

UPDATED SAFE MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

On 14 December 2021, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce (MTF) announced that Vaccination-Differentiated Safe Management Measures (VDS) will be expanded to more settings, as Singapore anticipates a potential surge in local Omicron cases. This document provides the conditions under which religious organisations (ROs) are permitted to carry out activities in places of worship from 1 February 2022.

2. The key changes affecting religious activities from 1 February 2022 are:
 - a. VDS is required for congregational and other worship services, and solemnizations, irrespective of the number of participants.
 - b. All unmasked performers who are singing and/or playing wind instruments as part of a live performance for congregational or worship services can obtain their required negative COVID-19 test result either through an MOH-approved test provider or a self-administered ART test.

Annex A summarises the changes that will take effect from 1 February 2022.

RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Worship Services

3. **From 1 February 2022, ROs must implement VDS¹ for all congregational and other worship services at places of worship, which can involve up to 1000 worshippers at a time**, subject to SMMs and the safe capacity of the premises. This cap excludes religious and supporting workers, who must be fully vaccinated.
4. **Worshippers have to be segregated into zones holding no more than 100 worshippers each.**
 - a. As there should be no mingling of individuals across zones, each zone must be completely separated from another by either a physical solid partition (at least 1.8m high if not floor-to-ceiling, from wall-to-wall); or at least 2 metres physical spacing demarcated by continuous physical barriers (e.g. rope barrier).
 - b. Worshippers can be seated in groups of no more than 5 persons, with 1 metre safe distancing between each group.
 - c. There must either be a separate ingress/egress for each zone or staggered entrance/exit timings so that worshippers from different zones do not mix with one another during entry/exit.

¹ For more information, refer to MOH's COVID-19 phase advisory (<https://www.moh.gov.sg/covid-19-phase-advisory>).

- d. ROs must also take reasonable steps to ensure that worshippers do not cross the physical barrier (where applicable) or enter another zone that they are not assigned to.
5. Children who are 12 years old and below, i.e. born in or after the year 2010², who are unvaccinated, may be exempted from VDS and can be included in a group of up to 5 persons for congregational and worship services³ as long as all the children in the group are from the same household.
6. ROs should continue to observe the following SMMs for worship services:
- a. Keep worship services to **as short a duration as possible**. There must be no reception or mingling between worshippers, before, during or after each worship service.
 - b. All persons present (except children below 6 years of age) must **wear a face mask at all times**.⁴ Face shields are not permitted as substitutes for face masks. Young children are still strongly encouraged to use a mask, especially when they are in a group setting (e.g. attending worship service).
 - c. Singing by worshippers with masks on is not permitted.
 - d. **Live performance elements are permitted during the worship service at places of worship**, with the following SMMs (see Annex B for details).
 - i. A maximum of 50 persons are allowed to be involved in/support the conduct of the worship service. This includes persons on-stage, backstage or off-stage.
 - ii. **Up to 20 persons who are involved in the conduct of the worship service may unmask** at any given time, of which **up to 20 persons can be unmasked for singing or playing of wind/brass instruments**. Persons should only unmask when required to perform their duties.

² A grace period has been extended to children born in December 2009 to allow them sufficient time to get fully vaccinated. Children born in 2009 who will turn 13 in 2022 will need to be fully vaccinated to enter venues and participate in activities with VDS from 1 March 2022. Please refer to the MOH Press Release on 2 December 2021 for more details.

³ The cap on the number of unvaccinated children aged 12 years and below participating in activities and events with VDS has been removed across all settings from 1 January 2022.

⁴ Children 12 years and below, as well as persons who have health conditions that may result in breathing or other medical difficulties when a mask is worn for a prolonged period of time, may wear a face shield in lieu of a face mask.

