

Safety Note 76

1st Edition, May 2020

COVID19 RISK-REDUCTION MEASURES ("SOCIAL DISTANCING")

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Introduction

The University is implementing a phased return to work on campus in accordance with government regulations and advice. This Safety Note provides guidance to local managers and staff on how they should tailor local arrangements to reduce the risk of transmission of the virus which causes Covid19. This Safety Note should be considered in addition to guidance in Safety Note 75 *Working in Very Low-Occupancy Buildings During the Coronavirus Pandemic*. Consult the local HSC for advice on interpreting and applying University guidance in specific circumstances.

Fundamentals

- Work which can be undertaken effectively at home should **continue to be done from home** unless there is a compelling reason to move it onto campus, and this has been approved. Colleagues who need essential access to campus should ask their Head of School or Function. The process for approval is described [here](#).
- Work which must be done on site should be arranged, where possible, so that different people or teams **use premises at different times or on different days** to avoid interaction
- Staff should remain familiar with current UK government advice on typical Covid19 symptoms and ensure that if they develop these symptoms they **do not come on to campus**, even if the symptoms are mild.

- While on campus staff should follow government advice to **frequently wash hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and **avoid touching the face**
- Staff should **use a clean tissue** when they cough or sneeze and dispose of it promptly.
- Interactions can be made lower risk by **increasing the distance** between people (preferably over 2 metres) and **reducing the time** people are close (preferably less than 15 minutes) - brief passing interactions are low risk

Public Health Advice

There are no reasonably practical measures which can reduce the risk of transmission to zero. Where staff have been advised by UK public health bodies to undertake a test, self-isolate or shield then the University expects staff to follow those instructions and inform their line managers. Self-isolation and shielding cannot be achieved on University property (other than in residential spaces).

Risk Assessment

It is not appropriate to generate a single Covid19 risk assessment for the entire University. Assessment of the risk and establishment of control measures must happen within Schools and Functions and be tailored to local circumstances.

In documenting this there is no general requirement to replace all existing risk assessment documents before resuming work activities on campus. However, those in control of work activities are responsible for **reviewing** the existing risk assessment to take account of Covid19. Confirm the current risk assessment is suitable and sufficient. If not, replace it with a new risk assessment, or make a note of additional control measures required locally during the pandemic. These may need to be task-specific, but in some cases one note would suffice for a single floor or a whole building.

Consider the guidance in this Safety Note during the risk assessment review and before seeking approval to resume work activities on campus. Consult the local HSC if you need advice on how to interpret and apply this guidance in specific circumstances. HSCs can also help co-ordinate Covid19 control measures across a building. HSCs may in turn seek professional H&S advice from their Liaison Advisor within H&S Services.

Useful UK Government guidance, including practical examples for different environments such as laboratories, vehicles, offices and workshops, is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

After resuming work, refer to this Safety Note again and continue to consult the local HSC as you monitor the implementation of arrangements in your local workplace - see below.

Avoiding Interaction

Consider if it is reasonably practicable to avoid human interaction. For example, consider if services previously delivered in person can be modified to allow completion online or through the post. Aim to move meetings and training sessions online where possible. Explore designating lab, meeting, office and storage spaces for use by specified teams only, to prevent unnecessary mixing (consultation with Strategy & Space Management would be required). Consider adjustments to working times (eg bringing in different teams on different days or at different times of day) to avoid concurrent occupation of workspaces. Consider introducing access controls, signage and telephone helplines to prevent casual visitors walking into workplaces where their presence is not essential.

Only those given explicit authorisation to come onto campus to work should visit buildings. Other colleagues should not be encouraged to visit or be assisted to access workspaces - even on a temporary or occasional basis. Casual visitors should not be admitted.

Encourage even those authorised to be on campus to dial-in to meetings from their desks where this will be effective in reducing interaction.

Lifts should be reserved for those with a genuine need arising from disability (including invisible disabilities), injury, illness or a manual handling task. Other staff should use stairs. Only one person at a time should ride within the lift car and all staff should show courtesy allowing others ample space to exit before entering themselves. For lift buttons see below.

While brief passing encounters are already lower risk, consider if one-way systems are practicable to avoid passing in corridors or in stairways. In the event of activation of a fire alarm all areas should be used as required by the fire escape strategy for that building, regardless of any one-way restrictions brought in for Covid19. No changes may be made which would impact on emergency escape routes without explicit approval from the Fire Safety Advisor.

Reducing the Density or Duration of Interactions

Where sharing of workspaces is necessary consider if larger meeting spaces or offices are available and can be used to reduce density. Keep gatherings, especially larger gatherings, as short as possible. Corridors should not be used for casual gatherings or conversations. Consider re-spacing workstations, or re-locating people among existing workstations. Consider removing chairs from unused workstations to discourage casual use. Tape off alternate rows of fixed seating or other areas to encourage people to stay at a distance from each other.

Where teams provide direct services to visitors explore options to alter services to minimise in-person visitors. If some in-person service remains necessary it should be by prior appointment if possible, to minimise congestion, density and loitering. Where the potential for other measures has been exhausted, employ signage and floor markings to maintain social distancing between casual visitors. For screens see below.

Consider toilets and devise local arrangements which reduce interactions. Depending on physical layout this may include knock-before-entry, taping off cubicles or designating different toilets to different teams (consultation with Strategy & Space Management would be required).

Signs & Physical Control Measures

Install signage to communicate building-specific arrangements. Consider if the installation of clear or opaque screens or panels will provide effective isolation or protection from inadvertent sneezes, coughs, etc. However, this should only be considered after other options for avoiding and reducing interaction have been exhausted and where residual risk is assessed to be significant. Try to ensure good ventilation using windows and doors (on keeping fire doors open see below). Investigate concerns about poor performance of ventilation systems. Estates can assist with these matters and can be contacted on ext 7000.

