Mandatory Use of Face Coverings to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

Category: Operations
Approval: PVP
Responsibility: COVID-19 Case Management Committee
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Definitions:
A face covering means a medical mask, non-medical mask, or other cloth face covering of at least two layers (three preferred) that covers the nose, mouth and chin providing a barrier that limits community transmission of respiratory illness /COVID-19 among individuals in proximity to one another. A face covering must be securely in contact with the surrounding face without gapping. Face shields (clear plastic coverings to protect the eyes and lower parts of the face) are not an acceptable alternative to a face covering for the purpose of this policy. An exception to this may be the use of face shields with an integrated cloth barrier that covers the chin and sides of the face, such as the Humanity Shield, that may be worn for the purposes of clearer communication (i.e. lecturers, communicating with someone with a hearing impairment), while also maintaining physical distancing. Face shields may be used by individuals in addition to a face covering for added protection, and may be required as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), in addition to a medical mask, in certain circumstances.

A multi-person indoor space is an indoor room or open area where more than one person may congregate. Examples include, but are not limited to, classrooms, labs, open concept office areas, and lounge or study areas in hallways, common rooms, cafeterias, open library spaces, atria and meeting or seminar rooms.

A person/people means any student, staff or faculty employee, contractor or visitor, who enters Trent University property.

Purpose/Reason for Policy:
The purpose of this policy is to comply with Ontario Regulation 364/20: Rules for Areas at Step 3 and at the Roadmap Exit, and the Trent Forward Plan, which include a mandate for mandatory face coverings.

Respiratory infections such as COVID-19 may be spread through respiratory droplets from infected individuals through coughing, sneezing, and speaking. COVID-19 transmission can occur even when someone is not showing symptoms; and when someone is partially or fully vaccinated. As on-campus activities fluctuate at the University during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to implement policies and safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus and to protect the health and wellbeing of employees, students, and community members.
While wearing face coverings is an important step in reducing the risk of transmission, it must be accompanied by other measures including physical distancing, respiratory etiquette, and good hand hygiene.

**Scope of this Policy:**
All indoor spaces on Trent University property, including spaces rented and operated by vendors and tenants, and all Trent owned or operated vehicles. All outdoor spaces on Trent property where physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as bus stops or narrow courtyards, or whenever you are within 2 metres of another individual.

**Policy Statement:**
All persons who enter or remain in the indoor spaces of Trent University, or in outdoor spaces where physical distancing cannot be maintained, are required to wear a face covering that covers the nose, mouth, and chin. All persons inside Trent-owned vehicles must wear a face covering if there is more than one occupant in the vehicle, or if there is not adequate time to disinfect the vehicle between different users.

The face covering must be worn inside Trent University buildings at all times, with the following exceptions:

- there is need for an individual to temporarily remove a face covering while in the indoor area:
  - to receive medical services that require the removal of the face covering;
  - to engage in an athletic or fitness activity, where allowed, or;
  - to consume food or drink.
- in a single person indoor space such as an office, study booths or residence room when the door is closed;
- when a manager responsible for a multi-person indoor space, that is inaccessible to the general public, determines that 2 metres physical distancing can be maintained and/or physical barriers are sufficient;
- if wearing a mask would constitute a safety hazard.

A person shall be exempt from wearing a face covering at Trent University if:

- The person has a medical condition that inhibits their ability to wear a face covering;
- The person is being accommodated in accordance with the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005*;
- The person is being reasonably accommodated in accordance with the *Human Rights Code*;
- The person is performing or rehearsing in a film or television production or in a concert, artistic event, theatrical performance or other performance.

If an employee, during the course of their job duties, is required to come within 2 metres of another person who is not wearing a mask or face covering, the employee must wear appropriate PPE that provides protection of the person’s eyes (e.g. face shield), nose, and mouth.

Requests for an individual to be exempt from the face covering requirement will only be allowed on serious medical, religious or other grounds under human rights. All accommodation requests are subject to review prior to approval. Persons seeking exemption from this policy will be required to contact Human Resources (staff and faculty) or Student Affairs (students) to discuss possible accommodation requirements. Accommodation other than on medical or protected grounds is not
guaranteed and is at the discretion of the University.

Visible signage indicating that face coverings are required inside Trent University buildings will be posted at all entrances and exits. In addition:

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer of 60% or more will be available at all entrances and exits of the establishment, for use by all persons entering or exiting;
- Disposable masks will be available for students, faculty, staff, and visitors who forget their masks at various points across campus;
- Face coverings may be safely disposed of in any lined trash receptacle.

**How to Safely Wear a Mask:**

- The following guidance from Public Health advises employees/volunteers and students on how to safely wear a mask:
  - Before putting on your face covering, wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
  - Secure the loops of the face covering around your ears. If your face covering has strings, tie them securely behind your head;
  - Cover your mouth and nose with the face covering and make sure there are no gaps between your face and the face covering;
  - Do not touch the front of the face covering while you wear it. Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if you accidentally touch your face covering;
  - Conduct hand washing and/or sanitizing prior to removing the face covering, and again once the face covering is removed.

**How to Talk to Others about Face Masks:**

The University recognizes that there may be circumstances in which a Trent student, faculty or staff encounter another individual who may arrive or be inside the University without a face covering. Read our Approaches for Interactions Regarding Face Coverings guide, which helps provide clear language and an empathic approach to these encounters.

**Responsibilities:**

**PVP and COVID-19 working groups** – developing and approving protocols and allocating resources to implement this policy.

**Facilities Management** – installing signs, hand sanitizers, plexiglass shields, and directional signage as necessary.

**Department heads/ chairs** – developing Return to Campus plans that identify those areas where and when face coverings are required/not required and ensuring employees are informed. Identify the number of complimentary face coverings required for employees/volunteers returning to campus. Ensuring all employees complete the mandatory COVID-19 Employee education module.

**Managers, Instructors, Principal Investigators and Research Lab Managers** – before providing the option to remove face coverings in multi-person spaces, will ensure that physical distancing or other measures that help prevent virus transmission are in place.

**Student Affairs/Housing** – ensure all students complete mandatory COVID prevention training.

**All employees** – completing Employee training module and encouraging compliance in good faith with this policy by reminding those not in compliance with the requirement of the policy requirements. Students, visitors and employees are not to be refused access to Trent buildings for non-compliance, but are encouraged to wear a mask (and may be provided with a mask).
Contact Officer:
VP HR

Date for Next Review:
This policy will be reviewed every two months by the COVID Case Management Working Group, or as necessary to ensure it remains compliant with direction from Public Health or the Government of Ontario.

Related Legislation, Policies, Procedures & Guidelines
a) Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-29) Act Regulation 364/20
b) Peterborough Public Health Section 22 Directive July 20, 2020
c) Durham Region Public Health Section 22 Directive July 6, 2020
d) Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act
e) Human Rights Code

Resources
- How to safely wear/clean a cloth mask or face covering
- Video: COVID-19: How to wear a non-medical mask or face covering properly
- Video: How to make your own face covering
- Poster: Wear a Face Covering (Ministry of Health)
- Poster: Stop Before Entering Poster
- Poster: 6-steps for handwashing
- Poster: Hand sanitizing

References


Postsecondary Education Health Measures Framework for Fall 2021; Ministry of Colleges and Universities: https://ontariosuniversities.ca/reports/postsecondary-education-health-measures-framework-for-fall-2021