

Clarifying use of Conference Lodge and important updates on COVID case reporting and contact tracing

Sunday, Feb 20, 2022, 15:06PM

Dear Members of the University,

Following the announcement of the contingency plans to handle COVID-19 cases among campus residents on Wednesday, 16 Feb 2022, a number of university members have already been relocated to Conference Lodge and Hall 9. The university continues to monitor closely the recent surge of COVID-19 cases in Hong Kong.

Use of Conference Lodge for Staff Quarter Residents Tested Positive

We would like to further clarify the use of Conference Lodge (CL) for staff quarter residents tested positive for COVID-19. According to the Government's recommendation, staff quarters can be used for home isolation while waiting for admission to hospital. When staff residents or their household members tested positive for COVID-19, considering that they may have to take care of their family members, although they will be offered relocation to CL, they may choose to remain in their quarters and wait for further Government instructions, which is in compliance with Government regulations. Residents choosing to stay in their quarters must strictly follow Government instructions, which can be obtained in the Center for Health Protection webpages:

- For people waiting to be admitted to hospital <https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/pending-admission.html>
- For people tested positive <https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html#testPositive>
- And for close contacts under home quarantine <https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/home-quarantine.html>

CMO colleagues will conduct thorough and regular cleaning of common areas in staff quarters with residents waiting for admission or undergoing home quarantine. Support for meal delivery would also be provided if needed.

Latest Government Definition of Close Contacts

We would like to inform members that the latest Government definition of Close Contact is as follows: <https://www.coronavirus.gov.hk/eng/early-testing.html#testPositive>

The determination of close contacts will take into consideration relevant details of the situation. In general, tracing period is counted from two days before symptom onset date of the confirmed case; for asymptomatic case, it is counted from two days before the date of collection of specimen which tested positive. Close contacts refer to:

- Persons who live with the confirmed case in the same household
- Persons who have had face-to-face close contacts with the confirmed case (especially when the confirmed case did not wear a mask, such as when having meals together)

Student hostels are not typical household, the above criteria are used as reference for determining close contacts in hostels. Since the COVID situation is developing very rapidly, please refer to the above webpages for the latest updates.

Centralized Reporting of Campus COVID Cases

In this latest surge of COVID infection in Hong Kong, the number of cases in the last few weeks has exceeded the total in the preceding two years. The recent cases at HKUST have been reported through different channels. In order to streamline information collection and take timely follow up actions, with immediate effect, **all reports of rapid test positive, PCR positive, and close contact cases should be made to the Security Control Center (SCC) by phone through 2358-8999**, which is manned 24/7, although reports through the COVID webpage and other channels will still be monitored.

Reminder about Preventive Measures

Under the threat of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, it is even more critical for all members to strictly adhere to preventive measures, including minimizing social gathering, and practicing good personal and environmental hygiene. In particular, members must wear a facemask at all time in public places, including bathrooms.

Let us all persevere and support each other through this challenging time!

Take care and stay vigilant,
T.C. Pong, Vice President for Administration and Business
Samuel Yu, Director of Health, Safety and Environment