



Weekly asymptomatic screening programme for COVID-19 at the University of Cambridge

Student Information Sheet

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Insurance Statement

Adequate provision is made for insurance or indemnity to cover liabilities which may arise in relation to the design, management and conduct of the research project.



Weekly asymptomatic screening programme for COVID-19 at the University of Cambridge

From the start of Michaelmas Term, all undergraduate and postgraduate students at the University of Cambridge living in College accommodation will be offered a weekly test for infection with SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes COVID-19, even if they show no symptoms.

Around half of people infected with SARS-CoV-2 develop *symptoms*, such as a high temperature, cough, or a loss or change in their sense of smell or taste. Others show no symptoms, and are unaware that they are infected at all (they are *asymptomatic*). Among university students, the rate of asymptomatic infection may be even higher.

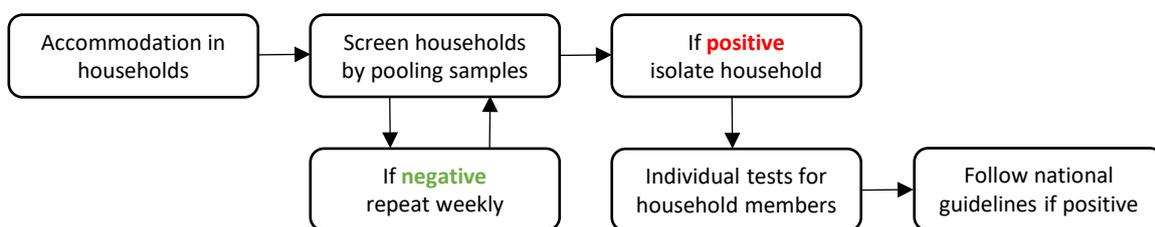
We know that people with SARS-CoV-2 infection but no symptoms can still spread the virus to others. The aim of the screening programme is therefore to identify students with asymptomatic infection, so they can avoid infecting more students or members of the Cambridge community.

The test will be self-administered, using a swab to take a sample from the nose and throat. Because we have a limited number of tests available, samples from several students will be tested together in *pools*. Pooling tests will allow us to make the best use of our testing capacity.

In general, samples will be pooled by *household*. In College accommodation, a household is a unit where students share communal facilities, such as a bathroom or kitchen. Some smaller households will be asked to join neighbouring households in a single testing pool, while some larger households will be split into smaller testing pools.

Samples will be tested at the Cambridge COVID-19 testing facility on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus. If a pooled screening test is positive, the household will be informed within 24 hours, and students in the household will be offered individual tests to confirm the positive result.

Households with positive pooled screening tests will be asked to follow University isolation recommendations until the results of individual tests are known. Individual students with confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection and their household and contacts will then be supported in following national guidance on isolation.

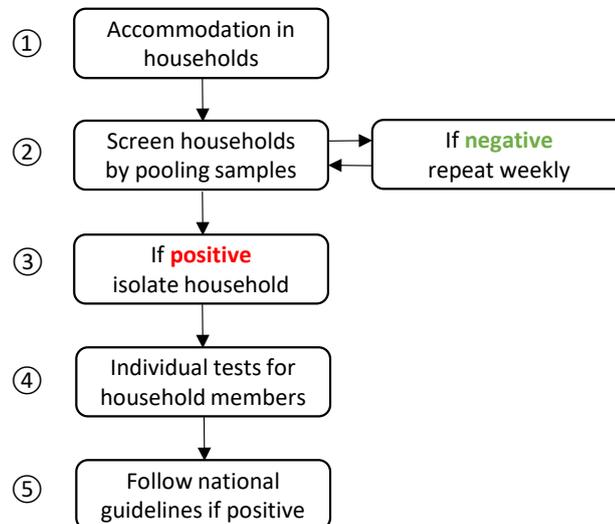


Participation in the programme will be voluntary, but we encourage everyone to take part. We anticipate that the majority of students will do so, to help keep themselves, their friends and colleagues, and the wider community safe.

