

MALTA FA

Return to Play Protocol

A guidance document to ensure football can return safely
in the context of COVID-19

Version 3.0: November 2020

Malta FA – Level 2, Millenium Stand, National Stadium, Ta' Qali

info@mfa.com.mt

Contents

1. Background	3
2. Introduction	5
3. Scope of Application	6
4. PHASE I – Prevention	7
a. Guidelines on the prevention of COVID-19 virus infection to be observed by Member Clubs.....	7
b. Reporting by Member Clubs and Member Associations	8
5. PHASE II – In Competition	10
a. Management of Quarantine	10
b. Management of positive cases	12
6. Premier & Challenge League 2020-21	15
a. Additional Competition matters related to COVID-19.....	15
b. Disciplinary matters	16
c. Standard Protocols for Stadium Operations.....	17
7. National Amateur League, Women’s Football Competitions and Festivals, Youth and Grassroots Competitions and Festivals 2020-21	24
a. Additional Competition matters related to COVID-19.....	24
b. Disciplinary matters for Competitions and Festivals organised by the Malta FA.....	24
c. Standard Protocols for Stadium Operations.....	25
d. Key points for all clubs	30
e. Guidance for Coaches	31
f. Guidance for Players	32
g. Guidance for Parents/Guardians	34
h. Guidance for venues in relation to hosting of football matches	35
Annex 1: COVID-19 – Club/MA reporting form	37
Annex 2: Attendance Register (including screening).....	38
Annex 3: Standard Operating Protocols for Stadium Organisation – Hygiene.....	39
Annex 4: Standard Operating Protocols for Stadium Organisation – Media	41
Annex 5: Guidelines for procedure in case of positive test.....	45
Annex 6: Personnel Requirements	46
Annex 7: Return to Play Protocol following Positive COVID-19 Test.....	49
Annex 8: Club Covid Officer	54

Annex 9: Standard Operating Protocols for Futsal Competitions55

1. Background

COVID-19 - A continuous struggle for football since March 2020

Football in Malta came to a halt on March 13, 2020 when the Malta Football Association proactively suspended all domestic competitions in the interest of public health amid an increase in the number of coronavirus cases. Soon after, the possibility of football activity was impeded through legal means via legislation prohibiting organised activities. The situation across Europe was no different with several countries suspending their leagues and competitions while UEFA postponed all international matches and tournaments, including EURO 2020 which will take place next year.

This sensible and cautious approach by all football stakeholders was essential as the world struggles to come to terms with a global health crisis.

Since March, the Malta FA, as the governing body of local football, has been engaged in efforts to adapt to the challenges posed by COVID-19, striving to find a balance between public health considerations, which represent the foremost priority, and the interests of local football.

The first health and operational protocol for the potential resumption of the domestic football competitions behind closed doors was submitted to the local health authorities in April. Further requests to the Government to provide a clear direction on the potential restart of domestic competitions were made on three separate occasions in May but this was not forthcoming. Consequently, the Malta FA had no option but to terminate the 2019/20 competitions prematurely.

It was in early June when the Government announced that the restriction on contact-sport activities were to be lifted. The Malta FA duly informed the clubs about the SportMalta guidelines and its own position on 'Return to Training'. This was followed by the successful staging of 'Return to Activity' programme for the national teams in July, backed by the implementation of a detailed health and safety protocol.

August saw the first competitive matches since March as Maltese teams have been involved in the UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League matches which are being played in accordance with the UEFA Return to Play Protocol.

While the situation is still fluid, in recent months, we have witnessed a concerted effort to reduce the negative impact of coronavirus on people's lives and the economy.

Several sectors outside of sport have been given the green light to resume activity subject to the implementation of health and operational protocols that take into account the needs and specificities of the stakeholders in that particular field. Hotels, restaurants and non-essential businesses have reopened, rightly benefiting from the authorities' support and incentive schemes.

Although football has benefited from Malta Enterprise incentives in terms of employment, when it come to the medical aspect, the authorities have yet to acknowledge the specificities of sport and the need to compete without interruptions. While contact sports activities resumed on July 15, the start of the 2020/21 domestic competitions is in the balance unless the specificities of sport, in particular when implementing quarantine and self-isolation protocols, are taken into consideration.

Best practices from other countries have shown that the requirements of elite sport in this context can be addressed through an ad-hoc approach based on scientific evidence, granting targeted exemptions from certain restrictions such as self-isolation. Countries like England, Italy and Germany have been able to resume and complete their 2019-20 football competitions with strict protocols in place.

Applying a strict quarantine regime on entire squads is preventing players from training for 14 days, in the process undermining teams' preparations and exposing athletes to injury. This will inevitably have a disruptive effect on competitions, both domestic and international, not to mention the serious financial repercussions being faced by clubs due to coronavirus issues. Excessive interruptions also impact on the integrity of competitions due to the imbalance they may create in the progression of the season.

Furthermore, the bubble (safe corridor) concept used in bigger footballing nations is not realistic for Malta since the clubs cannot afford to keep an entire squad in isolation for 14 days. In this regard, it is important to note that the Premier League is composed of 16 teams (each with circa 25 players and 10 technical staff members) which total 560 persons (75% of which are employed full-time) involved in matches in every match-day.

In preparation for the start of the 2020-21 domestic season, the Malta FA has updated its health and operational guidelines for clubs and nurseries, setting out obligations for regular reporting on the COVID-19 situation together with other health and safety measures.

This document further attests to the Malta FA's commitment to implement medical and safety procedures based on current medical advice and best practices, charting a safe way for football to continue for the benefit of all those involved in football and the wider community. During these difficult and unprecedented times, the society needs sport more than ever for its own physical and mental wellbeing.

This protocol sets out the framework of medical, sanitary and hygiene procedures together with the operational protocols that are to be applied when staging Malta FA competition matches. The evolution of the COVID-19 situation is dynamic and unpredictable, and while it is impossible to establish a completely risk-free environment, the aim is to lower the risk as far as possible by applying current medical advice and best practices.

2. Introduction

Minimising the risk to Malta FA competitions from COVID-19 relies on thorough and robust preparations and on-site organisation, but also to a large extent on the cooperation, behaviour and understanding of the teams, their players, officials and technical staff, as well as the Malta FA referees, the Malta FA venue staff and all target groups involved in the matches. Malta FA expects all parties to adhere to hygiene best practices both in the controlled match environments, as well as in their private day to day lives. It is therefore imperative that all precautions set out in this document, as well as the standard hygiene best practices, will be strictly adhered to by all members of these various groups. Non-respect of such social norms could have serious consequences for the organization of football matches in Malta and Gozo.

Players, staff, and everyone else involved should remember that their actions, and adherence to the social distancing requirements in particular, not only to guarantee a safe environment to matches but also serve as a strong symbol for the thousands of viewers locally. Football stakeholders have a collective duty to show leadership and set an example in the rigorous application of these measures.

Member Clubs organising and/or hosting football activities have a legal duty to take reasonable care to avoid acts or omissions which are a reasonably foreseeable risk. A risk assessment is a systematic review of the tasks, jobs or processes involved when your club organises, facilitates and/or hosts football activities. The purpose is to identify the significant hazards, the risk of someone being harmed and deciding what further control measures you must take to reduce the risk to an acceptable level.

Risk assessments should cover all risks, including those associated with the COVID-19 pandemic and how the club intends to ensure that its members and activities will operate within the parameters of guidance by health or other relevant authorities.

The public health crisis is constantly developing and so should clubs' response to it. Clubs are responsible for ensuring that risk assessments are completed, continually reviewed considering changing guidance, feedback, and observations from staff. Club officials and coaches should always keep the below steps in mind to ensure the safety of participants. Clubs should review the measures implemented in response to these regularly:

- Keep up to date with Government and the Malta FA guidance. Please ensure that they are followed at all times and communicate the guidelines to all individuals connected to your club.
- Undertake regular risk assessments of the club's activities. Risk assessments are 'living documents' and should be updated and reviewed regularly and kept in active use to mitigate any new or changing risks.
- Ensure that everyone – board/committee members, coaches, first aiders, volunteers, parents, and players – is aware of the club's COVID-19 protocols.
- Do not undertake an activity if the club has any concerns about the safety of club officials and/or participants.

Timeline since March 2020



3. Scope of Application

This document includes medical and operational obligations for all parties taking part in and/or organising football matches. These obligations will be applied by the Malta FA Venue Team when preparing venues, subject to any additional measures imposed by the local authorities.

The Malta FA administration is entrusted with the operational management of the protocol and is, therefore, entitled to take decisions and adopt detailed operational provisions and guidelines for the implementation of the protocol in particular in view of the different competitions to be organised as well as to amend it accordingly in view of the COVID-19 development and the constantly changing national conditions.

Non-compliance with the obligations set out in the Malta FA Protocol may lead to disciplinary measures in accordance with the Malta FA Disciplinary Regulations.

4. PHASE I – Prevention

a. Guidelines on the prevention of COVID-19 virus infection to be observed by Member Clubs

The following guidelines are intended to help club and nurseries and are to be read in conjunction with the latest guidelines published by Public Health and SportMalta¹. They are in no way intended to supersede or replace the guidelines published by the health authorities, but rather to serve as a reference guide to the main points detailed in the existing protocols. Please note that these guidelines may be updated from time to time.

1. All individuals should arrive separately (max. 2 people per car) wearing facemasks and be ready for training (i.e. wearing the appropriate kit) at the given time.
2. Temperature is to be checked before entry to the sporting facility, entry should be denied if over 37.2°C or if there are any signs/symptoms.
3. Hand sanitiser is to be used upon entry to the facility.
4. Social distancing applies until training or match starts on pitch.
5. Any persons who are feeling unwell or show signs/symptoms should stay at home and call 111 to arrange for swabbing and consult their GP. They are under no circumstances to attend the session.
6. Anyone who feels unwell during training is to stop, remove themselves from the pitch and if well enough to go home and isolate and call 111 / their GP. In the case that they are not well enough to remove themselves from play, a room to be used for isolation purposes needs to be identified. Only the club doctor should be allowed to enter this room when in use and PPE should be worn. Ideally this room is close to the pitch and proper disinfection must take place after use.
7. No more than 100 people (including players and staff) are allowed in any training space at one time. According to Legal Notices 322² and 325³ of 2020, an impact assessment is to be submitted to the authorities if the number exceeds 100.
8. Masks/Visors should be worn when not doing physically demanding activity, this means that coaches, technical staff and other staff (e.g. medics) must wear a mask or visor. These are to be maintained in dressing rooms and other common areas.