- iii. **Persons unmasked for singing or playing of wind/brass instruments must obtain a negative ART result on a Pre-Event Test, taken within 24 hours before the end of the live performance. From 1 February 2022, unmasked performers may obtain a negative result on an ART test, conducted by an MOH-approved test provider or self-administered. A self-administered test must be supervised onsite or virtually by the RO's live performance organiser. ROs are to keep records of unmasked singers/persons playing wind/brass instruments and their ART test results.**
- iv. There must be at least a 2 metres setback between persons involved in the conduct of live performance elements and worshippers.
- v. Minimise the duration of live performance elements for congregational and other worship services.
- vi. Masked singing will be treated in the same way as unmasked singing (i.e. masked singers will count towards the maximum number allowed to unmask for singing and/or playing of wind instruments).
- vii. **Static performers (i.e. in the same position throughout the live performance) may be in groups of 5 persons**
 - i. At least 1 metre safe distance from other groups if there are no persons singing and/or playing wind/brass instruments
 - ii. At least 2 metres safe distance from other groups if there are persons singing and/or playing wind/brass instruments
- e. There should be **no sharing of prayer and other common items** (e.g. holy books, passing of offertory baskets, prayer mats) as this increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Worshippers are to bring along their personal prayer items instead, where required.
- f. Places of worship with reduced air circulation (e.g. enclosed prayer spaces, air-conditioned worship hall) should, where possible, open doors and windows to naturally **ventilate the space after each use**⁵.

⁵ Refer to: <https://www.nea.gov.sg/media/news/news/index/good-hygiene-and-improved-ventilation-to-further-reduce-the-risk-of-covid-19-transmission>

Private Worship

7. Given the prevailing permissible group size of 5 for social gatherings, **ROs can continue to allow one group of up to 5 persons (regardless of vaccination status) at any one time to conduct private worship in the place of worship.**

- a. Private worshippers must remain masked at all times.
- b. Private worshippers may interact with a religious worker who is fully vaccinated, with at least 1 metre safe distancing between the group and the religious worker.

8. There should be no mingling between the private worship group and persons involved in worship services and other religious activities, which are subject to VDS.

Marriage Solemnizations

9. ROs may continue to use places of worship to conduct marriage solemnizations **involving up to 1000 attendees (including bride and groom) with VDS.**

10. These activities are subject to SMMs and the safe distancing capacity of the solemnization premises.⁶

Funerals

11. **Funerals, funeral wakes or funeral processions held during or before the burial or cremation of the deceased will not be subject to VDS and can involve not more than 30 attendees at any time, and in groups of no more than 5 persons (excluding religious and supporting workers, whose numbers should be kept to a minimum), subject to SMMs and the safe capacity of the premises.**

- a. There must not be any reception with food and drinks.
- b. ROs must also comply with prevailing SMMs listed on MTI's website⁷.

12. Funerary-related activities at places of worship may continue to involve live instrumental music (non-wind/brass) with the necessary SMMs in place (see Annex C). Persons involved in/supporting the live instrumental music segment should be kept to the minimum. No other performances (e.g. singing, dance, variety act) are allowed.

13. Visits to columbaria at places of worship **for up to 5 persons will be allowed without VDS.** Visits should be kept as short as possible.

⁶ Refer to SMMs for Marriage Solemnizations at:
<https://www.gobusiness.gov.sg/safemanagement/sector/>

⁷ Refer to SMMs for Funeral Events at: <https://www.gobusiness.gov.sg/safemanagement/sector/>

Other Religious Activities

14. **Religious rites that are not part of a worship service and other religious activities (e.g. pastoral services) will be subject to VDS and can involve up to 50 persons** (excluding the religious and supporting workers whose number should be kept to a minimum).⁸

15. **Religious classes can be held for up to 50 persons, inclusive of teachers and support staff, without VDS.**⁹ ROs are strongly encouraged to conduct religious classes online.

16. Religious and supporting workers (including volunteers) conducting in-person religious classes for children aged 12 and below more frequently than once a month are required to undergo Fast and Easy Testing (FET).

