



16 July 2020

Dear Colleague

## **RE: THE SPREAD OF COVID-19: DROPLETS AND AIRBORNE AND AEROSOL TRANSMISSION**

This communique is prepared in response to inquiries that HIGHER HEALTH has received from the post schooling education and training sector in relation to the suggestions that SARS-CoV-2 virus can be transmitted through the air (aerosols).

The World Health Organization (WHO) has indicated that the SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes COVID-19 disease probably spreads mainly through small droplets expelled from the nose and mouth of an infected person, and that these secretion droplets drop to a surface or the floor below. However, there is an emerging body of evidence that suggests that expelled micro-droplets may remain airborne for longer and that they may therefore also be transmitted from person-to-person through the air, via the presence of aerosols. However, more global scientific data on this newly emerging mode of transmission is still awaited, to give more clarity on the extent of transmission from person to person, through the air.

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease. History tells us that respiratory viruses can spread both through droplets and by aerosols. As we increase our medical knowledge about COVID-19, including the rate of transmission through different pathways, it is advisable that we prevent both these modes of spread, regardless of whether one is more likely than the other.

There are no medicines available to prevent infections. Thus, as scientists search for a prevention tool such as a vaccine, we need to follow public health measures to prevent ourselves becoming infected. These are contained in the HIGHER HEALTH guidelines, protocols and algorithms which can help in developing and strengthening effective infection control systems across our campuses.

### **If we presume that aerosol transmission does occur and until proven otherwise, these additional measures are also advised:**

- **Air circulation:** Ensure that all doors and windows are kept open, for good ventilation and circulation. This is challenging during winter, but nevertheless highly advisable.
- **Air-conditioners:** Make sure air-conditioners are fully serviced, the filters cleaned, and where possible, the mechanical exhaust opened to take air out of the building rather than recirculate back inside.

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- **Physical distancing:** Retaining at least two metres' distance between you and other individuals significantly reduces the likelihood of spreading the virus.
  - **Masks:** Irrespective of whether this virus is spread through aerosol or only spread via droplets, face masks must be worn on campus, as well as in other public spaces, including transport, shopping and so on, throughout.
  - **Fumigation/other sprays:** The WHO does not recommend fogging and fumigation. Surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water, dilute bleach or 70% alcohol.

Currently a number of scientific reviews are examining this matter further. HIGHER HEALTH continually monitors scientific, medical and other developments related to COVID-19 and will update its guidelines, protocols and algorithms as development occurs, in this regard.

Kind Regards



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Improving wellbeing. Inspiring success.

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