¹ <https://www.sportmalta.org/mt/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SPORTS-COVID-GUIDELINES-01.07.2057351.pdf>

² <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lp&itemid=30326&l=1>

³ <http://www.justiceservices.gov.mt/DownloadDocument.aspx?app=lp&itemid=30337&l=1>

9. Water and any food/snacks must be brought by the players / staff and no sharing is allowed. No water dispensers are allowed.
10. Shower facilities and changing rooms remain closed. **No recovery sessions in indoor pools, ice baths, etc.**
11. No spectators shall be allowed whether in training, friendly matches, or competitive matches (closed-doors for public).
12. Only persons occupying a role in the holding of a training session or a match shall be allowed. (players, technical staff, ground staff, club committees, media, as necessary).
13. Balls must be disinfected every 15min during training. An alternative way to manage this is to ensure a new ball is used every 15 min.
14. Equipment e.g. cones should be disinfected before and after use. No equipment is to be shared e.g. resistance bands etc.
15. Clubs shall ensure rigorous compliance with obligations related to annual medical examination of players.
16. Every Club shall designate a Club Covid Officer (Annex 8) who shall report regularly on the state of health and activity within his/her club on the basis of a reporting template provided by the Association. It is also important to keep an attendance register.
17. Maximum cooperation is to be ensured with Public Health Authorities. Disciplinary sanctions will be applicable upon reports of non-compliance.
18. **Gatherings of any sort outside of football (e.g. meals out, drinks, etc.) are to be avoided due to the likelihood of infection in such environment.**

b. Reporting by Member Clubs and Member Associations

Each Member Club is required to indicate a contact person (COVID-19 Liaison) who will be asked to report regularly on the state of health within the respective club and the ongoing activity (such as training, friendly matches, etc.). The person designated as 'COVID-19 Liaison' does not have to be a doctor or come from the medical profession.

This reporting should be provided using a template that can be found in Annex 1 and must include information about the respective football nursery. Nurseries are too encouraged to keep in touch with the Youth FA. The Member Associations within which they have Affiliate clubs are also asked to send their feedback.

The 'Club Reporting Form' should be sent by email on a weekly basis to covid@mfa.com.mt

Each club should keep an attendance register for all the training sessions being organised. A template of the attendance register (including screening) can be found in Annex 2.

The COVID Liaison officer is also requested to submit the COVID-19 Exposure/Contact Report Form from the link here: <https://forms.gle/vmnaxEdPNq1EAyi49>

The Malta FA calls on everyone for maximum cooperation with the health authorities and for the FA to always be informed of health-related developments. The Malta FA reminds everyone that in a difficult context for everyone, football at each level depends on such cooperation.

5. PHASE II – In Competition

a. Management of Quarantine

At present a number of premier league (elite) footballers in Malta have been quarantined due to a teammate testing positive for SARS-COV-2 infection. Several of them have tested negative for infection themselves yet remain quarantined on the advice of Public Health.

The Malta FA has agreed with the Public Health Regulation Department that the impact assessment upon a positive case being identified is made by the Malta FA COVID Officer following the sanctioned mitigating risk factors (found further below) who would then forward the report to a the Public Health Regulation Department to ensure a consistent and coherent approach.

Diagnostic Testing Summary

At present the evidence pertaining to nasopharyngeal swab testing by RT-PCR suggests a high specificity of around 95% and a moderate sensitivity of around 70% (though this is nearer the lower end of estimates)⁴ meaning that a positive result can be assumed to be more reliably accurate than a negative test.

If the swab testing by RT-PCR were 100% specific and 100% sensitive this would mean that a negative result guarantees that the person tested is negative and vice versa. However, because of the imperfect nature of the test, a negative result in real life only means that the likelihood of the person tested being positive for COVID-19 is less.

In order to be able to calculate how likely it is that the result is a false negative, the pre-test probability of the population being tested must be taken into account. This refers to the chances of the person being tested of being positive before the swab test is taken, which is in itself multi-factorial (e.g. prevalence in population, exposure to positive cases, adherence to social distancing etc.)

The higher the pre-test probability is, the more likely it becomes that the negative test is a false negative, conversely, the lower the pre-test probability, the less likely it becomes that a negative test is a false negative.

This post-test probability (the chance of infection despite a negative swab) may also vary depending on the number of days that has passed since transmission of the virus, the symptoms displayed by the patient and also, crucially, by the number of tests carried out. In theory, a second test will increase the sensitivity of the nasopharyngeal swab thereby reducing

⁴ BMJ 2020;369:m1808 doi: 10.1136/bmj.m1808

the likelihood of a false negative. Furthermore, the lower the pre-test probability, the lower the post-test probability, as outlined in the graph below:

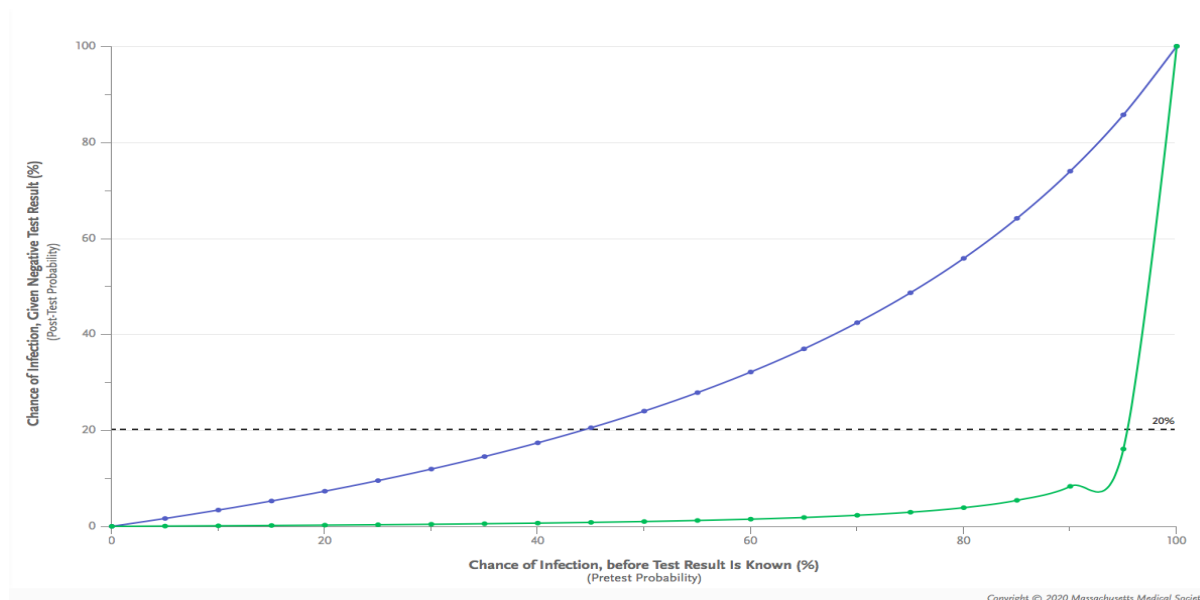


Fig.1 Graph showing pre-test probability vs post-test probability for a swab with 95% specificity and 70% sensitivity (blue line) vs 99% specificity and 99% specificity (green line) with a threshold of 20%. (NEJM⁵)

As shown in the graph, given the current accepted standards of testing, after one swab where the chance of infection in the individual tested being 50%, the chances post-test of them being positive stands at 23%. The lower the chance of infection before the swab, the lower the risk of a false positive and so given the number of cases currently active in Malta and in the community, the risk stands at substantially less than 20%.

Practical Applications (Factors increasing the likelihood of a false negative test)

The number of cases in Malta are increasing and as such, so is the prevalence in the general population. How prevalent COVID-19 is in the footballing population is not known and should therefore be assumed to be similar to that of the general population.

The symptoms displayed by younger people may be less than others and this may affect the post-test probability, but evidence is currently insufficient to determine the sensitivity of a nasopharyngeal RT-PCR test in asymptomatic carriers.

⁵ NEJM 2020; doi: 10.1056/NEJMp2015897

Practical Applications (Factors decreasing the likelihood of a false negative test)

The prevalence of COVID-19 in Malta, although increasing is still not at levels which would invalidate testing (because negative tests cannot lower the probability of infection enough to reach the threshold below which a person can be assumed to be uninfected – see graph above)

Social distancing, use of facemasks and no sharing of equipment, drinks etc. as outlined in previous protocols as well as protocols elsewhere all serve to significantly lower the pre-test probability.

Areas of contention

In several other European countries^{6,7}, football is not being considered as an activity which increases exposure (much as passing someone in a corridor would not be) and as such the pre-test probability is automatically considered to be lower.

Furthermore, there is scientific evidence to support the idea that exposure (time spent closer than 1.5m from the infected player or time spent in an exponentially declining zone where the infected player was positioned earlier, measured in seconds) during a football game of players to an infected player (based on one infected player per match) was on average, only 87.8s per game.⁸

The threshold at which somebody can be assumed to be uninfected has not been defined and should ideally represent a calculation of acceptable risk. For example, if a person with a negative swab test wanted to visit vulnerable relatives the acceptable threshold may be set at 5% or lower. For footballers playing a sport with other young people this threshold may be set a significantly higher level.

