



**THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS**

**GUIDELINES FOR REOPENING OF EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COVID-19
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOPs)**

SEPTEMBER 2020

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1. INTRODUCTION

Uganda is implementing comprehensive national efforts to control the spread of Covid-19. As part of these efforts, H.E. the President, directed all education institutions to close effect from 20th March 2020. Education institutions have remained closed as Government continues to manage the spread of the pandemic. However, Government has been gradually easing the lockdown on different sectors as advised by the technical team of scientists and Ministry of Health. A decision has now been taken to allow education institutions to reopen in a phased manner under clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Ministry of Education and Sports is issuing these guidelines to help education institutions take the necessary steps in mitigation of the risk of transmission and spread of the disease and to reduce the impact of the pandemic on teaching and learning. These guidelines, together with the standard operating procedures that have been issued by Ministry of Health, should guide managers of education institutions on what needs to be done to create a safe environment for both learners and staff within our education institutions.

2. PURPOSE OF THE GUIDELINES

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide actionable guidance for safe reopening and running of education institutions through effective implementation of *Standard Operating Procedures for Institutions of Learning during the Covid-19 pandemic*.

3. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Ministry of Health, in collaboration with Ministry of Education and Sports, developed *Standard Operating Procedures for Institutions of Learning during the Covid-19 pandemic* to provide practical guidance on establishing and operating a safe learning environment in education institutions in the context of ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

All education institutions in Uganda are required to adhere to the requirements of the SOPs when they reopen.

4. PHASED RE-OPENING OF EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- i. Education institutions shall reopen starting **21st September 2020 for candidate classes (P7, S4 and S6) and final year students in higher institutions of learning.** Institutions shall follow a revised national education institutions calendar as shall be provided.
- ii. Education institutions shall resume full operations for all learners when Ministry of Education, working with Ministry of health, determines that it safe for institutions to operate at full capacity.
- iii. Special schools for learners with special needs may open and operate for all classes provided they have the capacity to adhere to the social distancing of at least two metres.
- iv. All primary and secondary schools that reopen shall operate either as day or boarding schools but not both.

5. REOPENING OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS

The general guidelines on safety measures for reopening of education institutions shall apply to international schools in Uganda.

However, given that these schools follow the school calendar of their international affiliates and their candidate classes do not correspond to the standard education cycles in Uganda, international schools in Uganda may reopen and operate at full capacity with effect from 21th Sept

6. SAFE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OPERATIONS:

The SOPs, a copy of which is attached, provide detailed requirements for risk reduction of the spread of Covid-19 in the operations of education institutions. Institution should fully internalize and adhere to the requirements in the SOPs. The following are highlights, clarifications and additions for implementation of implementation of the SOPs to guarantee safety and protection of learners and staff in education institutions.

- i. Prior to reopening, the management of each education institution serving as quarantine centres shall undertake to ensure that if their institution is disinfected and confirmed as safe for resumption operations. The disinfection shall be done with support

- of the respective district COVID-19 taskforce.
- ii. The management of all education institutions shall hold a staff meeting to discuss the implementation of the SOPs within the institution and agree on appropriate classrooms and dormitory spaces to ensure physical spacing of 2 meters between learners in class and in dormitories
 - iii. Each institution shall constitute a COVID-19 taskforce of not more than seven (7) members, including two (2) learners and a member of the support staff.
 - iv. Each class/lecture room shall have a student monitor responsible for promoting compliance to COVID-19 control and safety measures
 - v. All education institutions shall ensure the proper use of facial masks that must be worn at all times. Each learner should have a minimum of two face masks.
 - vi. Education institutions shall take every precaution to ensure that no learner, who is reported to have entered the country illegally, is allowed into institution premises. Such learners should be reported to the relevant authorities for necessary action.
 - vii. Education institutions shall restrict entry to their premises by members of the public.
 - viii. Education institutions should provide extra support to safeguard vulnerable learners, including SNE learners, and learners with identified health conditions.
 - ix. Institutions should establish or strengthen collaboration with Covid-19 District Taskforce and social service providers for continuity of critical services in institutions such as health screening, school feeding programs, guidance and counseling.
 - x. Each institution should appoint a member of staff from the established Covid-19 taskforce to be a Community Liaison Officer (CLO). The CLO shall coordinate the institution's relationship and engagement with the community to promote observance of Covid-19 control measures.

- xi. Institutions should guide and counsel learners against Covid-19 related stigmatization.
- xii. All education institutions should conduct behavior change and health education sessions for staff and learners and provide reminders on safety, in form of posters, on safe behaviour.

7. EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

Implementation of the SOPs requires ample facilities such as classrooms, desks and hand washing equipment, which may not be readily available in all institutions. It is necessary that institutions effectively utilize the available facilities to implement the requirements of the SOPs.

- i. Each institution should re-arrange the sitting of learners using all available rooms within the school to ensure the required social distancing. This may include use of libraries, laboratories, dining halls, main halls where available.
- ii. Where classrooms have temporary partitions, institutions should remove the partitions to create larger rooms for ample sitting and aeration/ventilation.
- iii. Where available, main halls, dining halls and other large rooms should be prioritized for use as classrooms to ensure that available teachers cater for a sizeable number of learners per class. However, there should not be more than seventy (70) learners in a room/hall of any size for a lesson or other purposes.
- iv. A foot-operated hand washing facility shall be placed at strategic point of access to each block (and floor where applicable) used by learners and staff.
- v. Safe temporary shelters, such as tents, may be used as classrooms. Open air spaces, such as tree shades may be improvised as temporary venues for some classes.

8. REORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

To minimize the risk of Covid-19 and ensure recovery of lost learning time, institutions should review their programmes and prioritize curriculum completion.

- i) There shall be no group and close contact co-curricular activities in

all education institutions until further notice. Nevertheless, learners should be guided to engage in physical activities while observing the social distancing of at least two metres.

- ii) All education institutions shall avoid general assemblies that bring together a large number of students.
- iii) There shall be no external mocks or other external examinations organized for students in secondary and primary schools.
- iv) Institution heads should ensure that all staff integrate COVID-19 awareness and prevention messages in every lesson.
- v) There shall be no career days, class days or official visitation days, in education institutions until further notice.
- vi) Mid-morning and lunch breaks shall be staggered and fully supervised by the teachers for adherence to social distancing, wearing of face masks and hand washing.
- vii) Institutions with large numbers of candidate/final year classes, which cannot be accommodated in the available classrooms at the social distancing of two metres, shall make arrangements to operate either:
 - a. Morning and afternoon shifts. Where this is applicable, the morning shift shall end at 12:30pm and the afternoon shift shall start at 2:00pm to allow for disinfection of the affected surfaces before the next shift or
 - b. An alternate-day attendance schedule where different streams attend on alternate days as may be deemed appropriate, in a bid to ensure that numbers are manageable.
- viii) For boarding institutions, after-class afternoon and evening programmes shall not involve team or group and close contact sports or activities; and they shall be supervised by a dedicated team of staff. Every dormitory shall have a resident tutor to supervise adherence to the SOPs.
- ix) Institutions should not keep learners beyond the official school closing time.

9. MANAGEMENT OF STAFF AND CAPACITY BUILDING

- i. Schools that do not employ a qualified and dedicated health worker shall establish a formal collaboration with a health facility within a radius of 5kms for quick response and management of emerging health issues.
- ii. Each education institution shall work closely with the district Covid-19 taskforce to organize basic training for its staff on management of Covid-19.
- iii. Institutions shall build staff awareness and knowledge on Covid-19 safety measures through regular sharing of accurate information and literature.
- iv. Education institutions shall ensure that restrictions are in place to prevent teachers from part-timing in multiple institutions and thereby increasing the risk of spreading infection among institutions.
- v. Heads of institutions should ensure that only staff members who are on duty are present at the institution on a given day.

10. PROVISION OF FACILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SOPs

- i. The Permanent Secretary shall provide detailed guidance to institutions that receive capitation grants from Government on how additional facilities for implementation of the SOPs may be acquired.
- ii. Proprietors of private education institutions are advised to mobilize resources to ensure compliance with the SOPs.
- iii. All education institutions' budgets shall be reviewed to give priority to improved hygiene management, including disinfection of frequently touched surfaces such as desk tops, door handles, light switches, door frames and book covers.

11. SCHOOL FEES

- i. Education institutions shall engage their parents/guardians to adopt flexible fees payment arrangements and allow payment in appropriate installments.

- ii. The management and governance of all education institutions shall review institutional annual work plans and budgets to realign them with the changes in education institution programmes and priorities.
- iii. Education institutions shall not increase fees.

12. GENERAL APPEAL

All heads of education institutions are reminded that the country is still at high of the Covid-19 and maximum care must be exercised at all times. Having accurate information and facts about COVID-19 will help diminish students' fears and anxieties about the disease and will ultimately help them cope with measures that are being undertaken to minimize the risks of infection.

Education managers are further reminded to build and maintain strong collaboration with health facilities and workers in their neighbourhoods and always seek for guidance and support from your respective district Covid-19 taskforce.