We are pleased to offer free coronavirus and antibody testing to **asymptomatic students** of Queen’s University and Ulster University, as part of the Department of Health programme. These tests are undertaken purely on a voluntary basis, and can tell whether someone currently has coronavirus by analysing a nose or throat swab, or if someone has been previously exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19, by analysing a blood sample.

**You should not attend if you know/suspect you have had contact with a COVID-19 case or have been experiencing any of the following symptoms:**

* a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back.
* a new, continuous cough –coughing a lot (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual).
* a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

Most people with coronavirus have at least one of these symptoms.

**What do COVID-19 test results mean?**

A positive result means you had coronavirus when the test was undertaken.

If your test is positive, you must self-isolate for at least 10 days. Anyone you live with, and anyone in your support bubble, must self-isolate for 14 days from when you start self-isolating. You will get an email, text or call from the NHS Test and Trace service if you test positive after having symptoms. You will be asked where you've been recently and who you've been in close contact with.

If you receive a positive test result you will be contacted by the Public Health Agency’s (PHA) Contact Tracing Service from (028) 9536 8888.

If you do not answer the call the first time, the team will try another four times to get in contact with you – this is because it is really important that we speak to you. The reason for this call is to help us identify anyone you have been in close contact with who may be a risk of getting COVID-19, so we can offer them support and guidance on self-isolation and the need to get tested if they develop symptoms.

Close contacts will be contacted by the team using the same (028) 9536 8888 number.

A negative result means the test did not find coronavirus and you do not need to self-isolate. This testing programme is for asymptomatic students only but PHA self-isolation guidance additionally requires:

* everyone you live with who has symptoms tests negative
* everyone in your support bubble who has symptoms tests negative
* you were not told to self-isolate for 14 days if contacted by NHS Test and Trace – if you were, see what to do if you've been told you've been in contact with someone who has coronavirus
* you feel well – if you feel unwell, stay at home until you’re feeling better

If you have diarrhoea or you are being sick, stay at home until 48 hours after symptoms have stopped.

If you feel well but someone you live with tests positive or you have been traced as a contact of someone who tested positive you must still self-isolate. Follow the guidance on 14 days self-isolation. If you get symptoms of coronavirus, get tested and self-isolate for 10 days from when they start.

If you are not a contact you may return to work if you've not had a fever for 48 hours and feel well. Talk to your employer first. If you are shielding, please follow the guidance.

Contact 111 if you need medical help. In an emergency, dial 999.

**What do antibody test results mean?**

A positive antibody test demonstrates that someone has developed antibodies to the virus. The presence of antibodies signals that the body has come into contact with Coronavirus and has responded by developing antibodies.

However, it is very important to note that, as COVID-19 is a new disease, our understanding of the body’s immune response to it is very limited. **We do not know, for example, how long an antibody response lasts, nor whether having antibodies means you cannot be infected again, or transmit the virus to others. Thus, at this time, any result cannot and should not, influence behaviours.**

Our understanding of the virus will grow as new scientific evidence and studies emerge, and your participation in this testing of COVID antibody status in university students in N Ireland will assist with the growth of knowledge and understanding.

**If you test positive for antibodies, can you ignore lockdown restrictions?**

No. There is **no evidence to suggest that those who have been proven to have had the virus are immune**. This is the current position of the World Health Organisation.

You should continue to comply with social distancing measures and government guidelines. All infection prevention and control measures must continue to be in place irrespective of the presence of antibodies.

**How will my information be used?**

Your data will be anonymised and shared, together with grouped data from others in N Ireland, with statisticians and other workers in disease surveillance from Dept of Health, the Public Health Agency, Queen’s University and Ulster University. It will help provide information on whether some groups within our community are more at risk, on the prevalence of COVID-19 in different areas of N Ireland, and will help better understand how the disease spreads. With your permission, the remaining blood sample will be stored and your information retained on file; you may be contacted to participate in future research.

**Are there any risks to having the tests?**

A nasal swab test has few risks. However, you may gag a little during the test. You may also feel slightly uncomfortable, but you should not feel any pain. You may have a minor nosebleed afterwards. There are some minor risks related to having any blood test, such as feeling dizzy and faint during and after the test, but nothing specific to this antibody test. Risks can also include bruising at the venepuncture site. Serious complications such as an infection at the site where blood was taken, and phlebitis (swelling of the vein) are possible, but generally extremely rare.

There is anecdotal evidence that insurance companies may use a detectable antibody test to influence mortgage offers so if you are presently seeking a mortgage you may wish to consider this information and contact the relevant company for up to date information before being tested.

**How will I be informed of the result?**

The COVID-19 swab results will be communicated via email, text message or telephone within 2 days of testing. The result will be either ‘Positive’ indicated that you had coronavirus at the time of the test or ‘Negative’ meaning that coronavirus was not detected. You may also receive a “void” notice if the test was incomplete due to a sample error in which case a repeat test is required.

The antibody test results will be communicated to you separately by email if you give an email address (please ensure this is accurate). The result will be either “DETECTED” meaning that antibodies to COVID-19 are present, or “NOT DETECTED” meaning antibodies are not present at a significant level. Please be aware that results should be available within 3 working days from testing. The result of your test will be documented on your Electronic Care Record. Your GP will also be able to access the result if required.