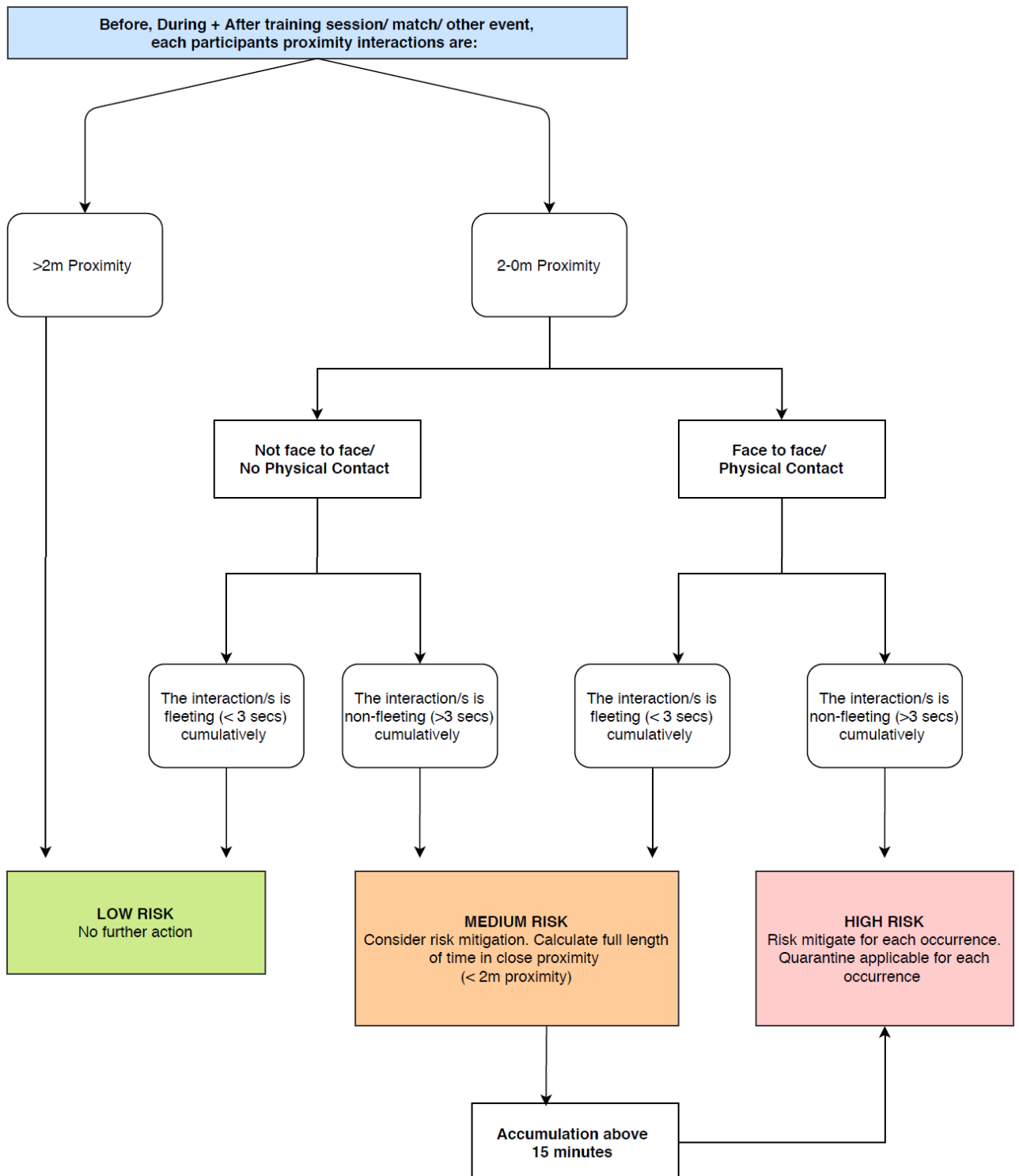
b. Management of positive cases

As long as protocols are followed, the following contact tracing assessment will be adopted by the **Malta FA medical team** to draw a report and submit to Public Health in the case of a player or staff member testing positive for COVID-19:

⁶ Scottish Football Association – Return to Play Professional Football

⁷ Italian Ministry of Health - Modalità attuative della quarantena per i contatti stretti dei casi COVID-19, in particolari contesti di riferimento, quali l'attività agonistica di squadra professionista, 0021463-18/06/2020-DGPRE-DGPRE-P

⁸ Knusden et al. - Spread of virus during soccer matches, Preprint (not yet peer reviewed) medRxiv preprint doi: <https://doi.org/10.1101/2020.04.26.20080614>



The Malta FA contact tracing team will be using the above for Premier League, Challenge League, National Amateur League, the Women’s League and the Youth League. The persons assessed will be classified according to their level of risk and contact tracing assessment will be sanctioned by Public Health. Persons classified as being Medium Risk will be asked to by the association to undergo a rapid swab test after 5-6 days from the last contact with the positive case.

Research Background

In the case of a Player or Staff Member with a positive COVID-19 test:

Player/Staff Member shall quarantine as per public health guidelines. Once passed fit to exit quarantine they must undergo a repeat medical examination in conjunction with the Malta FA medical department and follow a graduated return to play protocol.

The established close contacts of positive player or staff member shall quarantine for 14 days with a swab test taken at the end of the 14 days prior to re integration with the rest of the team in the absence of any symptoms.

The same approach will be taken with match officials.

In Germany, for example, the 'Special Match Operations Task Force in Professional Football suggests:

"Positive test results will result not only in a report to the health authorities, but also immediate isolation of the person concerned and an extensive log of contacts, in order to selectively initiate further testing and any other measures.

Such tests can begin effective immediately with the aim of resuming football-specific training as soon as possible, with only players and trainers that have definitely tested negative participating. Before kicking off regular team training, at least two tests are required of everyone involved in training operations – preferably within 5 days (inclusive) of the day before training kicks off."

The Task Force, headed by Dr Tim Meyer (Chair of the Medical Commission of the German Football Federation and UEFA Chief Medical Officer), maintains that with the above-mentioned safeguards, football activity "warrants an RKI rating⁹ of category II (minor risk or infection) for the potential contacts of infected people close to the players and trainers and thus the omission of group quarantine".

Similarly, in Greece, quarantine ends in five (5) days if players/staff have not presented any symptom of the disease and 2 (two) nasopharyngeal samples (PCR) are performed and come out negative, with at least 24 hours time difference between the first and the second (3rd - 5th day)¹⁰.

⁹ Robert Koch Institute, *Follow-up of contact persons for respiratory diseases caused by the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus*, available at https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/InfAZ/N/Neuartiges_Coronavirus/Kontaktperson/Management.html#doc13516162bodyText6

¹⁰ Greece Football Association -Return to Professional Football

In Italy, while the general principle upon a positive case being identified remains that persons who had close contact with the subject are obliged to self-isolate for 14 days, a specific approach is provided for professional competitive football.

According to a directive of the Italian Ministry of Health¹¹, where other components of the squad are obliged to quarantine following the identification of a positive case:

Il Dipartimento di prevenzione può prevedere che ... alla quarantena dei contatti stretti possa far seguito, per tutto il "gruppo squadra", l'esecuzione del test, con oneri a carico delle società sportive, per la ricerca dell'RNA virale, il giorno della gara programmata, successiva all'accertamento del caso confermato di soggetto Covid-19 positivo, in modo da ottenere i risultati dell'ultimo tampone entro 4 ore e consentire l'accesso allo stadio e la disputa della gara solo ai soggetti risultati negativi al test molecolare. Al termine della gara, i componenti del "gruppo squadra" devono riprendere il periodo di quarantena fino al termine previsto..."

This position in Italy follows the concept of allowing the resumption of activity following negative tests of the squad where a positive case is found.

6. Premier & Challenge League 2020-21

a. Additional Competition matters related to COVID-19

To complement the above, and to ensure the regular staging of competition, the Malta FA introduced regulations to address the specificities that COVID-19 presents.

Each team will be required to submit a squad list of a minimum of 25 players clearly indicating goalkeepers and players.

The Malta FA may request nasopharyngeal swab testing by RT-PCR or rapid swab testing of a representative sample from each squad, including coaches and other staff. This will take place every 14 days and will be coordinated by the Malta FA in conjunction with Public Health authorities. It will take place at the Millennium Clinic, Ta' Qali, Attard. The Malta FA will be liaising with the Club Covid Officer of the respective club.

Notwithstanding Art. 18(iv) of Section V (Competition Rules), the Club President and/or Council Member will not be allowed to enter the dressing room areas of the stadium unless listed on the match sheet. Only 2 kit managers can enter the dressing room and 1 additional physio/ masseur can enter the dressing room during half-time.

¹¹ Ministero della Salute, Modalità attuative della quarantena per i contatti stretti dei casi COVID-19, in particolari contesti di riferimento, quali l'attività agonistica di squadra professionista, available at <https://www.figc.it/media/123076/circolare-quarantena-calcio-def-2.pdf>

For season 2020/21, the Malta FA, in line with FIFA's temporary allowance, will allow up to 5 substitutions per team in a match even at Premier League level. These are to take place in not more than three substitution opportunities, excluding half-time.

A competitive match cannot be postponed if the team has a minimum of 16 players, including 2 goalkeepers, available from the squad list who are RT-PCR negative, notwithstanding the obligation to self-isolate imposed on the rest of the squad. Where less than 16 players (including 2 goalkeepers) from the above-mentioned list are available, the match will be postponed.

The return of the player with a RT-PCR positive nasopharyngeal swab test to the sporting activity is permitted with the certificate from the Malta FA doctor and ONLY if ALL the following five (5) conditions are met:

- Afebrile without the use of antipyretics for three (3) days.
- Asymptomatic.
- He has **one** negative nasopharyngeal sample.
- Followed the graduated return to play protocol outlined in Annex 7
- He has resubmitted the medical clearance form (via COMET).

In the case where a club has at least 10 players in mandatory quarantine at the same time, the Association shall endeavour to reschedule fixtures at least twelve (12) days following the day when at least sixteen (16) players from the squad list are able to return to activity.

b. Disciplinary matters

Additional regulations have been introduced¹² to ensure that clubs and their players and staff abide by health-related directives:

Malta FA COVID officer shall signify such person nominated by the General Secretary of the Malta Football Association to occupy such position;

COVID Testing shall signify **a PCR swab test or a rapid swab test deemed acceptable by the association for the detection of COVID-19;**

1. A registered football player or club staff member is to inform his club of any COVID testing undertaken resulting positive by not later than 24 hours from the result of such testing being notified to him;

2. The registered football player or club staff member shall adhere to all instructions issued by the Health Department and the Malta FA COVID officer, without reservations and to the fullest extent possible;

¹² Annex I, Section V – Competition Rules: Special rules applicable to competitions due to COVID-19

3. Every club shall ensure that all its registered players or club staff members that have undertaken COVID testing, informs the Malta FA COVID officer within 24 hours from the result of such testing being notified;
4. Every registered player or club staff member that has been deemed positive to COVID-19, shall self-isolate and consequently is not to participate in any football activity, up until such person has been given clearance by the Public Health Authorities to end the self-isolation period;
5. Every club shall ensure that any of its registered players or club staff members that has been tested positive to COVID-19, shall self-isolate and consequently is not to participate in any football activity, up until the registered player or club staff member has been given clearance by the Public Health Authorities to end the self-isolation period;
6. There shall be disciplinary sanctions imposed according to the above-mentioned regulations on any player, club staff, club official or club who fails to adhere to the foregoing;
7. A player who, on the day of the match, is obliged to self-isolate (whether by law or as instructed by the health authorities) shall be considered, for the purposes of such match, ineligible.

c. Standard Protocols for Stadium Operations

Standard operating protocols for the 4 stadia used will be followed with regards to hygiene¹³. Stadia used¹⁴ for competition have been divided into three zones (Only pre-authorized individuals will be allowed into their requisite zones, thus limiting the number of individuals in any given area at any given time to within the limits set by Public Health):

- Zone 1 - Interior
- Zone 2 - Stands
- Zone 3 - Stadium grounds (exterior)

¹³ Standard Operating Protocols for Stadium Organisation – HYGIENE (Annex 3)

¹⁴ This document presumes the usage of the following stadia: National Stadium, Centenary Stadium, Hibernians Stadium, and Victor Tedesco Stadium.



