

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

FOR

RE-OPENING THE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES POST LOCKDOWN DUE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Background

The Government of Tamil Nadu is following a phase-wise unlocking of activities. In G.O.(Ms) No.552 Revenue and Disaster Management (D.M.IV) Department, dated 21.8.2021 guidelines and relaxations have been issued in para 2(b) that all colleges and Universities will be permitted to conduct classes on rotation basis with effect from 1.9.2021 by following the Standard Operating Procedures throughout State except in containment zones".

The Standard Operating Procedure to be followed is as detailed below:

Scope

This SOP outlines various generic precautionary measures to be adopted in addition to specific measures to be taken while reopening all Higher Educational Institutions, Colleges and Hostels to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The Institutes are also directed to strictly comply with the COVID-19 related guidelines issued by Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

1. Measures Required before Re-Opening of Campuses

At the time of reopening, the universities and colleges have to plan in advance. Some of the measures, which the institutions have to take prior to reopening, are given below:

1.1. Pre-requisites

- i. The universities and colleges have to make adequate arrangements to ensure the safety and health of students, faculty and staff.
- ii. The universities and colleges will be opened only if they are outside the containment zones. Further, students and staff living in containment zones will not be allowed to attend the colleges. Students and staff shall also be advised not to visit areas falling within containment zones.
- iii. All the faculty and staff of the university and college should be fully vaccinated. The Principals/ Registrars of Colleges/Universities should ensure this and submit a certificate to the concerned District Collector and Commissioner, Greater Chennai Corporation in respect of Chennai district institutions.
- iv. The institutions should be ready with a plan for handling the inflow of students, faculty and staff in the campus, monitoring disinfecting measures, safety and health conditions, screening and detecting the infected persons, containment measures to prevent the spread of the virus in the campus.

1.2. Modalities for Physical Opening of Colleges/Higher Education Institutions

The following modalities regarding the physical opening of Colleges/Higher Education Institutions, in a graded manner, should be adopted subject to adherence to the guidelines/SOP for safety and health protocol.

1.3. Measures

- i. Universities and colleges have to open the campuses in phases, with such activities where they can easily adhere to social distancing, use of face masks and other protective measures. This includes administrative offices, research laboratories and libraries etc.
- ii. Students of all research programmes and post-graduate students in science & technology programmes shall also join as the number of such students is comparatively less and norms of physical distancing and preventive measures can be easily enforced.
- iii. Further, final year Engineering students are to be allowed to join on all days for both academic and placement purposes.

However, for (i), (ii) and (iii) above, it should be ensured that not more than 50% of the total students should be present at any point of time and necessary guidelines/protocols to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are observed.

- iv. Institutions should have a plan ready for such international students who could not join the programme due to international travel restrictions or visa-related issues, Online teaching-learning arrangements should be made for such students.

1.4. Safety concerns

- i. The Institution should ensure that all the Faculty, Staff and students are vaccinated.
- ii. The institutions should train their staff and students to assist and undertake the work related to safety and health to prevent an outbreak of the pandemic in their campuses. Non-resident students should be allowed in campuses only after thermal scanning, sanitization of their hands, wearing of face masks and gloves. Symptomatic persons should not be permitted to enter the campus and should be advised to contact the nearest hospital for clinical assessment.
- iii. To avoid the risk of transmission, the students, faculty and staff should be screened and symptomatic ones be advised to get clinically assessed before allowing them entry into the campus.

- iv. Isolation facilities for symptomatic persons and quarantine facilities for those who were in contact with the positively tested persons should be there on campus or a tie-up are to be made in advance with some Government hospital or approved premises or as advised by the local authorities so that, in case of necessity, prompt action are to be taken. Proper arrangement of safety, health, food, water etc. should be ensured for those in quarantine and isolation facilities.
- v. Universities and colleges should prepare a policy for restricting the outside experts on campuses, study tours, field works etc., keeping in mind the COVID-19 situation.
- vi. All extracurricular activities should be avoided where physical distancing is not possible.
- vii. Clean and hygienic conditions, as per safety and health advisories of the concerned government departments, are to be maintained at all places, including hostel kitchens, mess, washrooms, libraries, class rooms etc.
- viii. Proper signages, symbols, posters etc. should be prominently displayed at appropriate places to remind the students, faculty and staff for maintaining physical distancing. The details of COVID-19 cell established by the institution be prominently displayed containing the emergency number, helpline number, email id and contact details of persons to be contacted in case of any emergency in the institution.
- ix. Ensure the norms of physical distancing, sanitization and hygienic conditions for use of common facilities, viz., Auditorium, Conference/ Seminar halls, Sports, Gymnasium, Canteen, and Parking area, etc.