- a. The mandatory FET¹⁰ will be conducted once a week (7 days), regardless of vaccination status.
- b. **ROs are required to notify MCCY through the CPRO website of (i) the names of the persons involved in the conduct of the class; and (ii) appointed supervisor to oversee the FET, before conducting the religious class.** More information on the FET guidelines is available on the CPRO website.

Recording and Broadcast of Religious Services and Prayers

17. ROs can continue to support the religious needs of their communities via remote means such as recording and broadcast of religious services and prayers.

- a. **ROs can have up to 50 persons on-location for these productions, of which up to 20 persons can be unmasked at any one time.** All 20 unmasked performers may sing or play instruments which require intentional expulsion of air at any given time, if all performers and crew are fully vaccinated.
- b. Masked singing will be treated in the same way as unmasked singing (i.e. masked singers will count towards the maximum number allowed to unmask for singing and/or playing of wind instruments).

⁸ Subject to SMMs appropriate to the nature of the religious activity.

⁹ Teachers/staff/volunteers must be fully vaccinated and there must be safe distancing among the students in groups comprising no more than 5 persons each. As a best practice, we encourage a greater separation of 2 metres between groups of students attending religious classes.

¹⁰ The Government will be funding the cost of antigen rapid test (ART) kits for FET till 31 March 2022. Beyond that, employers and businesses should be prepared to factor in testing costs as part of their normal business operations.

- c. **Static performers (i.e. in the same position throughout the live performance) involved in this production may be in groups of 5 persons with**
- i. At least 1 metre safe distance from other groups if there are no persons singing and/or playing wind/brass instruments
 - ii. At least 2 metres safe distance from other groups if there are persons singing and/or playing wind/brass instruments
- d. The time spent on-location for this activity should be kept as short as possible. The production team must also put in place safe management measures, including no-cross deployment between locations, and thorough cleaning of technical equipment. There shall be no audience.

SAFE CAPACITY IN THE PLACE OF WORSHIP

18. All the permitted religious activities (i.e. excluding congregational and other worship services) can continue to take place concurrently, subject to a **total premises cap¹¹ of 1000 persons**, SMMs and the safe distancing capacity of the premises – and only if these activities can be conducted safely at separate locations within the place of worship, with no interaction between worshippers while entering, exiting or while in the premises, and where the activities also comply with the activity SMMs.

DEPLOYMENT OF MANPOWER

19. ROs should **primarily engage their religious workers and staff to support the permitted religious activities but can deploy volunteers to support if necessary**. The number of personnel involved in conducting each permitted activity should be kept to a minimum.

20. **Up to 50% of employees who are able to work from home can be at the workplace at any point in time, provided they are fully vaccinated**. Social gatherings at the workplace will continue to be disallowed. Religious workers and administrative staff should comply with prevailing workplace SMMs stipulated by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM).¹² Restrictions against cross-deployment¹³ across worksites remain in place.

¹¹ This total cap is the combined number of persons participating in the various permitted activities (excluding congregational and other worship services) on the premises at any one time, excluding religious and supporting workers. Respective caps on the individual activities will continue to apply.

¹² For more information, please refer to MOM's advisory at <https://www.mom.gov.sg/covid-19>.

¹³ If cross-deployment cannot be avoided (e.g. due to the nature of the job), additional safeguards must be taken to minimise the risk of cross-infection (e.g. systems are in place to ensure no direct contact with the cross-deployed personnel). ROs will be required to demonstrate that cross-deployment or interaction between employees is critical for business operations, when requested by MOM or MCCY.

TRACETOGETHER AND SAFEENTRY

21. TraceTogether-only SafeEntry, where the TraceTogether App or Token is required for SafeEntry check-ins, is **required at all venues that are required to implement SafeEntry**. ROs must make the necessary preparations to accept check-ins by the TraceTogether App or Token. ROs can refer to www.safeentry.gov.sg for more information.

MANDATORY SUBMISSION OF SAFE MANAGEMENT PLANS (SMP)

22. ROs must acknowledge through the CPRO website the new conditions for religious activities imposed before commencing the activities from **1 February 2022**. The detailed requirements and format for submitting the acknowledgement form can be found at www.cpro.gov.sg.