Further details and answers to FAQs on the screening programme will be made available on the *Stay Safe Cambridge Uni* website as they become available: <https://www.cam.ac.uk/coronavirus/stay-safe-cambridge-uni>



Flow chart for the weekly asymptomatic screening programme for COVID-19



1. Students living in accommodation that includes high-contact shared facilities such as a bathroom, toilet or kitchen area are generally considered by Colleges to share the same *College household*. These shared areas provide opportunities for SARS-CoV-2 transmission, through contaminated surfaces or close contact with other household members. Like other households, College households therefore represent units of social distancing (and, if necessary, quarantine) in the University of Cambridge context.
2. The screening test is a self-administered swab from the nose and throat. Because we have a limited number of tests available, samples from several students will be tested together in *testing pools*. In general, testing pools will correspond to College households. Some smaller College households will be asked to join neighbouring College households in a single testing pool, while some larger College households will be split into smaller testing pools. To pool samples at the time they are collected, all the students in a given testing pool will place their swabs in the same sample tube. These pooled samples will be tested by PCR for SARS-CoV-2 at the Cambridge COVID-19 testing facility on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus.
3. If a pooled screening test is positive, students from the affected household or households will be informed within 24 hours. To prevent the onward transmission of COVID-19, they will be asked to follow University guidelines on household isolation, supported by their College.
4. Students from the affected household will be offered individual tests, to confirm the positive screening test result. This test will also be a self-administered swab from the nose and throat, but conducted under supervision at one of the University's established testing pods.
5. When an individual test is positive, a final plan for household isolation will be decided, in accordance with UK national guidelines. These test results will also trigger *NHS Test and Trace*.



Pooled sample collection for the weekly asymptomatic screening programme for COVID-19

*Taking your sample may cause minor discomfort for a few seconds, but it shouldn't hurt.
Thank you for helping us keep Cambridge safe!*

Step 1 – Your *pool lead* should ensure that everyone in your *testing pool* is ready, and that everything is in place to start swabbing. The sample tube should be located in a shared area, such as a kitchen or bathroom. Remember to maintain social distancing throughout!



Step 2 – Your sample should be taken in your own room or bathroom, by yourself, with the door closed.

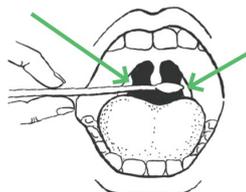
Step 3 – Gently blow your nose and cough into a tissue. Throw the tissue away.

Step 4 – Wash your hands.



Step 5 – Remove the swab from its wrapper.

Step 6 – Open your mouth wide and gently rub the fabric tip of the swab over both tonsils at the back of your throat, rotating as you do so. Try not to touch your tongue, teeth, cheeks, gums, or any other surfaces with the tip of the swab.



Step 7 – Insert the same end of the same swab gently into your nostril about 2.5cm (1 inch), or until you feel some resistance. Rotate the swab and slowly remove it.



Step 8 – Return the swab to the inside of its wrapper, taking care not to touch it on anything else.



Step 9 – Wash your hands.

Step 10 – Carry the swab into the room with the sample tube, ensuring that it remains inside its wrapper.

Step 11 – Remove the swab from its wrapper, snap off the unused end, and place the end with the fabric tip in the sample tube. Make sure the fabric tip is facing down. Dispose of the unused end and the wrapper in a waste bin, in the same way you would dispose of dental floss. You and the other members of your *testing pool* should take it in turns, until all your swabs are placed in the same sample tube.



Step 12 – Wash your hands.

Step 13 – Once you and the other members of your testing pool have placed all your swabs in the sample tube, your pool lead should securely screw on the lid and double-bag the sample, then wash their hands.

Step 14 – Take the bagged sample to your College collection point



Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

Getting involved

1. Why should I take part?

The aim of this screening programme is to identify students with asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection, so they can avoid infecting other people. By participating in the programme, students will therefore help reduce the risk of infection for other students, staff and the wider Cambridge community. If the University and Colleges are to remain open, it is essential to control the transmission of COVID-19. Everyone who wishes to attend University and College therefore stands to benefit.

2. Why are we being offered asymptomatic testing when the general public are not?

Students in universities have a high risk of transmitting COVID-19, and many outbreaks have been reported. Compared with other members of the population, young adults have a higher chance of asymptomatic infection. Public health experts have therefore called for asymptomatic screening in high risk settings, such as universities. As well as protecting students directly, controlling transmission between students will help prevent onward transmission to staff and the wider Cambridge community.