1.5. Online Classes

Wherever possible, students may be permitted to participate in the classes through online mode also. All faculty members may also be encouraged to share the e-Content to the students so that classes may be conducted in a blended mode. If students participate through online mode they may be given attendance as present. On those days when physical classes are not scheduled online classes shall also be conducted in the usual online mode.

1.6. First Year Students

After the first year students admissions are completed, an orientation program may be conducted for few days not exceeding a week and then on-line classes may be conducted for them, depending upon availability of space.

2. Institutional Planning

Institutional planning is the key for the successful reopening of the campuses and smooth conduct of the teaching-learning process during these difficult times. The universities and colleges will, therefore, be required to develop their plans very cautiously for reopening of their campuses and this planning has to be done well in advance. The plan may, inter-alia include the following points:-

- i. Vaccination camps shall be organized by the Institutions, so as to facilitate vaccination among the faculty, staff and eligible age group for vaccination of students.
- ii. The institutions must ensure appropriate sanitization and disinfection process and procedures.
- iii. It should be made mandatory for the Teachers, Officers, Staff and Students to wear the Id cards.
- iv. The faculty, student, staff should be screened regularly to protect and avoid infecting one another.
- v. All preventive measures, preparedness and necessary support system to deal with the COVID -19 positive cases should be monitored and reported to local authorities on a day to day basis.
- vi. Teaching hours in a day to be moderated, as per requirements of the institution.
- vii. Six-day schedule to be followed so that classes can be conducted in phases and the seating arrangement be made keeping in view the requirements of physical distancing.
- viii. Universities and colleges have to reduce the class size and break them in multiple sections to maintain physical distancing during the classes.
- ix. Depending on the availability of space in class rooms or learning sites, up to 50% students alone be allowed on a rotation basis to attend the classes.
- x. Faculty should be trained for online teaching-learning practices.
- xi. The visitors should either not be allowed at all or their entry should be drastically restricted. The conditions of the entry for visitors should be strictly laid down and displayed on the entry point(s). Complete contact details of the visitors be maintained along with the names of persons whom he/ she meets.
- xii. There should be adequate isolation arrangements for those having symptoms and also for those who test positive for COVID-19 (however the two need to be kept separately), either at the level of the institution or in collaboration with the Government authorities.

2.1. Safety Measures at Entry/ Exit Point(s)

- i. Adequate arrangements of thermal scanners, sanitizers, face masks should be made available at all entry and exit points, including the reception area.
- ii. Crowding must be avoided at entry/ exit points. Staggered timings of entry and exit with limited strength for different programmes should be followed.
- iii. For ensuring queue management, inside and outside the premises, specific markings on the floor with a gap of 6 feet to be made and be adhered to.
- iv. In case the institution has more than one gate for entry/ exit, all the gates should be used, with adequate care, to avoid crowding.
- v. Monitoring of the entry and exit of the students should be done.
- vi. Screening of students, faculty and staff, wearing of face covers/ mask, sanitizing of hands etc. must be ensured at all entry points.
- vii. Those having symptoms of fever, cough or difficulty in breathing should not be allowed to enter.

2.2. Safety Measures during Working Hours

2.2.1. Classrooms and other Learning Sites

- i. Proper sanitization at all learning sites should be ensured. Cleaning and regular disinfection (using 1% sodium hypochlorite) of frequently touched surfaces (door knobs, elevator buttons, hand rails, chairs, benches, washroom fixtures, etc.) to be made mandatory in all class rooms, laboratories, (and also) lockers, parking areas, other common areas etc. before the beginning of classes and at the end of the day. Teaching materials, computers, laptops, printers, shall be regularly disinfected with 70% alcohol swipe.
- ii. Sitting places in classes, laboratories, computer labs, libraries etc. should be clearly marked, keeping in view the norms of physical distancing. At least one seat should be left vacant between two seats (six feet apart).
- iii. Wearing face cover/ mask is a must at all times and at all places inside the campus.

2.2.2. Inside the Campus

- i. Cultural activities, meeting etc. are to be avoided. However, such extra- curricular and sports activities to be allowed where physical distancing is feasible and is in accordance with the SOP under Disaster Management Act.
- ii. Adequate arrangements for safe drinking water should be

made on the campus.

