

French universities to reopen, face masks 'recommended'

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French universities will reopen in September after nearly six months but students will be encouraged to wear face masks, the ministry of higher education announced Thursday.

Universities in France closed on March 16 as part of the new coronavirus restrictions. Schools gradually reopened on May 11 but the country's 74 universities have remained shuttered.

"The wearing of masks in classrooms is highly recommended," the ministry said, asking universities and leading higher education institutions "to let in a greater number of students while respecting health regulations."

"We are working in tandem with these establishments to put in place measures to protect teachers, personnel and students from the virus," Higher Education Minister Frederique Vidal said.

She said [social distancing](#) would be observed with a meter maintained between each student in classrooms. Face masks will be mandatory in libraries.

Closed spaces will be aired twice a day and [pedestrian traffic](#) will be regulated in busy areas, it said.

There has been a rise in COVID-19 cases in France in recent weeks but the current daily numbers of deaths and hospitalisations are far lower than they were earlier.

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