3. Which students will be involved in the programme?

The risk of COVID-19 transmission is expected to be highest in College accommodation, where the density of students and potential for interactions are greatest. All undergraduates and postgraduates resident in College accommodation will therefore be eligible to take part. Our testing capacity (approx. 2,000 tests every week, subject to national testing needs), combined with the number of students that can be tested within each pool (maximum of 10, average of 8), will allow approx. 16,000 students to be screened every week. This matches the number of students in College accommodation. Whilst desirable, there is therefore insufficient testing capacity to include students who “live out”. Testing capacity and eligibility will be kept under review, and all students and staff will be able to access a test for COVID-19 if they are [symptomatic](#).

4. Can students from any College take part?

Yes, all Colleges will be participating in the programme, together with houses of the Cambridge Theological Federation.

5. How many weeks will asymptomatic pooled testing be offered for?

The programme will run throughout full term, subject to testing capacity. For Michaelmas Term 2020, this will span 9 weeks, commencing in the week of 5th October, and finishing in the week of 30th November. The first week of testing will operate at reduced scale, to test our systems, and establish the prevalence of asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection in students returning to Cambridge.

6. Would you recommend that I participate if I have already had COVID-19?

We do not know how long immunity to COVID-19 lasts, or the risk of asymptomatic re-infection. We are aware, however, that some individuals with COVID-19 continue to shed SARS-CoV-2 virus for several weeks after their illness, without being infectious to others.

Students who have already had COVID-19 will therefore be eligible to participate in the programme, but only if 8 weeks have passed since their infection.

Consent and privacy

7. Will I be penalised if I don't take a swab?

Absolutely not, swabbing is entirely voluntary. It is grounded upon students' willingness to keep themselves and their communities safe. We therefore hope that students will encourage each other to participate in a positive and compassionate way. Students who decline to participate will still be informed by their College if COVID-19 is detected in their household, and expected to follow guidelines on isolation. In line with the GDPR (data protection) and other laws, and with appropriate data minimisation and safeguards, personal data held by the University and Colleges about participants and non-participants may be used to support programme evaluation and COVID-19 research (for example, to evaluate rates of participation, infection and infection detection).

8. What personal details will I be asked for when I sign up?

The minimum possible personal data will be used by the University to facilitate the running of the programme. Most of this data will already be held by the University, but participating students will be asked to provide an up-to-date mobile telephone number that can be used to send pooled screening test results via text message. Limited personal information (name, date of birth, College address, contact details) will be used to register participating students with Cambridge University Hospitals, to allow access to individual tests. To facilitate this, each student will be registered on Epic (the hospital's secure electronic medical record system, which is used to book all individual tests in the University's COVID-19 testing pathways) and MyChart (the patient-facing way to view to Epic).

9. How will my personal data be used and protected?

Personal data will be processed fairly, lawfully and transparently, and in accordance with the data protection principles in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The University and Colleges have responsibility to ensure this. Primarily, personal data will be processed because it is necessary for the protection of public health and for the University and Colleges to provide educational services safely for students, other members of the University and other people in Cambridge. Other organisations involved in some stages of the programme include Cambridge University Hospitals (laboratory tests, reporting results, medical advice), a laboratory service provider such as Astra Zeneca (laboratory tests using only pseudonymised data), Public Health England (surveillance) and the East of England Health Protection Teams and Local Authority Public Health Team (contact tracing, public health advice and outbreak management). These organisations are also obliged to process data fairly, lawfully and transparently and in accordance with the data protection principles in the GDPR. All information systems will have a high degree of security, proportionate to the sensitivity of the information. In order to learn from and improve the testing programmes, personal data (minimised and pseudonymised) may be processed for evaluation and research in line with the GDPR. Further details on how personal data will be used as part of this programme is included in the [Privacy Notice](#).

10. What is the purpose of the Consent Form?

Voluntary participation in the programme is valued and appreciated! The consent form is a way to record the students who agree to participate, and to check that they understand the

implications of participating. It also provides a mechanism to opt into optional parts of the programme.

11. What happens if I don't sign the Consent Form?

Students who do not consent to participate in the programme will not be included in testing pools, nor sent weekly swabs. They will still be informed by their College if COVID-19 is detected in their household, and expected to follow guidelines on isolation. Since the programme has been developed to protect public health, minimal personal data may be used without individual consent, subject to appropriate safeguards and provided it is necessary and appropriate. Further details on how personal data will be used as part of this programme is included in the [Privacy Notice](#).

