Use of masks at the University of Adelaide

What am I required to do?
You are required to wear a mask at all times indoors in any University of Adelaide controlled space, including:

- at any information desk or service point,
- in lecture theatres and other teaching spaces,
- in any shared work and study spaces, including laboratories, libraries, clinics, etc
- in meetings or gatherings, and
- within shared spaces such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Note that there are some exemptions to wearing a mask and these are listed below.

Who is exempt from wearing a mask?
The requirement to wear a mask indoors does not apply in the following situations:

- Where the individual cannot wear a mask due to a physical or mental health illness or condition which makes wearing a face covering unsuitable, including persons with obstructed breathing, a serious skin condition of the face, or those who have experienced trauma
- Where the individual is alone in the room
- Where the individual is in a situation where the wearing of the mask significantly interferes with communication – noting in this instance the additional importance of physical distancing
- Children under 12 years of age
- Where the activity undertaken requires other personal protective equipment to be worn that is incompatible with, or a higher level of protection than, a face mask; such as a respirator.
- Whilst eating and drinking – noting that physical distancing should be observed and ideally you should consider taking a break outdoors if possible.

NOTE: Where one of the above exemptions applies it is important to maintain proper distancing of at least 1.5m wherever this is practicable.

The University encourages everyone to exercise common sense – if in doubt, wear a mask.

Can I remove my mask indoors if I am 1.5m from other people?
No. You should wear a mask at all times indoors unless the exemptions apply to you.

Why are we required to wear masks?
SA Health advise that masks assist with controlling the spread of COVID-19 and that staff and students at the University should wear masks when indoors. Wearing a mask is about keeping yourself and others safe.

It is also worth noting that SA Health currently deem anyone in contact with a COVID positive person a “close contact” and a period of isolation is then required. Where both individuals were wearing masks,
irrespective of the type of mask worn, they are not deemed close contacts and therefore do not need to isolate. Ensuring everyone wears a mask therefore also assists with reducing disruption to our teaching and research endeavours (and your personal life) by limiting isolation requirements.

**How long will the requirement to wear a mask last?**

The University is putting indoor mask wearing in place until further notice. The requirement to wear masks will be reviewed at the end of March 2022, or sooner if SA Health advice changes.

**What sort of mask should I wear?**

Disposable surgical masks are preferred for infection control as they are single use, however cloth masks are permitted. Cloth masks tend to be better for the environment but need to be regularly laundered.

N95 masks/respirators may be more effective than surgical masks, but this depends on proper fit testing and regular fit checking and that is unlikely to occur outside a healthcare setting. N95 masks are also more uncomfortable for regular use.

Students are expected to bring their own masks. If you lose your mask or it becomes unable to be worn please seek a replacement from Ask Adelaide at your student hub.

Staff will be provided access to surgical masks should they prefer to use this type of mask. Masks will be distributed to Faculties and Divisions who will make them available to staff from appropriate locations across the Schools and Branches.

**How often should I change my mask?**

When using surgical masks SA Health advise changing your mask every 4 hours or whenever the mask becomes damp or damaged. Surgical masks should be disposed off in a bin when no longer required and should not be reused.

Cloth masks can be used for the day and should then be washed. Washing can be done by machine washing in a normal wash or hand washing with soap and hot water. It is ideal to always have a clean spare cloth mask available.

**Further advice and support:**

Please contact Senior HSW Advisors Paul Roberts or Annie Richards for further advice.