23. MCCY reserves the right to suspend a RO's activities if there are gaps in the SMP submitted and until the necessary rectifications are made. ROs are responsible for the implementation of SMMs and action could be taken for lapses and breaches. Should there be any confirmed COVID-19 cases linked to a RO's premises or place of worship, the premises may be closed for a period of time as determined by the authorities.

WORKING TOGETHER TOWARDS A COVID-19 RESILIENT SINGAPORE

24. We thank ROs for their continued vigilance and understanding during this Transition Phase. This set of measures serves as important safeguards to prepare ourselves for a potential surge of local Omicron cases. Hence, we seek the continued cooperation of the ROs and their followers to exercise social responsibility and ensuring that religious activities can continue safely. MCCY will continue to work with our ROs to ensure a COVID-19 resilient environment for religious activities.

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH

For more information and FAQs on COVID-19 for the religious sector, please visit www.cpro.gov.sg or contact MCCY's Crisis Preparedness for Religious Organisations Programme Office (cpro@mccy.gov.sg).

**SUMMARY OF KEY CHANGES IN SMMS FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES
IN THE TRANSITION PHASE**

Religious Activity	Measures for the Transition Phase	
	From 22 November 2021	From 1 February 2022
Permissible Group Size	Group size of up to 5 persons	No change
Congregational and Worship Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 1000 worshippers, in zones holding no more than 100 worshippers each, if all worshippers, religious and supporting workers are vaccinated Reduce safe distance requirement between zones to 2 metres (from 3 metres) 	Up to 1000 worshippers, in zones holding no more than 100 worshippers each. All worshippers, religious and supporting workers are vaccinated.
Live performance elements during congregational and other worship services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Static performers on stage may be in groups of 5 persons</u>, with no need to maintain safe distance within the group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject to VDS Unmasked performers may obtain a negative result on an ART test, conducted by an MOH-approved test provider or self-administered. A self-administered test must be supervised onsite or virtually by the RO's live performance organiser. ROs are to keep records of unmasked singers/persons playing wind/brass instruments and their ART test results.

Religious Activity	Measures for the Transition Phase	
	From 22 November 2021	From 1 February 2022
Other Religious Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious rites limited to <u>5 worshippers</u> at any one time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Religious rites limited to <u>50 worshippers</u> at any one time, in groups of 5 Religious classes can be held for up to 50 persons, inclusive of teachers and support staff, without VDS. Other activities are subject to VDS.
Marriage Solemnizations	<p>Wedding couples or individuals from the Wedding Party who (i) undergo an Antigen-Rapid Test (ART) minimally supervised by the venue operator; or (ii) have a valid Pre-Event Test (PET) will be allowed the following provisions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wedding couple will be allowed to unmask throughout the wedding solemnization while maintaining a safe distance of 2 metres from other attendees except for the Wedding Party; Up to 10 individuals from the Wedding Party will be allowed to sing and unmask at the wedding solemnization, while maintaining a safe distance of 2 metres from these other attendees when these individuals are unmasked. 	Subject to VDS (refer to SMMs for Marriage Solemnizations)

Religious Activity	Measures for the Transition Phase	
	From 22 November 2021	From 1 February 2022
Recording and Broadcasting Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Static performers on stage may be in groups of <u>5 persons</u>, with no need to maintain safe distance within the group. 	No change