12. Will information that I provide as part of this programme be used for research?

Your information may sometimes be used for purposes that are not directly related to your health and care. Wherever possible, this will be done using information that does not identify you. These include: planning of services or actions in response to COVID-19; understanding the transmission of COVID-19 in a university setting; other research into COVID-19. There are innovations in this programme that are likely to be of broad interest to individuals, institutions and policymakers developing screening programmes for COVID-19. We therefore aim to present the protocols and outcomes of this programme at conferences and publish in peer-reviewed journals. Results are normally presented in terms of groups of individuals. If any data are presented or published, the data will be fully anonymous, without any means of identifying the individuals involved. Further information is included in the [Privacy Notice](#).

13. Will I be contacted by researchers as part of this programme?

You may be re-contacted by researchers from the University of Cambridge and other institutions about studies related to this programme e.g. studies about COVID-19, screening programmes, other infectious diseases or public health. You have no obligation to take part in these studies. If you do agree to participate, you will assist your institution in furthering its world-renowned knowledge and understanding in these scientific fields of study. Whatever your decision, it will not affect your participation in this programme.

Households and testing pools

14. What is the difference between a "household" and a "testing pool"?

"College households" are groups of students with shared facilities (such as kitchens and bathrooms) in College residential accommodation. "Testing pools" are groups of students who pool their swabs together in the asymptomatic screening programme. Wherever possible, testing pools will correspond with College households. In practice, some smaller households will need to "buddy-up", and some larger households (>10 people) will need to include 2 testing pools.

15. Why do tests need to be pooled?

Our available testing capacity is approx. 2,000 tests every week. There are expected to be approx. 16,000 students resident in College accommodation during Michaelmas Term. To test all students on a weekly basis, pooling of tests is therefore necessary.

16. How will pooled sample collection actually work?

To pool tests at the time swabs are taken, students in a testing pool will simply place their individual nose/throat swabs in a single sample tube. This is described in detail in the [swabbing protocol](#).

17. What if I share a bathrooms or kitchen with >10 people?

If households are larger than 10 people, they will be split into two testing pools. If either one of these testing pools is positive, the whole household will need to isolate.

18. Can I join another household if I forget to swab with mine?

No, to allow us to run the programme safely and efficiently, it is essential that you only participate in your allocated testing pool.

19. What if we need to compromise on a time for pooled testing that not everyone can attend?

We would strongly recommend discussion among your testing pool in advance of the swabbing day, to find the most suitable time for everyone. For many households, that will be first thing in the morning, prior to any teaching commitments or other activities. Remember that all students resident in College will be swabbed on the same day. In exceptional circumstances, if a time cannot be agreed, we recommend that as many pool members as possible contribute.

20. I'm not close to anyone I share a kitchen or bathroom with. Will I be able to change my household?

The Colleges have responsibility for student accommodation and allocations to households and testing pools. They should be the first point of contact if you wish to change your accommodation.

21. Does the whole household have to participate for us to do it?

No, swabbing is voluntary, and as many or as few people within a household can participate as they wish.

22. What if no-one else in my household wants to participate in the programme?

Everyone who is eligible to participate and wishes to do so will be included in a testing pool.

23. I don't know who is in my household yet, is that an issue?

No, Colleges will organise households and their associated testing pools before the start of term.

24. Can we choose the day of swabbing?

No, to organise test kit delivery and collection, as well as ensure that the tests are evenly spread across the week for the testing facility, each College will be allocated a particular day (Monday to Thursday) on which swabbing will take place. This will be the same day every week.

25. Will pooled sample collection itself carry a risk of SARS-CoV-2 transmission?

No, the protocol for pooled sample collection has been specifically designed by Infectious Diseases clinicians to ensure that any risk of transmission will be near-zero, and certainly much lower than the risk of contracting SARS-CoV-2 infection as part of general student life.

Results and reporting

26. How will we be notified of positive results?

Members of a positive testing pool will be notified by text message the next morning. This will be followed by an email with details of an appointment for individual confirmatory testing later that day. Results of individual tests should be available the day after that. For example, if screening is on Monday, the results will be available on Tuesday morning. If positive, an individual test will be offered on Tuesday, and the result will be available on Wednesday. In exceptional circumstances, it is possible that test results, or appointments for individual testing, will be delayed. We will make every effort to minimise the chance of this happening.

