

COVID-19

Risk Assessment Guidance for Heads of Department / Directors of Service

1. Purpose

The University's strategy is to protect the safety, health and wellbeing of its staff and students when responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and when planning for the return and resumption of work on campus. This guidance is designed to support departments in the risk assessment process when planning to manage the risk from COVID-19.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Head of Department / Director of Service

It is already established in the University's Health and Safety Management System that Heads of Department / Directors of Service are responsible for ensuring suitable risk assessments are conducted. In line with this requirement, it is the Head of Department's / Directors of Service's responsibility to ensure a COVID-19 risk assessment is produced covering all the department's working environments and work activities for staff returning to campus. It must be communicated effectively to relevant staff and kept under frequent review.

The responsibility for completion of the risk assessment can be delegated to a suitably trained person(s) in the Department e.g. Departmental Safety Co-ordinator but must be signed off by the Head of Department / Director of Service as responsible person.

2.2 Personal Responsibility

All staff have a personal responsibility for adhering to government and public health guidance regarding travelling, social distancing, hand hygiene, cough etiquette, face coverings and arranging for COVID-19 testing through the NHS if they develop symptoms of the virus.

They also have a responsibility to follow the University's arrangements for health and safety which includes arrangements to manage the risk of COVID-19 transmission by complying with the significant findings of the risk assessment

3. Approval for Return to Campus

Staff return to campus is by application only and is subject to approval. Details of the processes to be followed by managers and individual members of staff, together with the relevant forms and guidance, are available on the [Return & Resume](#) and [Safety, Health and Wellbeing](#) websites. COVID-19 Risk Assessments must be prepared prior to return to campus, as part of the approvals process.

4. COVID-19 Risk Assessment

The COVID-19 virus presents a hazard with the potential for people developing a high temperature, a new continuous cough or loss or change of taste/smell. Symptoms can be mild for most people, severe for others and for some people it can result in death. Because there is little immunity in the worldwide population and there is currently no vaccine, the virus has spread rapidly across the world.

The risk of contracting the virus occurs when the virus is spread through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. This is thought to be the main way the infection is transmitted between people and is most likely to happen when there is close contact (within 2 metres) with an infected person. It is likely that the risk of infection transmission increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person. There are two routes by which COVID-19 can be spread:

- 1) Directly: from close contact with an infected person (within 2 metres) where respiratory secretions can enter the eyes, mouth, nose or airways. This risk increases the longer someone has close contact with an infected person.
- 2) Indirectly: by touching a surface, object or the hand of an infected person that has been contaminated with respiratory secretions and then touching own mouth, nose or eyes.

The COVID-19 Risk Assessment must identify the risks posed by the virus, and the control measures that are required to eliminate or reduce the risk.

Using the principles used for assessing any workplace hazard, undertaking a COVID-19 Risk Assessment is a matter of:

- identifying what work activity or situations might cause transmission of the virus;
- thinking about who could be at risk;
- deciding how likely it is that someone could be exposed;
- acting to remove the activity or situation, or if this isn't possible, control the risk.

Guidance on Undertaking a General Risk assessment can be found on the [SHaW webpages](#). Only those trained in the [Principles and Practice of Risk Assessment](#) should conduct or sign off a risk assessment.

6.1 Preparatory Visit Risk Assessment

In advance of an entire staff or student group returning, it is advisable for a small number of the team to make a preparatory visit for the purposes of:

- assessing what changes need to be introduced to make the department's work environment COVID-19 safe when more staff and students return;
- familiarising themselves with changes in communal areas to make them COVID-19 safe;
- checking or maintaining equipment, checking condition of chemicals and other supplies such as personal protective equipment;
- producing a detailed COVID-19 Risk Assessment.

To assist departments a '[Preparatory Visit Risk Assessment](#)' template has been produced to ensure the safety of staff attending campus for short duration preparatory visits. This template should be amended by departments, as appropriate to their areas of responsibility.