A set maximum of persons may be distributed over the entire stadium grounds at the same time depending on the profile of the match in question, primarily determined on whether the match is to be televised or not. Presence within the stadium shall be strictly tied to roles fulfilled in the staging of the match.

Static requirements planning considers the total number of people in the respective zone over the entire match day. Dynamic requirements planning looks at the number of people per zone at the different times of the matchday.

In dynamic requirements planning, the matchday is divided into different time slots (approx. 2 hours). In this example, the kick-off time will be set at 18:00.

Preparatory and set-up work on the match day must be completed well in advance of the teams' arrival in the stadium.

Arrival of the teams at the stadium:

- Arrival of the teams with their own personal transport (not more than 2 persons in every vehicle), use of face masks when there are two persons in the vehicle.
- The arrival of the teams at the stadium must be staggered over time.
- Teams and their respective staff (particularly kit manager/s) are allowed to enter the stadium 90 minutes before kick-off.
- Depending on the stadium infrastructure: different routes to the dressing rooms (e.g. Centenary) or separation over a large area (e.g. National Stadium; Hibernians Stadium).

Dressing rooms (teams & referees):

- Imperative use of adjoining, free spaces as additional changing facilities (e.g. splitting of starting eleven - goalkeeper - substitutes). Each team will be allowed to have two separate dressing rooms.
- Equalisation of the use of the stadium (1st starting eleven, 2nd additional players, etc.).
- All persons must always wear a mask in the dressing room and in communal areas.
- No showers are allowed.
- Teams & referees can stay in the dressing room for a maximum of 20 minutes after the match ends.

Warm-up:

- Time adjustment to circumstances.
- Avoidance of simultaneous use of the accesses to dressing rooms / player's tunnel.

Equipment control/gathering for the arrival of the teams:

- Equipment control at dressing room by Assistant Ref (not in the collection area).
- Separate entry through the players' tunnel/no gathering or joint entry at all.

Walk-on of the teams:

- No escort kids.
- No mascots.
- No team photos (photographers position only behind goal).
- No opening production with additional people.
- No handshake.
- No joint formation of the teams.

Technical zone/pitch side:

- Teams only on benches (exceptions: 4th official, camera positions, medical service).
- **All persons on pitch side, must always wear a mask throughout the match, unless playing or doing warm-up.**
- Minimise TV positions in interior area.
- Positioning of teams on the bench: Use of every second or third seat. Replacement extension possibilities: grandstand area (if there is direct access) or additional chairs/benches in extension of the spare benches (ideally also covered).
- Adaptation of technical area.

Half time:

- Divide access to the dressing rooms, reverse order to that taken before the match.

After the game (media¹⁵ areas with Super Flash/Flash/PK/X zone):

- Media working area and Mixed zone remain closed.
- Press-conference to take place as virtual press conference (if any).

¹⁵ Standard Operating Protocols for Stadium Organisation – MEDIA (Annex 4)

- Minimise the interview (flash) position and number of interviews taking into account necessary hygienic measures. These should always be held pitch-side and should not last more than 5 minutes taking into account the social distancing measures. The reporter and camera crew must always stay at least 2m from the player. Common sense must prevail in terms of location and access.

After the game (Operations):

- Establishment of a second doping control room to separate players of both teams

Departure teams:

- Spatial and temporal separation of departure see arrival.

All matches will be played behind closed doors until further notice.

Proposed typical Premier League 2020-21 Match-day rundown

Time	Location	Activity
Cleaning and Sanitizing		
7.30am	Pitch side Area Restricted Area VIP Area VIP Stand Media Area	Cleaning
10.00am	Pitch side Area	Sanitizing
10.30am	Restricted Area	Sanitizing
11.30am	VIP Area	Sanitizing
12.00pm	VIP Stand	Sanitizing
12.30pm	Media Area	Sanitizing
1.00pm	All Areas	Close-off
Match One		
3.00pm	All Areas	Open (VIP Stand at 4.15pm)
3.20pm	Restricted Area	Arrival of Referees
3.25pm	Restricted Area	Arrival of Team A
3.30pm	Restricted Area	Arrival of Team B
4.10pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Referees
4.13pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Team A
4.15pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Team B
4.40pm	Warm-Up Area	End - Referees
4.43pm	Warm-Up Area	End -Team A
4.45pm	Warm-Up Area	End - Team B
4.48pm	Pitch side	Enter Fourth official
4.50pm	Pitch side	Enter - Bench Team A
4.52pm	Pitch side	Enter - Bench Team B

4.55pm	Pitch	Enter - Team A
4.57pm	Pitch	Enter - Team B
4.58pm	Pitch	Enter - Referees
4.58pm	Pitch	All Teams lined-up
4.59pm	Pitch	Captains' Toss
5.00pm	Pitch	Kick-off
End of First Half	Pitch	Depart Team A
End of First Half	Pitch	Depart Team B
End of First Half	Pitch	Depart Referees and Fourth Official
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 3 mins	Pitch	Enter - Team A
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 2 mins	Pitch	Enter - Team B
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 1 min	Pitch	Enter - Referees
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 0 mins	Pitch	Kick-off
End of Second half	Pitch	Depart Team A
End of Second half	Pitch	Depart Team B
End of Second half	Pitch	Depart Referees and Fourth Official
7.15pm	Restricted Area	All Teams and Referees Departed
<u>Cleaning and Sanitising</u>		
7.15pm	Pitch side Area	Cleaning
7.15pm	Restricted Area	Cleaning
7.15pm	VIP Area	Cleaning
7.15pm	VIP Stand	Cleaning
7.15pm	Media Area	Cleaning
7.25pm	Pitch side Area	Sanitizing
7.30pm	Restricted Area	Sanitizing
7.40pm	VIP Area	Sanitizing
7.45pm	VIP Stand	Sanitizing
7.55pm	Media Area	Sanitizing

Match Two		
7.15pm	All Areas	Open (VIP at 8.30pm)
7.35pm	Restricted Area	Arrival of Referees
7.40pm	Restricted Area	Arrival of Team A
7.45pm	Restricted Area	Arrival of Team B
8.25pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Referees
8.28pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Team A
8.30pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Team B
8.55pm	Warm-Up Area	End - Referees
8.58pm	Warm-Up Area	End - Team A
9.00pm	Warm-Up Area	End - Team B
9.03pm	Pitch side	Enter Fourth official
9.05pm	Pitch side	Enter - Bench Team A
9.07pm	Pitch side	Enter - Bench Team B
9.10pm	Pitch	Enter - Team A
9.12pm	Pitch	Enter - Team B
9.13pm	Pitch	Enter - Referees
9.13pm	Pitch	All Teams lined-up
9.14pm	Pitch	Captains' Toss
9.15pm	Pitch	Kick-off
End of First Half	Pitch	Depart Team A
End of First Half	Pitch	Depart Team B
End of First Half	Pitch	Depart Referees and Fourth Official
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 3 mins	Pitch	Enter - Team A
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 2 mins	Pitch	Enter - Team B
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 1 min	Pitch	Enter - Referees
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 0 mins	Pitch	Kick-off
End of Second half	Pitch	Depart Team A
End of Second half	Pitch	Depart Team B
End of Second half	Pitch	Depart Referees and Fourth Official
11.30pm	Restricted Area	All Teams and Referees Departed

7. National Amateur League, Women's Football Competitions and Festivals, Youth and Grassroots Competitions and Festivals 2020-21

a. Additional Competition matters related to COVID-19

To complement the above, and to ensure the regular staging of its competitions, the Malta FA introduced regulations to address the specificities that COVID-19 presents for the amateur sector.

For season 2020/21, the Malta FA, in line with FIFA's temporary allowance, will allow up to 5 substitutions per team in a match, to be made in not more than 3 substitution opportunities (excluding half-time).

For the National Amateur League, Women's Football Competitions and Youths for the season 2020-21: **Each team will be required to submit a squad list of a minimum of players clearly indicating goalkeepers and players.**

The return of the player with a RT-PCR positive nasopharyngeal swab test to the sporting activity is permitted with the certificate from the Malta FA doctor and ONLY if ALL the following five (5) conditions are met:

- Afebrile without the use of antipyretics for three (3) days.
- Asymptomatic.
- He has **one** negative nasopharyngeal sample.
- Followed the graduated return to play protocol outlined in Annex 7
- He has resubmitted the medical clearance form (via COMET or Youth FA mechanisms).

b. Disciplinary matters for Competitions and Festivals organised by the Malta FA

For the purposes of these regulations, the following shall signify:

Malta FA COVID officer shall signify such person nominated by the General Secretary of the Malta Football Association to occupy such position;

Club COVID officer shall signify such person nominated by the Football Club to occupy such position;

COVID Testing shall signify **a PCR swab test or a rapid swab test deemed acceptable by the association for the detection of COVID-19;**

1. A registered football player or club staff member is to inform the club of any COVID testing undertaken resulting positive by not later than 24 hours from the result of such testing being notified to him;

2. The registered football player or club staff member shall adhere to all instructions issued by the Health Department and the Malta FA COVID officer, without reservations and to the fullest extent possible;
3. Every club shall ensure that all its registered players or club staff members that have undertaken COVID-19 testing, informs the Malta FA COVID officer within 24 hours from the result of such testing being notified;
4. Every registered player or club staff member that has been deemed positive to COVID-19, shall self-isolate and consequently is not to participate in any football activity, up until such person has been given clearance by the Public Health Authorities to end the self-isolation period;
5. Every club shall ensure that any of its registered players or club staff members that has been deemed positive to COVID-19, shall self-isolate and consequently is not to participate in any football activity, up until the registered player or club staff member has been given clearance by the Public Health Authorities to end the self-isolation period;
6. There shall be disciplinary sanctions imposed according to the above-mentioned regulations on any player, club staff, club official or club who fails to adhere to the foregoing;
7. A player who, on the day of the match, is obliged to self-isolate (whether by law or as instructed by the health authorities) shall be considered, for the purposes of such match, ineligible.

c. Standard Protocols for Stadium Operations

Standard operating protocols for the stadia or pitches used for National Amateur League, Youth League, Women's Football competitions and festivals, and Youth FA competitions and festivals (kindly refer to Annex 9 for Futsal competitions):

Arrival of the teams at the stadium or pitch:

- Arrival of the teams with their own personal transport (not more than 2 persons in every vehicle), use of face masks when there are at least two persons in the vehicle from different households.
- The arrival of the teams at the stadium or pitch must be staggered over time.
- Temperature checks of each individual permitted to enter the area, will be carried out at the entry of the venue. Entry will be refused to any individual either displaying or complaining of symptoms or having a temperature of over 37.2C.
- Teams and their respective staff are only allowed to enter the stadium or pitch 45 minutes from kick-off time. Kindly refer to match-day run-down further below.
- Teams should drop off their bags in a designated area.

