19.

## **Taking of Temperature at the Door, Face Masks, Contact Tracing, Sanitizers in all Areas, Flow of Students and Staff**

These measures shall continue as per the previous academic year, in line with the Guidelines set by the Health Authorities.

## **Classroom Set-Up**

- a. As per Guidelines issued pages 11-12, quoted hereunder, the required distance of 1m for students and 2m for adults is the established norm:

*'In view of the positive uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine in this age group, maximum efforts should be made to maintain a minimum physical distance of 1 metre between students in all directions whilst sitting in their chair (except those positioned near a wall)'.*

Furthermore: *'Teachers, lecturers and non-teaching staff must keep 2 metres between themselves (between staff) and between staff and students'.*

- b. Supporting staff shall strive to maintain this distance by repeated checks and inspections in classrooms on a daily and weekly basis;
- c. Where Practical Sessions are concerned, these will be held as long as the minimum distance of 1m between students and 2m between adults and/or students is maintained (as per Guidelines page12).
- d. In line with the Guidelines issued, **ventilation** shall be given priority in all classes, laboratories and staffrooms.

### **Staffrooms**

Teaching Staff shall remain divided into sub-groups to avoid staff density in one room.

### **Staff, Student and Other Meetings**

To reduce population density in restricted spaces, meetings shall continue to be held online in sub-groups through MS Teams.

### **Basic Guidelines for All Students**

A brief containing basic guiding principles shall be issued to all students and staff prior to the commencement of the new academic year.

### **Emails, Electronic Communication and Alternatives to Paper Documents**

Practices adopted during the last academic year shall continue to be employed.

*'In order to minimise the non-essential contact between persons, any communication, including that between Students, Management, Staff should preferably take place by electronic means eg. via email or virtual meetings'.* Guidelines September 2021 page 12

### **Use of the Library**

The Library Guidelines issued last year shall continue to apply.

### **Use of the Canteen**

This is to be allowed as long as this is in line with the Standards for Restaurants as described in page 15 of the current Guidelines. We shall not be allowing access to third parties external to the Institute.

### **Online Teaching-Learning Protocol**

An Online Protocol to guarantee we are guided by a workable framework when adopting a blended approach, had already been enacted and published.

### **Blended Learning Approach in Extenuating Circumstances**

As per Guidelines issued, blended/online teaching and learning shall be a viable alternative to safeguard a continuum of learning for our students. This option will be adopted following discussions with and authorisation from MFED and directions given by the Health Authorities. Such a model will not remove students from Campus or face-to-face learning but will rather complement it whilst safeguarding students' and staff's health.

### **Shielding of Staff and Students, Quarantine and carrying out of teacher duties**

In light of the measures highlighted in the Guidelines issued in September 2021, page 20, quoted hereunder, there is no specific group of persons who warrant blanket shielding. The Institute/School management will however support staff in every possible way:

*'The Legal Notice LN 111 of 2020 Protection of the Vulnerable was repealed on the 5th June 2020 and clinically vulnerable people are no longer required to stay at home. The principal measure to combat COVID-19 infection is ensuring that at the first available opportunity one takes the full course of an EMA approved COVID-19 vaccine which would have been made available to all students and staff in this setting. The vaccination roll out in Malta was such that medically vulnerable persons were prioritized for vaccination. Moreover, it has been announced that immunocompromised persons*

*would be offered an additional dose of a COVID-19 vaccine starting in September 2021. In light of the above measures, there is no specific group of persons who warrant blanket shielding’.*

### **Enhanced Hygiene**

Apart from abiding by all hygiene protocols as directed by Health Authorities, **Sanitization Afternoons** shall be held per scholastic term to add cleanliness to areas most affected by students and staff. All the necessary materials shall be stocked to ascertain the job is done properly.

### **Third Parties on Premises**

All communication channels are to be kept open with all stakeholders, but the presence of third parties external to the entity is not solicited and is to be avoided, as per Guidelines page 10.

### **Customary Events held throughout the Academic Year**

Although a return to normality is much desired, a full return to the routine we were accustomed to is a process which is to be taken through a step-by-step approach. Events involving large groups of students, staff and parents are at this point, to be avoided (Guidelines page 16) and those concerned reached through alternative modes of communication.

### **Students to Act Responsibly**

Although the administration of each school/institute will carry out follow-ups to guarantee that all mitigation measures as issued by the Health Authorities in the recently published Guidelines (September 2021) are respected, students at these post-compulsory entities must do their fair share where mitigation measures (re COVID-19) are concerned. The starting point is to respect themselves first and foremost by avoiding reckless behaviour, thereby also promoting good practice amongst fellow students.

Here are some points which students shall be updated with to sensitise them to the reality of the threat posed by COVID-19 and how responsible behaviour can make a huge difference.

1. Follow the direction of the **signage** all over the building: on the floor (footprint) indicating one-way or two-way traffic; signage which indicates entry and exit; signage which indicates when to stop outside an office or room;
2. **Labels** on class doors showing a number followed by the word ‘students’ indicating the new number of students that room can hold with new social distancing regulations as per Updated Public Health Guidelines;

3. **Noticeboards** cannot hold circulars, posters, or any form of advertisement on them as part of the Administration's mitigation measures against COVID-19;
4. You are **to proceed straight to your classes** and cannot loiter in the corridors or foyers upon your arrival at your school/institute. There are a good number of **monitors** where you can access your daily info from and not just in the foyers;
5. Take note of **posters** all over the school/Institute and classes;
6. Use **sanitizers** and **wash your hands** regularly. **Use a mask at all times**;
7. Although our cleaners will be doing their very best for you, we encourage the practice of students wiping their desks with a 'wet-one' or alcohol wipe before every lecture, although this is a completely voluntary thing;
8. Your **temperature will be taken at the door**. Avoid running around outside the Campus unnecessarily. If you finish your lectures early in the day, we recommend that **you go straight home**;
9. Take special note that the **Library and Canteen** have special Guidelines;
10. **Science Labs** also have specific standards that need to be respected;
11. **Respect Social Distancing** at all times. Respect your health and that of others.
12. Contact our **COVID-19 Liaison person** at Sixth Form when in doubt.
13. **Do not take unnecessary risks. Avoid carelessness.**

### **Concluding Remarks**

Within the context of the recent Guidelines issued by the Health Authorities, ***maintaining a Work-Healthy Life Balance without any additional risks*** remains the key concept for the forthcoming Academic Year 2021-2022.

**September 2021**