6.2 Return to Campus Risk Assessment

Prior to returning to campus, a full COVID-19 Risk Assessment must be conducted. A '[Covid-19 Risk Assessment](#)' template is available for departments to adapt accordingly. Guidelines that were used to prepare the template risk assessment are outlined in Appendix 1, which provides a checklist of some of the measures that are expected to be implemented. The template risk assessment should be reviewed and amended by the member of staff conducting the risk assessment to ensure that it is appropriate to the area for which the assessment is being conducted.

When identifying what needs to be included in the risk assessment, the HSE has developed a risk assessment document with useful points to consider.

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/assets/docs/risk-assessment.pdf>

Additional information can also be obtained from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) webpages on working safely during the coronavirus outbreak

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/working-safely/index.htm>.

5. COVID-19 Return to Campus Induction

Before staff return they must receive sufficient information, instruction or training about the changes introduced to protect them, and what they are expected to do to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This can be included as part of a return to campus induction or briefing. The induction should include the significant findings of the risk assessment, identifying the main hazards and associated risks and the control measures that are planned to control the risks associated with COVID-19. Guidance on preparing a [Return to Campus Induction](#) can be found on the SHaW webpages.

APPENDIX 1. COVID-19 Guidelines

These guidelines should be used to inform a COVID-19 Risk Assessment being undertaken by a returning research group, or other University group to return to campus.

Addressing the below guidelines will provide the Head of Department / Director of Service with assurance that the Return to Campus Risk Assessment minimises the risk from COVID-19 to as low as reasonably practicable.

Personal hygiene, social behaviour and cleaning regimes

- Do not attend work if displaying COVID-19 symptoms.
- Maintain social distancing at all times. Keep a 1 metre distance from others.
- Wash hands frequently. Avoid touching face and mouth with hands. Follow cough and sneeze etiquette.
- Cleaning of locations out with of Estates Services remit, e.g. equipment, kitchen areas.

Access and egress

- A sign in/out procedure has been established at the work area.
- Limited building opening hours (08:00-18:00).
- ID Badges are worn by staff while at work.

Emergency arrangements

- Fire evacuation plans has been reviewed.
- Emergency procedures have been reviewed, including personal emergency evacuation plans (PEEPs).
- First Aid Needs Assessment has been reviewed.
- First Aid boxes are adequately supplied including appropriate PPE.

Building and layout changes

- The maximum occupancy of each lab or occupied space is known. Social/physical distancing for labs or occupied space has been assessed and marked up on plans.
- Occupied areas, including laboratory space have been re-configured to facilitate social/physical distancing measures, this may include adding barriers to separate staff, circulation routes/one-way systems, floor markings and signage.

Operational changes

- Protocols are in place to clean occupied areas and remove waste.
- Protocols are in place for handling and storing deliveries to each research or returning group.
- Protocols are in place for managing contractor visits.
- Where equipment is shared, a shared equipment protocol is in place, to include timetabling of use and cleaning procedures.
- Supplies of consumables (soap, paper towels, hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes) can be sustained into the foreseeable future.
- Signage for labroom occupancy numbers is clearly marked on room doors.
- Staff are given information and instruction on any changes to their role, work tasks, processes and team operations.
- PPE is available to as necessary.
- Mandatory PPE for the working environment is available for others who may require it, e.g. Estates staff.
- A lone working risk assessment is in place (where required).
- Hand washing guidance is clearly displayed in toilet and sink areas.
- Travel to work arrangements are established for research staff, including avoidance of peak public transport hours.

Safeguarding and Compliance Workstream

- Rotas and working arrangements minimise transmission e.g. start times and breaks are staggered or research-groups are arranged to work in small 'bubbles'.

Monitoring and Compliance

- Weekly monitoring by the returning group is completed to ensure the workplace is COVID-19 safe to complete.
- Assurance visits by SHaW to ensure the workplace is COVID-19 safe.

Training and Induction Declaration

- Return to Campus Agreements are established with staff and their line manager.
- Staff are provided with Information Leaflet for Staff Returning to the University.
- COVID-19 Health Self-Assessments are completed for returning researchers and staff.
- A local induction is in place.
- A process is in place to log the completed Return to Campus Induction and Fire Safety Awareness training, by returning staff.