Dressing rooms (teams):

- Dressing rooms must always remain closed and any team talks are to be held at the club premises or on the pitch respecting social distancing measures. Everyone must wear a mask in the indoor communal parts of the stadium or pitch.

Dressing rooms (referees):

- Referees will be allowed to make use of at least 2 dressing rooms.
- No showers are allowed (except in the case of referees commuting from Malta to Gozo or vice-versa to officiate a match). Referees must always wear a mask in the dressing room and in communal areas.
- Any referee team talks may be held either on the pitch respecting social distancing measures or in the dressing rooms. Everyone must wear a mask in the dressing rooms and indoor communal parts of the stadium or pitch.

Warm-up:

- Coaches, staff and players of the respective teams should go straight on the pitch to start their warm-up in their designated area.
- Referees shall carry out their warm-up in their designated area

Technical zone/pitch side:

- All persons on pitch side, must always wear a mask throughout the match, unless playing or doing warm-up.

Teams should line up in their respective side of the pitch. There shall be:

- No escort kids.
- No mascots.
- No team photos (photographers position only behind goal).
- No opening production with additional people.
- No handshake.
- No joint formation of the teams.

Half-time:

- Players who play during the first half are only allowed to go into the dressing room, together with the coach at half-time. Players who were not active are to remain outside. This would limit the number to 12.
- This is only allowed in stadiums where there are 2 dressing rooms (1 for each team), and the size of said dressing rooms allows for social distancing.
- Hand sanitization, wearing of masks and strict social distancing is mandatory the moment persons go indoors.
- Restroom facilities will be available for players and staff during half-time.

Post-match:

- Players are allowed to use 1 dressing room for each team after the match for changing one's clothes (if the size of the said dressing room allows for social distancing). Showers are strictly not allowed.

- Hand sanitization, wearing of masks and strict social distancing is mandatory the moment persons go indoors.

Equipment control/gathering for the arrival of the teams:

- Equipment control at dressing room by Assistant Referee where necessary (not in the collection area).
- Players will all be on the pitch and there will be no entry through the players' tunnel/no gathering or joint entry at all.

After the game (Operations):

- Establishment of a second doping control room to separate players of both teams.

Departure teams:

- Spatial and temporal separation of departure, see arrival.

All matches will be played behind closed doors until further notice. It is pertinent to note that for pitches without stands, spectators should not be allowed to watch. However, the association is aware that this is beyond our control since spectators are outside the premises. Nonetheless, it is always essential for spectators outside the premises to follow social distancing measures and wear a mask or visor.

Proposed typical National Amateur League, Women's Football, Youths and Youth FA matches 2020-21 Match-day rundown

Match One		
Time	Location	Activity
Cleaning and Sanitising		
11.00am	Pitch-side Area	Cleaning
11.00am	Sanitary Facilities Area	Cleaning
11.00am	VIP Area	Cleaning
11.00am	VIP Stand	Cleaning
11.00am	Media Area	Cleaning
1.30pm	Pitch-side Area	Sanitising
2.00pm	Sanitary Facilities Area	Sanitising
2.15pm	VIP Area	Sanitising
2.30pm	VIP Stand	Sanitising
2.45pm	Media Area	Sanitising
3.00pm	All Required Areas	Close-off
Countdown to Kick Off		
3.30pm	All Required Areas	Open (VIP Stand at 4.15pm)
3.40pm	Pitch-side	Arrival of Referees
4.15pm	Pitch-side	Arrival of Team A
4.25pm	Pitch-side	Arrival of Team B
4.25pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Referees
4.25pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Team A & Team B
4.45pm	Warm-Up Area	End - Referees
4.55pm	Warm-Up Area	End - Team A & Team B
4.57pm	Pitch	Lined-up - Team A & Team B
4.58pm	Pitch	Enter - Referees
4.59pm	Pitch	Captains' Toss
5.00pm	Pitch	Kick-off
End of First Half	Pitch	Move Pitch-side/ Dressing room area Team A & Team B
End of First Half	Pitch	Move Pitch-side/Dressing rooms Referees and Fourth Official
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 2 mins	Pitch	Enter - Team A & Team B
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 1 min	Pitch	Enter - Referees
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 0 mins	Pitch	Kick-off

End of Second half	Pitch	Move Pitch-side/ Dressing room area Team A & Team B & Depart
End of Second half	Pitch	Move Pitch-side/Dressing rooms Referees and Fourth Official
7.00pm	Pitch-side Area	All Teams and Referees Departed

Match Two		
Time	Location	Activity
Cleaning and Sanitising		
7.15pm	Pitch-side Area	Cleaning
7.15pm	Sanitary Facilities Area	Cleaning
7.15pm	VIP Area	Cleaning
7.15pm	VIP Stand	Cleaning
7.15pm	Media Area	Cleaning
7.25pm	Pitch-side Area	Sanitising
7.35pm	Sanitary Facilities Area	Sanitising
7.40pm	VIP Area	Sanitising
7.45pm	VIP Stand	Sanitising
7.50pm	Media Area	Sanitising
Countdown to Kick Off		
7.15pm	All Required Areas	Open (VIP Stand at 8.15pm)
7.40pm	Pitch-side	Arrival of Referees
8.15pm	Pitch-side	** Arrival of Team A
8.25pm	Pitch-side	** Arrival of Team B
8.25pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Referees
8.25pm	Warm-Up Area	Start - Team A & Team B
8.45pm	Warm-Up Area	End - Referees
8.55pm	Warm-Up Area	End - Team A & Team B
8.57pm	Pitch	Lined-up - Team A & Team B
8.58pm	Pitch	Enter - Referees
8.59pm	Pitch	Captains' Toss
9.00pm	Pitch	Kick-off
End of First Half	Pitch	Move Pitch-side/ Dressing room area Team A & Team B
End of First Half	Pitch	Move Pitch-side/Dressing rooms Referees and Fourth Official
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 2 mins	Pitch	Enter - Team A & Team B
Start of 2nd Half - Minus 1 min	Pitch	Enter - Referees

Start of 2nd Half - Minus 0 mins	Pitch	Kick-off
End of Second half	Pitch	Move Pitch-side/ Dressing room area Team A & Team B & Depart
End of Second half	Pitch	Move Pitch-side/Dressing rooms Referees and Fourth Official
11.15pm	Pitch-side/ Dressing room Area	All Teams and Referees Departed
11.30pm	All Areas	Close-off

It is pertinent to note that when there are back-to-back matches and stands are not being used such as the VIP area, VIP stand, Media area, etc. then the second match can start 45 minutes after the end of the first match.

d. Key points for all clubs

- Each club should decide when it is right for them to return to activity based on their ability to comply with Malta FA guidance; please check any insurance you have in relation to your football activities to ensure it remains in place during the pandemic and if so, you are not breaking any of its terms.
- Clubs must appoint a minimum of one COVID-19 Officer.
- Clubs have a responsibility to ensure that the maximum number of attendees is not exceeded.
- Communicate processes and responsibilities to all coaches and club volunteers – ensure that tasks such as sanitising equipment are assigned.
- Communicate processes to all players and parents/guardians to ensure familiarity with new requirements.
- Hand sanitising facilities to be made available for participants in advance of match.
- For clubs with U18 teams, advise parents that at present, the Malta FA guidance does not allow for spectators at match and therefore they should not gather on the side lines or in the vicinity of the pitch.
- All equipment including balls, cones, goal posts and corner flags to be sanitised before and after use.

- Changing facilities must remain closed however access to toilet facilities should be provided with door handles and toilet flush mechanisms to be regularly sanitised and as a minimum before and after each match.
- Cleaning should be carried out where reasonably practical with single use disposable cleaning equipment such as disposable wipes, or the cleaning material (for example the cloth or sponge) is either placed in a disinfectant solution effective against COVID-19, or it is discarded and not reused; in all cases, the cleaning product used should be effective against COVID-19.
- Social distancing guidance should be adhered to when not on the field of play. Substitute area is to be arranged to allow for social distancing. Where this cannot be accommodated in the technical areas, other arrangements should be made – e.g. use of stands, seats spread out along the side line.
- Use of showers/ice baths is not permitted.
- In relation to First Aid, all efforts should be made to maintain social distancing and allow player to self-treat; where this cannot be achieved please ensure that first aid kits are stocked with appropriate PPE to support with this including gloves and face masks.
- Any additional facilities, for example, gyms, clubs and tuck shops, must comply with the relevant government guidance and/or legislation.

e. Guidance for Coaches

Everyone has a role to play in the safe return to contact sports – it is the personal responsibility of each participant.

All matches to be played without spectators

- Coaches should be familiar with all safety and hygiene arrangements and communicate them to players, other coaches and parents/guardians.
- Coaches should not return to football individually; check with the Club COVID-19 Officer and ensure that the club wishes to re-start coaching and has all the necessary COVID-19 preparations in place.
- Coaches should remind anyone intending to attend the match venue that if they are showing symptoms of COVID-19 infection or have been in contact with someone displaying symptoms or diagnosed with COVID-19 within the last two weeks, they should not attend and should seek medical advice.
- Advise parents that at present, the Malta FA guidance does not allow for spectators at match and therefore they should not gather on the side lines or in the vicinity of the pitch.
- Before each match, you should ask all participants if they have displayed any of the attached symptoms <https://covid19malta.info/>

During matches

Ensure that players comply with the up-to-date guidance at all times including during matches this includes no high fives, handshakes, spitting or clearing of nasal passages.

- Players should bring their own water bottles and maintain social distancing as much as possible during water breaks.
- Drinks should not be shared.
- Ensure all equipment is sanitised prior to match including goal posts and balls.
- Social distancing guidance should be adhered to when not on the field of play. Substitute area to be arranged to allow for social distancing.

Where this cannot be accommodated in the technical area, other arrangements should be made – e.g. use of stands, seats spread out along the side-line.

- No physical contact goal celebrations.
- No handshakes between teams.
- In relation to First Aid – all efforts should be made to maintain social distancing and allow player to self-treat; where this cannot be achieved please ensure that First Aid kits are stocked with appropriate PPE to support with this including gloves and face masks.
- If a player becomes symptomatic during the match, they should be immediately removed from the match and taken home as soon as possible; Public Health guidance on further management of symptoms should be followed.

After matches

- There should be no post-match handshakes.
- Use of showers/ice baths is not permitted.
- No congregating post-match – leave the venue promptly and adhere to social distancing guidelines.

f. Guidance for Players

Everyone has a role to play in the safe return to contact sports – it is the personal responsibility of each participant.

