



Office of
Safety and Security

Dear PSR Students,

One-Time COVID-19 Testing for Hostel Residents

As part of the Singapore Government's efforts to expand the COVID-19 testing regime to selected community groups, a one-time COVID-19 testing will be conducted at all university hostels in January 2021. SMU's Prinsep Street Residences (PSR) will be included in this exercise.

2. In consultation with MOE and MOH, we strongly encourage all PSR residents to undergo this complimentary one-time COVID-19 testing in January 2021, as residents return to campus from their year-end break.

3. The testing of all PSR residents will allow the University to better monitor the prevalence of COVID-19 and contain any asymptomatic cases in the community quickly. This is in view of the high-density, communal living environment that may pose increased risk of community transmission. The collective participation of all PSR residents will be a positive step towards ensuring a safer campus for everyone in the community.

4. The one-time COVID-19 testing is free and will be conducted using Antigen Rapid Tests (ARTs). The ARTs involve a nasal swab from the lower part of the nose. PSR residents who are tested ART positive will require a separate confirmatory COVID-19 Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test to ascertain if they are infected with COVID-19. For your convenience, we have liaised with the Health Promotion Board to conduct the test onsite at PSR on 16th and 17th January 2021.

5. We strongly encourage all residents to take the ART for your personal well-being and as part of your personal responsibility in keeping the campus safe from COVID-19. The test results – contingent on a high proportion of residents who undergo testing – will provide an indication of the hostel population prevalence in January 2021, which MOE and SMU will take into consideration when calibrating the safe management measures on campus and within the hostels for the Term 2 of AY2020. The test schedule for each PSR apartment and other details will be shared with you once the information is available.

6. Thank you for helping to keep PSR and the SMU campus safe. Do feel free to reach out to the PSR Team at psr@smu.edu.sg and/or the OSS team at oss@smu.edu.sg if you need further assistance. You are also encouraged to refer to the list of FAQs appended at the end of this email message.

Haesoo Park
Assistant Professor of Science, Technology &
Society (Education)
PSR Faculty Resident Fellow
Office of Core Curriculum
School of Social Sciences

Alvin Leow
Director
Office of Safety & Security

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is there a need for COVID-19 testing when the community transmission rate in Singapore remains low?

Even though the community transmission rate is low, we must not be complacent, especially as we look forward to resuming more activities on campus in 2021. Expanding community screening allows us to identify and contain any asymptomatic cases in the community quickly. This is particularly important for hostel residents who live in close proximity and share communal facilities.

The university is not alone in adopting testing regimes to keep campus safe. Many overseas universities, e.g. in China and the United States, have adopted regular testing for students studying and living on campus.

Other community groups in Singapore who have been tested include taxi drivers, food delivery workers, stallholders at hawker centres and markets, pre-school teachers and residents/employees of elderly homes.

2. Are there plans for regular testing?

We are conducting this as a one-time exercise for now. If the test results show a higher prevalence than expected, MOH and MOE may decide to put in place a regular testing regime.

3. Are there plans to expand the testing to all staff and students rather than only those living in the hostels?

We have chosen hostel residents for now given the increased risk of COVID-19 transmission as result of communal living.

If Singapore's prevalence of COVID-19 were to increase, MOH and MOE may consider extending testing to all staff and students.

4. Why are we using ART rather than PCR tests which is the gold standard to diagnose for COVID-19?

Unlike PCR tests whereby results may take up to two days to process, ART returns results within 30 minutes. MOE has chosen to use ART as it would pose the least inconvenience to hostel residents.

5. Who can be excluded from the one-time COVID-19 testing?

Individuals who have tested PCR-positive within the past 180 days can be excluded from the one-time testing as they would still have antibodies against COVID-19. Residents must present documentation in the form of a COVID-19 PCR test result in English and from recognised laboratories. The test result must contain the following details:

- Date the test was taken
- Test Result
- Particulars of Student as indicated in the passport or Student Pass.

6. What do the antigen rapid test results (ART) mean? Why is there a need for a confirmatory PCR test if the staff/student is tested ART positive?

The ARTs used minimally meet the World Health Organisation's (WHO's) recommendation of at least 80% for sensitivity and 97% for specificity and have been evaluated by MOH.

A sensitivity of 80% means that ARTs will be able to pick up at least 80% of the individuals who are infected with COVID-19. There is a risk that ARTs may not detect some COVID-19 positive cases. This is why safe management measures, e.g. mask-wearing, safe distancing, group size and capacity limits, must continue to apply to reduce the risk of transmission, even if all residents have tested negative.

A specificity of 97% means that ARTs will have 3% false positive rates amongst healthy individuals. False positives refer to cases that may test positive under ART even though they are not infected with COVID-19. Residents who are tested ART positive will therefore need a confirmatory PCR test, which remains the definitive test for the confirmation of COVID-19 infection. They will be required to self-isolate at Blk 83 and minimize exposure to others while waiting for their PCR test results. Those who are confirmed COVID-19 cases will be conveyed via ambulance to an appropriate care facility.

7. How might this one-time COVID-19 testing inform hostel's safe management measures?

The ART test results provide a snapshot of the campus population prevalence and provides an indication of how well our safe management measures have worked.

If the COVID-19 prevalence on campus is low and the national community transmission rate remains low, we could look into reviewing the safe management measures to align with the national posture.