- iii. Hand washing stations with facilities of liquid soap should be created so that every student can wash her/ his hands frequently.
- iv. Regular and sufficient supply of face covers/ masks, heavy duty gloves, disinfecting material, sanitizer, soaps etc. to sanitation workers should be ensured.
- v. Wearing of face cover/ mask by all students and staff should be ensured.
- vi. Proper cleanliness should be maintained inside the entire campus.
- vii. Adequate arrangements should be made for sanitizing the entire campus, including administrative and academic buildings, classrooms, laboratories, libraries, common rooms, toilets, water stations, furniture, learning material, teaching aids, sports equipment, computers etc.
- viii. Physical distancing should be maintained at all places and crowding must not be allowed at any place under any circumstances.
- ix. Adequate supply of water in toilets and for hand- washing should be ensured.
- x. Proper sanitization of buses, other transport and official vehicles of the institution should be done.
- xi. Spitting in the campus must be made a punishable offence.
- xii. Dustbins must be cleaned and covered properly.
- xiii. Dustbin for collection of used facemasks, personal protective equipment, hand gloves and their disposals should be ensured as per safety norms.
- xiv. For air-conditioning/ventilation, the temperature setting of all air conditioning devices should be in the range of 24-30°C, relative humidity should be in the range of 40-70%, intake of fresh air should be as much as possible and cross ventilation should be there.
- xv. Gymnasiums should follow the SOPs.
- xvi. Swimming Pool (wherever applicable) shall remain closed.
- xvii. All employees who are at higher risk, i.e., older employees, pregnant employees and employees who have underlying medical conditions to take extra precautions. They should preferably not be exposed to any front-line work requiring direct contact with the students.

2.2.3. Hostels (including Hostels run by Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare and BC,MBC & Minorities Welfare Department)

- i. Hostels are to be opened only in such cases where it is necessary while strictly observing the safety and health preventive measures. *Wherever possible, Students are to be encouraged to stay in nearby relatives houses and attend classes, so that overcrowding will be avoided in Hostels.* Symptomatic students should not be permitted to attend classes and they must be isolated.
- ii. There should be no crowding in hostel areas where students live in close proximity and share common facilities and utilities. Hence, their numbers need to be limited appropriately to avoid crowding. Thermal Screening of all resident students should be ensured.
- iii. Density in dining halls, common rooms, playing areas should be limited, keeping in view the requirement of physical distancing.
- iv. Hygiene conditions should be regularly monitored in kitchens, dining halls, bathrooms and toilets etc.
- v. Cleanliness is to be maintained in dining areas. Meals should be served in small batches, avoiding overcrowding. Take away options should be available for students and staff.
- vi. It must be ensured that the meals are freshly cooked. A senior staff should monitor the same.
- vii. Utensils should be properly cleaned. Students shall be encouraged to use their own plates and tumblers.
- viii. Wearing of face covers/ masks and proper sanitization of hands of the staff engaged for the preparation and distribution of meals should be ensured.
- ix. Resident students and staff should avoid or limit visiting the markets. As far as possible, essential items may be made available within the campus.
- x. Hostels should define the number of students in dining halls at any point in time. Mess timings should be increased to avoid overcrowding.

2.2.4. Regular Monitoring of Health

- i. Every institution should regularly monitor the health of its students, faculty, and staff.
- ii. Faculty, staff and students should also be sensitized on self-monitoring of their health.
- iii. Faculty, Staff and students should submit self-disclosure, if any of their family members have been infected/availed treatment for COVID-19.

2.2.5. Counselling & Guidance for Health

In order to reassure the students' community to avoid any kind of stress or panic in the prevailing situation *vis-a-vis* their studies, health and related issues, Universities and Colleges should take the following measures for the health, psychological aspects and well-being of the students:

- i. Set up help lines for health, psychological concerns and well-being of students in Universities/ Colleges which need to be regularly monitored by Counsellors and other identified faculty.
- ii. Regular mentoring of students through interactions, and appeals/letters by the Universities/ Colleges to remain calm and stress-free. This can be achieved through telephones, e-mails, digital and social media platforms.
- iii. Form COVID-19 help groups of students headed by hostel wardens / senior faculty who can identify friends/ classmates in need of help and provide the immediate necessary help.

2.2.6. Measures for Containment

- i. As soon as a student, faculty or staff is detected COVID-19 positive, such person should be immediately isolated as per the directive/advisory of the Government. Room-mates and close contacts should be quarantined and symptomatic ones to be immediately tested.
- ii. Universities and colleges should have a ready plan to provide healthcare support to those resident students and staff who test positive and are isolated.
- iii. The guidelines restricting social and physical contacts and mobility in such parts of residential places in the campus, where positive cases have been found, should be strictly

enforced. Measures like holding no class, not leaving the rooms for hostellers, if applicable, no take away arrangement of food from mess etc. are to be enforced, depending upon the severity of the situation.