Before matches

- If you have been diagnosed with COVID-19 or are displaying any of the symptoms detailed <https://covid19malta.info/> you must not attend training or matches.
- If a member of your household has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or is displaying these symptoms you must not attend training or matches.
- Do not car share on the way to or from matches with anyone outside your household.
- Practice good hand hygiene always.

During matches

- Some facilities may have one way or parking systems in place; find out what these are in advance and comply with all guidance.
- Practice good hand hygiene; wash/sanitise hands before all activity.
- Refrain from spitting or clearing of nasal passages; if you need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue and put the tissue in the bin and if you do not have a tissue, use the crook of your elbow.
- Ensure that you bring your own water bottle that is clearly recognisable as yours.
- Maintain social distancing at all times when not on the field of play; including in the technical area, on the side-line and during water breaks.
- No physical goal celebrations.
- No handshakes between teams.
- If you suffer an injury, you will be encouraged to self-treat where appropriate; if there is a First Aider or other medical personnel present, they should be equipped with the appropriate PPE to protect themselves and others if they need to compromise social-distancing guidelines to provide medical assistance.
- If you become symptomatic during the match, you should immediately remove yourself from the match and return home as soon as possible; Public Health guidance on further management of symptoms should be followed.

After matches

- No post-match handshakes.
- Use of showers/ice baths is not permitted.
- All used water bottles, tape, strapping etc to be removed from the venue and disposed of by the individual who used them.
- Do not congregate and leave the venue quickly.
- Ensure that social distancing guidance continues to be adhered to.
- Follow any exit systems in place at the venue.
- Wash/sanitise your hands as soon as possible after the match.

Mental and Emotional wellbeing

- For some the experiences over the lockdown period and in relation to the COVID-19 situation may have been very difficult.
- If your mental and emotional wellbeing has been affected as a result of the changes brought about by COVID-19, the Malta FA can help you. You can contact the Malta FA on covid@mfa.com.mt and you will be guided accordingly through the safeguarding and psychology departments. All information will be strictly confidential.

g. Guidance for Parents/Guardians

Everyone has a role to play in the safe return to contact sports – it is the personal responsibility of each participant.

- Each club will have to decide when it is right for them to return based on factors such as the ability to comply with Malta FA guidance; be aware of the protocols and processes within your child's club and what is expected of you and your child and if in doubt, or you are not comfortable about your child(ren) returning to football, there is no pressure to do so.
- Discuss how the return will look with your child to ensure that they are familiar with what will be asked of them.

Before matches

- As we progress through the Malta FA plan, there will be changes in football activity including the introduction of new arrangements and unfamiliar restrictions; please support those who are trying to provide a safe re-introduction to football in line with the guidance and you can do this by following the guidance provided by the Malta FA and also the measures introduced by the club/venue as well as ensuring your child is familiar with what is expected of them.
- Make yourself aware of the measures being taken to provide a safe environment; if you are not happy with the arrangements that have been made, then you should remove your child from that environment and send an email to covid@mfa.com.mt.
- If your child has additional disability or medical needs, please ensure that you have discussed this specifically with the club and coach; you can then agree how/if these needs can be met within current Malta FA guidance.
- As you will undoubtedly already know, young children are more likely to struggle to maintain social distancing; please continue to do your best to help your child recognise what social distancing means, looks and feels like – this could be related to relevant arm spans or standing jumps for example.
- In line with the Malta FA guidance on travel, you or another adult from the family should travel with the child to the venue; consider all other forms of transport before using public transport and no car-sharing with anyone outside your household.
- Currently, spectators are not permitted at matches. This will mean that you will collect your child from the venue after the match.

During matches

- Ensure that your child practices good hand hygiene; wash/sanitise hands before all activity.
- Remind your child that they should refrain from spitting or clearing of nasal passages; if they need to sneeze or cough, do so into a tissue and put the tissue in the bin or use the crook of their elbow.
- Ensure that your child brings their own water bottle that is clearly recognisable.
- Children should maintain social distancing when not on the field of play; including in the technical area, on the side lines and during water breaks.

- Your child should be reminded that there should be no physical contact goal celebrations.
- There will be no handshakes between teams.

After matches

- Do not congregate; collect your child and leave the venue quickly.
- Ensure that social distancing guidance continues to be adhered to.
- Use of showers/ice baths is not permitted.
- All water bottles, tape, strapping etc to be removed from the venue and disposed of by the individual who used them.
- Follow any exit systems in place at the venue.
- Remind your child to wash/sanitise your hands as soon as possible after the match.
- Current guidelines require Players to wash their own playing kit. Please ensure this happens and the kit is returned to the club by the child for the next game.
- If you have any safeguarding concerns, you can access the Malta FA Safeguarding policy including reporting mechanisms here <https://www.mfa.com.mt/downloads/17902/pdf.pdf> (in <https://www.mfa.com.mt/en/the-mfa/themfa/8/statute-and-regulations.htm>) and send an email to safeguarding@mfa.com.mt

h. Guidance for venues in relation to hosting of football matches

Everyone has a role to play in the safe return to contact sports – it is the personal responsibility of each participant.

- All matches to be played without spectators.
- Risk assess match facilities to ensure that guidelines, for example social distancing, good hand hygiene can be adhered to.
- Display signage at the entrance and around the facility to promote good hand hygiene and social distancing. Public Health downloadable signage and resources may be found here: <https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/COVID-19/Pages/resources.aspx>
- Hand sanitising facilities to be made available for participants in advance of match.
- Consider entry and exit procedures i.e. a one-way system with separate drop-off and pick up points may be beneficial if required.
- All equipment should be sanitised before and after each match – this includes goal posts and corner flags.
- Changing facilities must remain closed however access to toilet facilities can be provided with door handles and toilet flush mechanisms to be regularly sanitised and as a minimum before and after each match.
- Cleaning should be carried out where reasonably practical with single use disposable cleaning equipment such as disposable wipes, or the cleaning material (for example the cloth or sponge) is either placed in a disinfectant solution effective against COVID-19, or it is discarded and not reused; in all cases, the cleaning product used should be effective against COVID-19.

- Any additional facilities, for example, gyms, social clubs and cafes, should comply with the relevant government guidance and are not covered by the detail contained in the Malta FA guidelines.

Annex 1: COVID-19 – Club/MA reporting form

1. Contact details

Club / Member Association	
Contact person (<i>for weekly updates</i>)	
Function	
Email	
Mobile	

2. Questionnaire

Has your club held training of the senior team in the past 4 days?	Yes/No – If not, why								
Which other age-groups are holding regular training sessions?	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">U19</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Yes/No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>U17</td> <td>Yes/No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>U15</td> <td>Yes/No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lower age groups</td> <td>Yes/No</td> </tr> </table>	U19	Yes/No	U17	Yes/No	U15	Yes/No	Lower age groups	Yes/No
U19	Yes/No								
U17	Yes/No								
U15	Yes/No								
Lower age groups	Yes/No								
Have you had anyone within the club who tested COVID-19 positive in the past 4 days?	<i>Yes/No- please give details (player/technical staff/committee member, etc.)</i>								
Has anyone within the club been ordered to stay in quarantine in the past 4 days?	<i>Yes/No- please give details (player/technical staff/committee member, etc.)</i>								
Have any of the players or staff travelled in the past week?	<i>Yes/No – if yes, where?</i>								
Please describe the situation with respect to the obligatory annual medical test of players.	<i>How many players have already undergone the medical test? How many remain to be medically examined?</i>								

Please return this questionnaire on a weekly basis to covid@mfa.com.mt.

Annex 2: Attendance Register (including screening)

Register of attendees (pre-populate in advance if possible and one person administers at the session)

Activity: _____ **Location:** _____ **Date:** _____

Arrival time	Depart time	Full name	Phone	Email address	Role i.e. Coach/ Player/ Participant/ Volunteer	Emergency contact name	Emergency contact number	In the previous 14 days, have you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Had any COVID-19 symptoms? • Been in contact with any confirmed/suspected COVID-19 case? • Travelled internationally?

Annex 3: Standard Operating Protocols for Stadium Organisation – Hygiene

1. Inform all persons required for match operations in the stadium about compliance with the basic hygiene measures (hand disinfection, coughing and sneezing hygiene, distance) in accordance with the instructions of the Hygiene Officer.
2. Minimize the time spent in the dressing room before and after the match.
3. Inform players and staff with access to the stadium about the definition of "infection symptoms".
4. Entry attendant regulates access to the stadium for players and compulsory staff.
5. Entrance attendant asks other access persons about Health status and measures body temperature.
6. Keep hand disinfectant (stands) available in front of or in each room if possible.
7. Regular surface disinfection before the arrival of the teams.
8. Leave doors as open as possible and avoid touching the door handles.
9. Food should be prepared by the team cook and brought to the stadium already packed. Do not hire external catering.
10. Exclusive use of personalised drinks bottles.
11. Use of the common rooms (changing rooms, showers) (only in small groups) with guaranteed 2m distance.
12. Showering at home / in the hotel (to avoid steam as a possible conductor of viruses / aerosol generator).
13. Use of the fitness equipment only with disposable gloves, face mask and use of disinfectants before and after – consider closing gym area.
14. Medical department works with mouth protection, hand disinfection and disposable gloves and is responsible for hygiene in the medical premises.
15. Spatial separation and sufficient distance between treatment couches for therapeutic measures, if possible, use separate rooms.
16. Economical use of medical equipment such as ultrasound/shockwave/etc. only after prior and subsequent disinfection.
17. Persons who have contact with several players should pay attention to hygiene and protective measures.
18. IMPORTANT: In the stadium, the public's view of professional football, the teams and players in the current situation will be even greater than before. Exemplary behaviour with regard to hygiene and insulation measures outside the pitch is a must.
19. IMPORTANT: All hygiene and isolation measures serve to ensure that no further measures are necessary on the pitch and that 22 players and 4 referees are active without current infection.

20. Overall, care should be taken to ensure that only those persons from the coaching staff are on the team who are essential for the game. Persons who are not essential for the direct course of the game can be contacted via telephone and video calls.
21. Personnel requirements:
 - Hygiene Officer
 - Increase in cleaning personnel
 - Entry attendant /accreditation system/regulation service
22. Stadium infrastructure requirements
 - 2 separate doping control rooms
 - Isolation room
23. Material requirements
 - Hand disinfectant/stand
 - Surface disinfectants
 - Mouthguard
 - Personal bottles for drinks
24. The individual arrival of the players in their own car should be considered.

Annex 4: Standard Operating Protocols for Stadium Organisation – Media

General Outline

The aim is to protect each individual employee and to ensure that the TV production is as completely separated as possible from the players and staff.

Maximum protection can only be achieved by consistent hygiene, a sense of responsibility and a minimisation of time overlap or spatial proximity. Individual hygiene measures are the most important activities to protect against infection.

