Teaching With a Mask

Mask wearing changes Memorial’s teaching and learning environment as the university transitions to a safe return to campus for the fall 2021 semester. This resource is to provide instructors with some considerations for maintaining the effectiveness of their teaching. For updates on Memorial’s return to campus plans, check the COVID-19 Information Hub. Memorial continues to adhere to public health guidelines during the pandemic.

Addressing the Need for Accommodations

While everyone is required to wear a mask, some instructors and students may require an accommodation. Instructors should discuss their need for accommodation with their unit head. For students requiring an accommodation, instructors can direct them to Blundon Centre.

Optimizing Facial Expression

Masks may be removed where physical distancing of 2 meters is maintained in a teaching space to optimize visibility of mouth movement and facial expression. Non-medical masks are required where physical distancing cannot be maintained. Instructors and students can consider using face masks with clear windows. Transparent Face Masks have been added to Health Canada’s list of Authorized Medical Devices for uses related to COVID-19. Memorial’s Environmental Health and Safety Department (EHS) will provide such masks upon request. Please contact EHS for details, or discuss with your unit head.

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Projecting Voice and Volume

Speaking while wearing a mask muffles sound and doing so for a prolonged period of time can be tiring. It is important to speak slowly and clearly articulate all words. It helps to check the fit of a mask and practice instruction prior to class. While practicing, it is helpful to test speaking volume as not all teaching spaces are equipped with microphones and audio devices. Placing a recording device in various locations in a room can help determine the speaking volume that will be heard by all in the room. If a microphone is available, use it. If a microphone is required, contact CITL Classroom Support.

Mixing Different Ways to Present Content During Class

While teaching on campus wearing a mask, instructors can consider different ways of presenting course content, such as recorded lectures, closed-captioned PowerPoint, and video resources. These artifacts can serve as great resources for students if later added to a Brightspace course site while continuing to teach in person. CITL has many resources to help with these different ways.

Setting Expectations for Students

Instructor communication of the university’s policy on mask wearing to students ensures safety and comfort for better learning for all in physical environments. Also, it helps to remind students that Memorial continues to follow the public health guidelines on the COVID-19 pandemic. Instructors can consider doing this during the first class and adding a statement in the course syllabus.

References

How to Teach F2F With a Mask and Create Caring Classrooms (Inside Higher Ed)
Mask Recommendations and Tips for Teaching in a Mask (Wake Forest University)
Teaching While Wearing a Mask: Video (East Carolina University)

For more information about teaching with a mask, please contact CITL’s Support Centre. citl.mun.ca/support