- iv. Universities and colleges should also plan in advance, in case shut down are ordered by the Government due to outbreak in campus or the surrounding region.

2.2.7. Sensitization of Students, Teachers and Staff

- i. Awareness programmes regarding COVID-19 as to how the infection spreads, common symptoms, and precautions and measures required to contain its spread may be launched.
- ii. Maintaining hygiene, e.g., how to wash hands, how to cough or sneeze into a tissue or elbow, avoid touching of face, eyes, mouth and nose should be regularly told to the students and the staff.
- iii. The necessity of physical distancing, wearing face covers/masks, hygiene etc. should be brought home to all.
- iv. Activities to stay fit, physically and mentally, should be encouraged like doing exercises, yoga, breathing exercises, meditation, etc.
- v. To improve resilience and mental health, students should be encouraged to share their feelings with friends, teachers and parents, remain positive, grateful, helpful, have focussed approach, take a break from work, eat healthy and sleep timely etc.
- vi. Eating healthy food and fruits, avoiding junk food, frequently drinking warm water, adopting ways to increase immunity etc. should be encouraged.
- vii. Students should be told to regularly sanitize their laptops, audio, video and other media accessories.
- viii. Factual information regarding COVID-19 and consequences of infection, without making them stressed or fearful, should be disseminated.
- ix. Posters and stickers should be pasted at appropriate places in the campus to create awareness about the risk of infection from Coronavirus.

- x. All support and facilities should be provided to persons with disabilities.
- xi. No discrimination based on caste, creed or gender should be allowed to take place.
- xii. Sharing of books, other learning material and eatables shall be discouraged.

3. Role of Stakeholders

3.1. Head of the Institution

- i. Registrars/ Principals have to adhere the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in accordance with the Government orders and guidelines.
- ii. They have to contact the District Administration/Local bodies and act according to their instructions from time to time.
- iii. A detailed institutional plan which should, inter alia, include sanitization, safety and health measures should be prepared and kept ready, before reopening of campus. Proper implementation of the institutional plan should be ensured and regular monitoring should be done with the help of faculty and the staff.
- iv. Tie-ups are to be established with nearby hospitals, health centres, NGOs, health experts for help and support in fighting COVID-19.
- v. A plan for all academic activities, i.e., the academic calendar, teaching-learning modes, examinations, evaluation etc. should be kept ready well in advance.
- vi. A Task Group should be created to handle varied situations and issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Such Task Group consists of senior persons from faculty and staff, students, volunteers from communities, NGOs, health organisations and Government officials etc. as the case may be.
- vii. Teachers, students and staff should be made aware of all relevant plans and activities on the campus.

3.2. Teachers

- i. Teachers should make themselves fully aware of institutional plans and Standard Operating Procedures.
- ii. Every teacher should prepare a detailed teaching plan for the subjects taught by him/her, including time table, class size, modes of delivery, assignments, theory, practical, continuous evaluation, end- semester evaluation etc.

- iii. Teachers should keep themselves updated with the latest teaching- learning methods and availability of e-resources.
- iv. Teachers should make the students aware of the COVID-19 related situation, precautions and steps to be taken to stay safe and healthy.
- v. Teachers should monitor and keep track of the physical and mental health of their students.

3.3. Parents

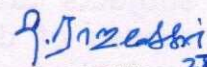
- i. The parents should ensure that their children observe safety norms at home and whenever they go out.
- ii. Parents should not allow their children to go out, if they are not feeling well.
- iii. Parents should sensitize them of healthy food habits and measures to increase immunity.
- iv. Parents should ask them to do exercise, meditation and breathing exercises to keep them mentally and physically fit.

3.4. Students

- i. Self-discipline is most important to contain the spread of COVID-19 pandemic through social distancing and maintaining hygienic condition.
- ii. All students should wear face covers/ masks and take all preventive measures.
- iii. It is important for the students to be physically and mentally fit to handle any exigencies. By remaining fit, they can take care of others also.
- iv. The students must inculcate activities that will increase immunity-boosting mechanism which may include exercise, eating fresh fruits and healthy food (avoid fast food), sleep timely.
- v. Discrimination of fellow students in respect of whom there is a history of COVID-19 disease in the family be avoided.
- vi. Students should follow the guidelines, advisories and instructions issued by the Government authorities as well as by the universities and colleges regarding health and safety measures in view of COVID-19 pandemic.

D. Karthikeyan
Principal Secretary to Government

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Section Officer 27.8.2021


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