All persons working on site must declare their agreement to comply with the hygiene regulations and the necessary health checks.

Awareness of the rules of conduct on hygiene according to the recommendations of public health. Informing all persons required for match operations in the stadium about compliance with basic hygiene measures (hand disinfection, coughing and sneezing hygiene, distance) in accordance with the instructions of the club's Hygiene Officer in coordination with the production manager (PV).

The employees stay in their respective areas (zone 3) exterior of stadium, in the stands area (zone 2) and the interior (zone 1).

From a hygiene point of view, special regulations for the arrival and departure of personnel and technical service providers must be observed:

Entrance attendant regulates access to the stadium for mandatory staff.

Involvement of the Hygiene Officer

Duties of the Hygiene Officer and Delegation from tasks to medical professionals.

Control access of all persons working on site and education about hygiene measures.

Checking the state of health (questioning, temperature measurement) of all those involved in production.

Monitoring of basic hygiene measures (hand hygiene, coughing and sneezing hygiene, distance rules) and checking of hygiene regulations on site during the entire production period.

Right of intervention in the event of infringements against employees working on site. The Hygiene Officer can assign individual tasks to a delegated person with medical expertise.

Collaboration of the Production Manager (PM) with Hygiene Officers or delegates of the club. The PM is responsible for the planning and implementation of the entire production and interface to all those involved in production - and thus the Hygiene Officer or other delegated person is to be introduced to the PM. The Hygiene Officer and the PM should be in constant exchange of information.

Access, control and instruction of individual employees

Every production participant is to undergo a "health check" when entering the stadium and agrees to submit a "health declaration" including compliance with the hygiene regulations (see 1.). Access is only granted after a health check.

Each operator completes a questionnaire (yes/no) describing possible symptoms of COVID-19 and confirms the information by signing:

1. Fever in the last 14 days?
2. Coughing in the last 14 days?
3. Throat or aching limbs in the last 14 days?
4. Breathing problems in the last 14 days?
5. Restriction in sense of taste and smell in the last 14 days?
6. Contact with a COVID-19 patient in the last 14 days?
7. Past 14 days in a corona risk area?
8. Already tested (including when and how)?

If one or more questions are answered with "Yes", further decision regarding access and permission of the activity by Hygiene Officers.

Provision of protective equipment (by media personnel):

1. Mouth and nose protector
2. Disinfectants (unless otherwise provided)

Provision of hygiene material (at toilet and broadcast van):

1. Installation of mobile washbasins in several easily accessible places
2. Soap
3. Disposable folding towels
4. Alcohol based hand disinfectant

Additional explanations of the safety measures and hygiene rules

In addition to the most important safety requirements, the following points must also be observed:

1. Avoidance of private conversations, as these tempt to reduce the distance requirements.
2. Mandatory consultations should be held in a small circle, short and at the greatest speaking distance.
3. Leave doors as open as possible and avoid touching the door handles.
4. Press lift buttons with your elbow or use stairs.
5. Mouth and nose protectors: must be worn after entering the stadium grounds and in all areas. Observe correct putting on and taking off as well as carrying (complete covering of mouth and nose).
6. Hand disinfection: Basically, before and after every use of jointly used equipment (focus on broadcast technology). Hand disinfectants must be rubbed into dry hands and must not be subsequently rinsed with water.

Work in the stadium in compliance with hygiene regulations

General

The time spent on site is reduced to the bare minimum (see Planning and Dispatching).

- In order to avoid crowds of people of any kind no catering provided on site. The press room should remain closed.
- The production van is closed and only for PM and accessible to the Hygiene Officers of the club.

Precautions at workstations and work equipment

- General measures (e.g. cameras, Plexiglas, microphones, headsets)
 1. Observe the minimum distance for camera positions and on the media stand.
 2. Use of plexiglass partitions by the service providers, where other spatial equalisation is not possible.
 3. If possible, establishment of an open access (open doors and avoidance of barriers and thus unnecessary contact with hands).
 4. Protection of microphones and headsets.
- Cleaning and disinfection (before/after installation) of equipment
 1. Cleaning of equipment and surfaces with a surface disinfectant before the start of production, after assembly and disassembly on the production day by the service provider.
 2. Recurring cleaning if necessary.
- Posting of the hygiene plan at media-relevant locations in the stadium.

Personnel are considered separately according to functions and access to zone/working area:

Zone 1 -

- Persons working in zone 1 should only work on their equipment or equipment for a certain period of time according to strict necessity and schedule.
- Walking distances should be reduced and planned as short as possible, no crossing of the players' tunnel.
- The rules of social distance are strictly necessary here and unnecessary conversations are to be avoided.

Zone 2 & 3 -

- In the stands and in the outside area, the rules of distance must be strictly observed, and no unnecessary discussions must be held.
- Broadcast van.
- Significant reduction in the number of workstations on the broadcast van to comply with the distance regulation.
- Closed rooms are to be ventilated three to four times a day for ten minutes each time, ideally the production takes place with open doors.
- Cleaning of the surfaces of the equipment and the door handles with a surface disinfectant before the start of production and after installation on the production day by the service provider.

Media activities after the match

- Here the current security measures apply with distance of 2m and possible plexiglass partitions.

Other rules

- Meetings of the production team is subject to the current hygiene rules, the distance rules. Arrangements should be made preferably by e-mail, telephone, or video calls.
- Behaviour during breaks: Avoid meetings and spend your break alone if possible, this also applies to the intake of meals. If possible, do not stay in closed rooms.

Supplementary provisions

- The precautionary principle means that everyone must take care of his or her own personal protection.
- The principle of solidarity means that everyone is responsible for and can protect the OTHERS.
- These recommendations can be changed at short notice.

Annex 5: Guidelines for procedure in case of positive test

Doctor

- I. Informing the Public Health department and the Malta FA medical department.
- II. If testing of a player with symptoms is still to be done, this should be preferably done as a "drive in" method in a car.
- III. Immediate isolation of the affected player.
- IV. Organisation of the testing of the documented contact persons.
- V. Observation and clinical testing of symptoms in the team.
- VI. Calming down and informing the team about the situation (no panic, strategic orientation of the team, control of hygiene measures, etc.)

Players

- I. In case of symptoms of illness, call the team doctor immediately and inform public health on 111.
- II. Immediately initiate a self-isolation in the sense of a quarantine in order not to infect family members and team members.
- III. In case of illness, all physically strenuous activities should be avoided.
- IV. In case of a positive test without illness, an individual training program can be carried out at home.

Clubs

- I. No automatic reporting of a positive case to the press since the focus is on disease verification and clear documentation of previous transmission routes.
- II. Telephone consultation to ensure that players isolate.
- III. Ensure a sufficiently large squad for the season finale.

Annex 6: Personnel Requirements

Dynamic Personnel Requirement - Zone 1



	Preparation	Preparation	Preparation	Event start	Kick-off	Match end	Event end
Group	0730 h	1000 h	1500 h	1530 h	1700 h	1900 h	2000 h
Zone 1 Total	5	10	49	114	114	114	27
Players				22	22	22	4
Substitutes				18	18	18	
Technical staff			8	30	30	30	8
Referees + Observer				5	5	5	
Additional technical seats				0	0	0	
Ball boys				4	4	0	
Medical Staff + Ambulance				6	6	6	
Doping Control				0	0	2	2
Media + Media Officer				16	16	16	
Police			4	4	4	4	
Hygiene personnel/cleaning staff				2	2	2	2
Groundskeeper	3	3	3	0	0	0	3
Chief Security + Venue Manager	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Ballboys		0	0	0	0	0	0
MFA Officials		5	5	5	5	5	5

Dynamic Personnel Requirement - Zone 2



	Preparation	Preparation	Preparation	Event start	Kick-off	Match end	Event end
Group	0730 h	1000 h	1500 h	1530 h	1700 h	1900 h	2000 h
Zone 2 Total	7	7	26	86	86	86	13
Security				4	4	4	4
Catering			0	0	0	0	0
MFA Officials and Ex-Co			15	15	15	15	0
Referees observer				1	1	1	
Additional technical seats				4	4	4	
PA / Scoreboard			1	1	1	1	
Medical Staff				1	1	1	
Main Gate Attendant	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Media + Media Officer				16	16	16	
Police			3	3	3	3	
Hygiene personnel/cleaning staff				2	2	2	2
Doping Control				2	2	2	0
Admin staff	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Club committee members				30	30	30	0
Venue Director	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Dynamic Personnel Requirement – Zone 3



Group	Preparation 0730 h	Preparation 1000 h	Preparation 1500 h	Event start 1530 h	Kick-off 1700 h	Match end 1900 h	Event end 2000 h
Zone 3 Total	4	4	9	9	9	9	9
Security + Attendants	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Media			5	5	5	5	5



Static Personnel Requirements



**Zone 1
Pitch**

Players	22
Substitutes	18
Technical staff	30
Referees + Observer	5
Additional technical seats	0
Ball boys	4
Medical Staff + Ambulance	6
Doping Control	0
Media + Media Officer	16
Police	4
Hygiene personnel/cleaning staff	2
Groundskeeper	0
Chief Security + Venue Manager	2
Ballboys	0
MFA Officials	5
TOTAL	114



**Zone 2
Stands**

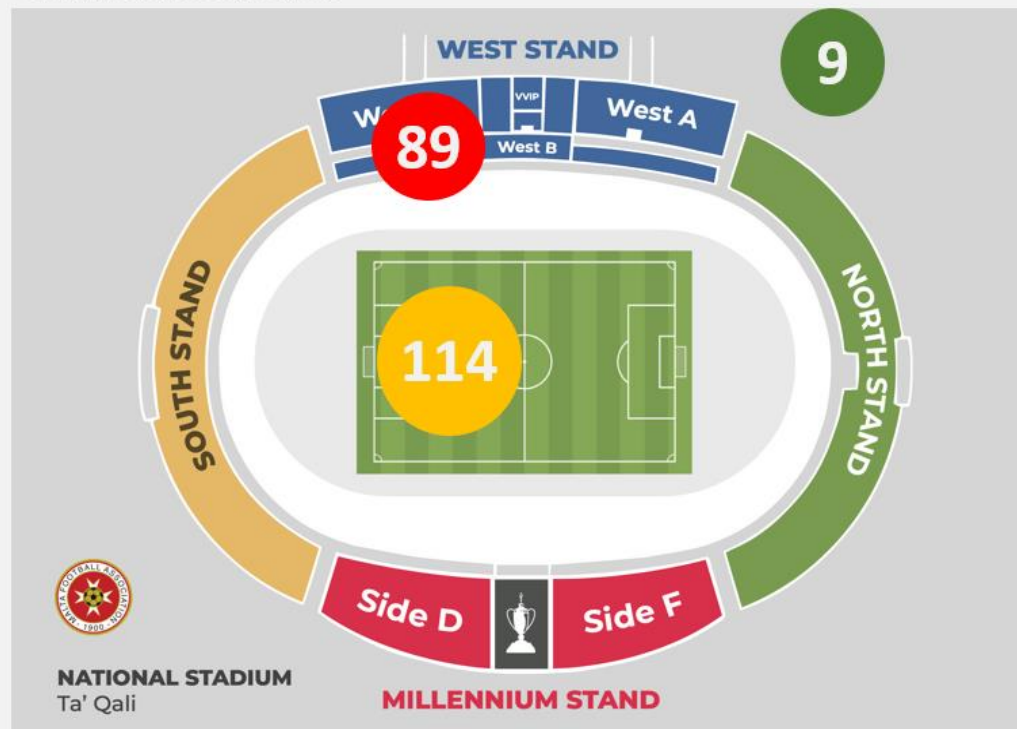
Security	4
Catering	0
MFA Officials and Ex-Co	15
Referees observer	1
Additional technical seats	4
PA / Scoreboard	1
Medical Staff	1
Main Gate Attendant	1
Media + Media Officer	16
Police	3
Hygiene personnel/cleaning staff	2
Doping Control	2
Admin staff	5
Club committee members	30
Venue Director	1
TOTAL	86