27. What happens if a testing pool is positive and the pool corresponds with a single College household?

Household isolation will begin immediately. Each student who has consented to provide swabs in the testing pool/household will be offered an individual test via the existing University pod. If/when individual household members are confirmed to be positive, a final plan for duration of household isolation will be determined in accordance with national guidelines. Individual test results will be reported to Public Health England (PHE) and NHS Test and Trace.

28. What happens if a testing pool is positive from a large College household including more than one testing pool?

As above, but household isolation will begin immediately for all students within the College household (not just household members contributing to the positive testing pool). Only students who have participated in the swabbing of the positive testing pool will be offered an individual test.

29. What happens if a testing pool is positive and it includes students from more than one College household?

As above, but household quarantine will begin immediately for all households included in the testing pool. Every student in the testing pool will be offered an individual test. If/when individual household members are confirmed to be positive, a final plan for duration of household isolation will be determined in accordance with national guidelines. This will be limited to the affected household, not the entire testing pool.

30. If I do not participate but my household tests positive, am I expected to self-isolate?

Yes, if a member or members of a household test positive for COVID-19 as part of this programme, all members of the household should isolate, not just participating students. This is because, whether or not they participate in the programme, all students in the household will be at risk of infection.

31. If I test positive, will the rest of my household be told I have it?

The rest of the household will be informed that someone in the household has confirmed COVID-19. However, we will not reveal the identity/identities of the individual(s) that have tested positive.

32. If I test positive, who else will be informed?

The results of pooled screening tests and positive individual tests will be made available to a small team within the University and relevant College who have been identified as COVID-19 leads. This is to ensure that all households that are required to isolate are provided with

appropriate support, and that any necessary infection control measures are put in place in the College and University departments. Individual test results will be reported to Public Health England (PHE) and NHS Test and Trace. Further information is included in the [Privacy Notice](#).

33. What is the risk of false positive result?

We estimate that the risk of a false positive pooled screening test will be less than 1/1,000. In practice, positive pooled screening tests will always be followed by individual confirmatory tests, and individual students and their households will only be asked to isolate for an extended period if a positive pooled screening test is followed by a positive individual confirmatory test. We estimate that the risk of a false positive pooled screening test being followed by a false positive individual confirmatory tests will be less than 1/1,000,000.

Testing

34. Where will my samples be tested?

All samples will be processed by the Cambridge COVID-19 testing facility at the University's Anne McLaren Building on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, which is part of the UK Lighthouse Labs network. Further information is included in the [Privacy Notice](#).

35. Will the programme impact on national testing capacity?

No. The University has access to a limited number of tests for the evaluation of new approaches to maximise the value of testing, but NHS Test and Trace samples always take priority. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure that the programme proceeds as planned, there are therefore exceptional circumstances in which it may need to be suspended, or reduced in extent. In fact, a very important aim of the programme is to demonstrate how testing samples in pools can be used to increase effective testing capacity.

36. What happens to my sample after it has been tested?

Samples will be processed and disposed of in the testing facility in exactly the same manner as "normal" NHS Test and Trace samples. Some of these samples may be used to optimise the tests that we use to detect SARS-CoV-2.

37. Will my DNA be tested as part of this programme?

No, human DNA will not be extracted, tested or stored as part of this programme.

38. If I get a positive result, will the virus that I have be stored?

Yes, this is likely as part of a national surveillance programme that is attempting to study all SARS-CoV-2 viruses identified in the UK throughout the pandemic called COG-UK. This is a major public health programme, supported by the UK government. More information can be found [here](#).

General

39. Is it inevitable that I will test positive at some point?

No, this programme, in conjunction with other measures introduced by the University and Colleges, aims to substantially reduce the risk of transmission.

40. Is this a service or a research study?

The primary aim of this programme is to identify students with asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection, so they can avoid infecting other people. In addition, evaluation of the programme will help inform the feasibility of similar programmes in different settings, such as other universities, as well as providing insights into the transmission and natural history of SARS-CoV-2 infection. We have therefore applied to the Cambridge Human Biology Research Ethics Committee for ethical approval of these research aspects of the programme.

41. Where can I find out more information?

Information about the programme can be found on the University website, here:

<https://www.cam.ac.uk/coronavirus/stay-safe-cambridge-uni/get-tested>

Further information is included in the [Privacy Notice](#). Additional information will be provided by your Colleges. If you have any questions that remain unanswered, please contact us at asymptomatic-queries@admin.cam.ac.uk.

Thank you for helping us keep Cambridge safe!