Control of Risk from Surfaces

Current official advice emphasises that symptomatic people remain the highest source of virus. However, transmission from virus on surfaces (fomites) is possible if people subsequently transfer virus to their own

mouth, nose or eyes. Remind every worker that handwashing is a demonstrably-effective control measure against transmission of Covid19. Ensure access to suitable handwashing facilities as part of preparing for resumption of work activities - do not resume without them. To encourage their use encourage the use of pre-task barrier cream and post-wash moisturiser cream wherever possible. To replenish soap and other washroom supplies contact the Estates Helpdesk on ext 7000.

Explore options for resetting printers and similar equipment to allow online control, avoiding the need for multiple people to use shared touchscreens. Review the need for use of number pads, keys, whiteboard markers, calculators, hole-punches, tool sets or other shared physical objects. Consider labelling items and putting them on personal issue. Where light switches are identified as a significant problem explore with Estates if options such as motions sensors may be practicable. Consider fixing doors open to minimise contact with door handles. Some technical solutions exist to hold doors open with release on alarm. Further advice is available from the Fire Safety Advisor. No fire doors should be wedged, tied or propped open without explicit approval from the Fire Safety Advisor.

Concerns arising from contact with lift buttons can be managed through handwashing. Where local circumstances mean this does not provide adequate risk control line managers should ensure lift-users have access to additional controls such as disposable gloves, anti-viral wipes or hand sanitiser, on personal issue, supplies permitting. Line managers should seek advice from HSCs before responding to such requests.

Kitchens can remain open for those who need them. However, staff should be encouraged to minimise use of them and bring in drinks and food, where necessary in insulated containers. Staff should be encouraged to picnic on their own blankets in outdoor spaces for their meal breaks, while still paying attention to hand hygiene and social distancing.

Eating or drinking can create aerosols and these activities should be discouraged in shared spaces (including lifts), where practically possible, and should not occur during business meetings. Where appropriate, establish a clear desk policy to reduce potential contamination by food or drinks, to reduce risks to cleaning colleagues and to help them implement cleaning regimes effectively.

Ensure those waste bins already provided are readily available for disposal of tissues. Monitor them and contact the appropriate services in good time to avoid overspill.

Post

Postal Services will store incoming items at Whiteknights House and deliver by arrangement, seeking to deliver during least busy times. Items for despatch can be taken to Postal Services by appointment only. No casual drop-in is currently permitted.

University Drivers

Where possible swapping and sharing of vehicles should be minimised. Where it cannot be avoided and residual concern remains line managers should ensure drivers have access to additional controls such as disposable gloves, anti-viral wipes or hand sanitiser, on personal or per vehicle issue, supplies permitting.

Enhanced Cleaning

Changes have already been made to cleaning regimes and protocols to target potential fomites. This enhanced cleaning may not be visible as cleaners will mostly work out of office hours to minimise non-essential contact with other staff. Protocols have been devised for additional cleaning in the event of positive Covid19 test results for workers known to have come on site.

Where a manager becomes aware of a positive test result for a person who has been working on campus that manager should immediately ensure the sick person's office or workstation is locked or taped off (if this is possible) to protect cleaners due to visit on the following morning. The line manager should also contact Cleaning Services to discuss further cleaning options. Cleaning Services will apply agreed protocols, which in some cases may involve maintaining the restriction on the area and a deliberate delay of 72 hours before cleaning.

Other Behavioural Controls

All staff are expected to minimise the concern they cause among colleagues by maintaining high levels of courtesy. Refrain from gathering for casual conversations in common areas, especially where this would require others to pass close to speakers. Generally try to refrain from talking (including into mobile phones) while moving through corridors and common areas, other than saying normal social greetings.

Monitoring & Review and Reporting Concerns

Staff should report social distancing issues or concerns with their line managers. As always, anyone may also use the incident notification online form [here](#) to report a health or safety concern, near miss or dangerous occurrence. Typically incidents notified through this process are dealt with by the local HSC in the first instance, supported where necessary by Health & Safety Services.

Managers should respond appropriately to concerns, seeking advice from the local HSC if needed. They should also proactively monitor the implementation of social distancing arrangements.

Local Health & Safety Committees should review social distancing within their routine committee meetings.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Hand Sanitiser

The University will continue to supply PPE to protect against exposure to hazardous substances, as identified in existing risk assessments. However, it currently has no plans to supply PPE (including masks) solely for protection against the Covid19 virus, unless a risk assessment has specifically identified that staff are at particular risk of infection arising directly from work activities.

Similarly, the University currently has no plans to supply hand sanitiser, except where risk assessment has identified this as an appropriate control measure. Generally, where handwashing facilities are available hand sanitiser will not be provided.

Staff may use their own personal face coverings and hand sanitiser, as long as these do not compromise other control measures provided for health & safety. Care and attention should be given to using and disposing of these appropriately.

Measures Not Being Implemented

The University has no plans to measure body temperatures or use heat-sensitive cameras.

Managers are not expected to ask staff about their symptoms, except within the routine context of staff reporting in sick. Information about individual ill-health will typically not be publicised - the University's commitment to preserving confidentiality means there will normally be restrictions on what information can be shared, even when managers respond with action around absence, cleaning and social distancing.

Where handwashing facilities already exist there is no plan to change air-blowing dryers or paper-towel dispensers.

The University will keep its response to COVID19 and this guidance under review.