**Zone 3
Exterior**

Security + Attendants	4
Media	5
TOTAL	9

Graphic Representation



- ZONE 1 —
- ZONE 2 —
- ZONE 3 —

Annex 7: Return to Play Protocol following Positive COVID-19 Test

Summary - COVID-19 Infection

COVID-19 is a predominantly respiratory virus, but there is substantial evidence to suggest it may also affect the cardiovascular system.

Most cases resolve without requiring hospitalisation.

Any player with a suspected case of COVID-19 should be isolated.

Players with a positive test for COVID-19, or a strong suspicion of infection should be re-introduced to physical activity gradually.

Symptoms must be resolved, and medical clearance given before return to play.

Any worsening of symptoms during the rehabilitation phase requires removal from activity and re-assessment.

If symptoms persist, then players may need to be referred for specialist intervention. Any players requiring hospitalisation should seek specialist help before attempting return to sport and are not to use these guidelines.

Introduction

These guidelines reflect the current best practice and are based largely on recommendations / expert opinion at the time of publication. We acknowledge there are gaps in current scientific knowledge however these guidelines are intended as a tool for health professionals involved at all levels of Maltese football as a means for to effectively manage return to sport following a positive test for COVID-19 safely.

“If you have tested COVID-19 positive you must undergo mandatory quarantine for a number of days as advised by the Public Health Authorities”

These guidelines aim to provide a framework return to football, for those who have suffered a mild or asymptomatic illness, while respecting the guidelines issued by Public Health Malta.

What to know if you have tested positive for COVID-19:

[https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/resources/What You Need To Know If You Have Tested Positive To Covid-19.pdf](https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/resources/What%20You%20Need%20To%20Know%20If%20You%20Have%20Tested%20Positive%20To%20Covid-19.pdf)

What does being infected with COVID-19 mean?

COVID-19 infection may lead to symptoms such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, diarrhoea or vomiting, loss of taste and/or smell, tiredness, sore throat, runny nose/blocked nose, headache and muscle pain. In some cases, the virus may lead to a subclinical myocarditis and arrhythmias, even in the absence of symptoms.

“7% of all patients with proven COVID-19 infection show evidence of myocardial injury”

How to deal with a player with a positive COVID-19 test?

When dealing with a player who has a proven COVID-19 infection, they must firstly and foremost follow the national guidelines issued by Public Health.

As much as possible they should be encouraged to maintain a balanced diet and keep hydrated and to monitor any worsening of symptoms.

A repeat swab test will be arranged by Public Health after 14 days of quarantine AND at least 3 days of showing no symptoms. After **one** negative swab test in the absence of symptoms a player may be considered to be recovered.

Before Return to play:

Any player who has recovered from COVID-19 infection may follow the protocol outlined above which reintroduces physical activity in a controlled manner. Some key considerations which are required before the player starts the RTP protocol are highlighted below:

- Before starting the RTP protocol, the player must be able to complete their regular daily activities and be able to walk 500m without excessive fatigue and breathlessness.
- The player must have been symptom-free for at least 7 days.
- The player should be off all medication before starting.
- Medical Assessment should be undertaken before starting the protocol. This should be done in conjunction with the Malta FA medical department.

“In the non-professional setting return to work or school takes priority”

Graduated return to play

Following the recovery of a player from COVID-19, the initial management of should involve a medical assessment with input from the Malta FA medical department, this may require referral to a specialist for further investigation, depending on the results of any investigations done. As a minimum requirement the medical assessment should include, a full history and examination, ECG and PEFr testing.

Once players have been cleared to begin their return to play, they should be encouraged to monitor the following and report to the club medical staff:

- Resting heart rate.
- Rated perceived exertion.
- Wellness questionnaire - covering sleep, stress, fatigue and muscle soreness.
- Injury-Psychological Readiness to Return to Sport.

A healthy diet and good hydration are encouraged.

A graduated return to play protocol is outlined in the next page, with the occurrence of symptoms mandating a return to the previous stage after 24hrs of rest.

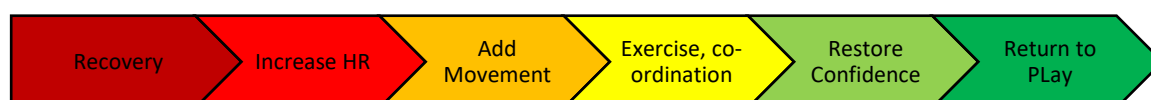
There should be at least 24hrs between each step.

Any player who has persistent symptoms should be referred to a specialist for further investigations.

Graduated return to play protocol

Stage	Exercise Allowed	% HR	Duration
Stage 1 Quarantine 14 days	Activities of daily living	No training	Minimum 14 days
STAGE 2 – LIGHT EXERCISE 2 days	Walking, light jogging, swimming, stationary cycling	<70 %	<15min
STAGE 3A – FOOTBALL SPECIFIC EXERCISE 1 day	Simple movement activities e.g. running drills NO Resistance training	<80%	<30min
STAGE 3B- FOOTBALL SPECIFIC EXERCISE 1 Day	Progression to more complex training Increased intensity Co-ordination and attention, e.g. passing, change of direction, shooting, tactics	<80%	<45min
STAGE 4- LIMITED DURATION TRAINING 2 days	Restore Confidence and assess functional skills. Normal training activities limited to 1 hour	<80%	<60min
STAGE 5 – FULL CONTACT TRAINING Earliest Day 21	Normal training activities		
STAGE 6 – RETURN TO PLAY	Player rehabilitated, may continue physical conditioning to reach match fitness		

Aims:



References:

- Public Health Malta Quarantine guidelines:
<https://deputyprimeminister.gov.mt/en/health-promotion/covid-19/Documents/resources/What You Need To Know If You Have Tested Positive To Covid-19.pdf>

- Does H. & Cardim N. - Return to play after COVID-19: a sport cardiologist's view, British Journal of Sports Medicine Published Online First: 07 May 2020. doi: 10.1136/bjsports-2020-102482
- Elliott N, Martin R, Heron N, et al - Infographic. Graduated return to play guidance following COVID-19 infection, British Journal of Sports Medicine Published Online First: 22 June 2020. doi: 10.1136/bjsports-2020-102637

Annex 8: Club Covid Officer

Each club will appoint a Club Covid Officer. The role of this person is to remain familiar with the most up to date Malta FA, Sport Malta and Public Health Guidance and ensure that this is communicated throughout club officials, administrators, volunteers, coaches, players and parents/ guardians.

Like Safeguarding, ensuring the adherence to the Malta FA protocols is the responsibility of **everyone** and the role of the Club Covid Officer is to oversee this.

Key responsibilities:

- Ensure coaches, staff and volunteers are aware and adhere to COVID-19 guidance and protocols while at training & during matches and have access to the appropriate equipment. (sanitiser/disinfectant/gloves etc.)
- Co-ordinate attendance record keeping for each training session and match, regardless of venue. This information should be retained by the club and destroyed after 30 days. (unless required for another lawful purpose as per GDPR).
- Ensure that the club only uses facilities that allow Malta FA, SportMalta and Public Health guidance to be met. This includes social distancing and good hand hygiene practice.
- Keep updated with all new SportMalta and Public Health guidance and Malta FA guidelines on COVID-19; update and communicate club plans, as necessary.
- Carrying out a risk assessment will help support the decision to return to football activity.
- Clubs have a responsibility to ensure that the maximum number of attendees is not exceeded.
- Report regularly on the state of health within the respective club and the ongoing activity (such as training, friendly matches, etc.).

Annex 9: Standard Operating Protocols for Futsal Competitions

Technical area

1. The technical team shall remain within the designated technical area throughout the duration of the whole game and shall thus not switch sides during half-time.
2. Game 1 teams shall be allocated the traditional technical zone, whilst Game 2 teams shall be allocated a different technical zone (Adapted within the spectators stand).
3. In either of the cases, within the technical area, social distancing is to be observed with technical staff and substitutes observing social distance principles.
4. All persons who will be on the match sheet, must always wear a mask throughout the match, unless playing or doing warm-up.

Use of dressing rooms

3. No use of dressing rooms shall be allowed for any of teams, and thus clubs shall ensure that team talks are organised beforehand, whilst players are to arrive within the facility kitted.
4. Players or whosoever, will not be allowed to use any place within the premises to change into their sporting kits, thus any arrangements are to be done beforehand.

Bibs

5. There shall be no exchange of bibs between players or whosoever. This shall also apply to the flying keeper principle, whereby entry/exit (substitution of the flying keeper) from the field of play shall be done without the exchange of the bib.

Change of balls

6. Frequent change of futsal balls is to be organised; in any case the referee shall ensure that the ball is changed at least every 15 minutes.

Miscellaneous

7. In an effort to ensure social distancing and reduction of exposure, the following personnel will be allowed within the facility:

i. All persons listed within the match sheet ii. The members of the club committee involved in the particular match iii. The referee observer iv. FMA officials v. National team & MFA technical centre personnel vi. MFA executive committee members

No other person shall be admitted within the facility. These persons are to continuously observe social distancing.

8. When the referee signals the end of the game, the players and members related to that particular game are to immediately leave the facility and without delay.

9. Players, staff and committee members of the second game are to only be admitted within the facility, once the disinfection process is done and everyone from the previous game has left the premises, and in any case not before they are so allowed to enter the facility by the referee.