SAFE MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES INVOLVING LIVE PERFORMANCE ELEMENTS

Parameter	Safe Management Measures
Persons involved in/supporting ¹⁴ live performance elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not more than 50 persons (whether on-stage, backstage or off-stage). • A maximum of 50 persons are allowed to be involved in/support the conduct of the worship service. This includes persons on-stage, backstage or off-stage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No more than 20 persons may be unmasked at any given time (subject to safe distancing capacity of the premises) ○ 20 persons can be unmasked for singing or playing of wind/brass instruments. • Additionally, persons unmasked for singing or playing of wind/brass instruments must undergo ART¹⁵ with results valid through the duration of the service for which they are unmasked for this purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As a best practice, singers should try not to position themselves directly opposite each other and are encouraged to sing away from each other ○ Persons playing wind or brass instruments should ensure that these instruments are fully intact, and refrain from engaging in practice sessions involving only parts of the instrument (e.g. mouthpiece buzzing, playing with just the lead pipe) to prevent droplet transmission ○ Liquids from instruments (i.e. condensation and saliva) should be collected and disposed of hygienically after the practice session or worship service/religious rite • Masked singing will be treated in the same way as unmasked singing (i.e. masked singers will count towards the maximum number allowed to unmask for singing and/or playing of wind instruments)

¹⁴ E.g. audio crew or videographer.

¹⁵ The ART must be (i) conducted by an MOH-approved test provider or (ii) conducted by a self-administered test that is supervised onsite or virtually by the religious organisation's live performance organiser.

Parameter	Safe Management Measures		
Safe distance		Static persons (i.e. in the same position throughout the live performance / digital production)	Persons who move on stage or on camera during the live performance / digital production
	Not singing or playing wind/brass instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performers may be in groups of the prevailing social group size with no need to maintain safe distance between group members. • However, the group of persons must maintain at least 1 metre safe distance from the next group on stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They do not need to maintain a minimum safe distance from others, but should keep close contact with others to as short a duration as possible
	Singing or playing wind/brass instruments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performers may be in groups of the prevailing social group size with no need to maintain safe distance between group members. • However, the group of persons must maintain at least 2 metres safe distance from the next group on stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They must maintain 2 metres safe distance from others.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Default 1 metre safe distance applies otherwise 		

Parameter	Safe Management Measures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least a 2 metres setback between persons involved in the conduct of live performance elements and worshippers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the stage height is at a higher vantage point in relation to the worshippers, it is encouraged for the safe distance to be more than 2 metres as the trajectory of droplet projection will likely be further ○ Premises without a clearly defined stage area should have floor markings to mark out the 2 metres boundary
Responses from worshippers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worshippers are to remain masked (includes when giving verbal responses) • All other safe management measures for worshippers continue to apply
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sharing of equipment (e.g. musical instruments, microphones, props) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If unavoidable, equipment should be cleaned/ disinfected before handled or used by others • All technical equipment (e.g. camera, lights) should be cleaned at the beginning and end of each session, and between each user

A summary of the allowances and requirements for activities involving unmasking for singing and/or playing of wind/brass instruments are outlined below for easy reference.

Activity	Total number of persons allowed	Total number of persons allowed to unmask	Total number of persons allowed to unmask for singing and/or playing of wind /brass instruments	Requirements
Live performance elements as part of worship service	50	20	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All involved in the live performance must be vaccinated. b. Those unmasked for singing and/or playing of wind/brass instruments must have a valid ART through the performance.
Rehearsals for live performance elements	50	20	20	All involved in the rehearsal for the live performance must be vaccinated.
Recording and broadcasting of religious services and prayers	50	20	20	All involved in the recording and broadcasting service must be vaccinated.

**SAFE MANAGEMENT MEASURES FOR
RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES INVOLVING LIVE INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC**

Parameter	Safe Management Measures
Persons involved in/supporting ¹⁶ the live instrumental music segment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep to the minimum required • Persons must be masked at all times
Safe distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Default 1 metre safe distance applies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Static persons (i.e. in the same position throughout the live performance) involved in the conduct of live instrumental music may be in groups of 5 persons with at least 1 metre safe distance from other groups.
Responses from attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendees are to remain masked and can give spoken responses (no singing)
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No sharing of equipment (e.g. musical instruments, microphones, props) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If unavoidable, equipment should be cleaned/ disinfected before handled or used by others • All technical equipment (e.g. camera, lights) should be cleaned at the beginning and end of each session, and between each user

¹⁶ E.g. audio crew or videographer.