

The University of Manchester: COVID-19 Pandemic Response

Framework for Activity on Campus: January to April 2021

1. Introduction

This updates The Return to Campus Framework issued in August 2020 and describes the principles and assumptions underlying the operating framework for the period January 2021 to April 2021 in the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

The UK government has defined the COVID-19 pandemic stages as follows and the University has mapped re-opening to the level of COVID-19 pandemic as defined in government's COVID-19 Alert status:

COVID-19 Alert Levels

5	As level 4 and there is a material risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed	Social distancing levels increase from today's level
4	A COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation; transmission is high or rising exponentially	Current social distancing measures and restrictions.
3	A COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation	Gradual relaxation of restrictions and social distancing measures
2	COVID-19 is present in the UK, but the number of cases and transmission is low	No or minimal social distancing measures; enhanced testing, tracing, monitoring and screening.
1	COVID-19 is not known to be present in the UK	Routine international monitoring

UK Government COVID-19 Alert
Level

Actions

University Road-Map For Campus Reopening

5	As level 4 and there is a material risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed	Essential services on campus only: estates, student residences, security, Covid-19 research, animal facilities.
4	A COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation; transmission is high or rising exponentially	Reopening of scientific research laboratories
3	A COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation	Preparation for online teaching, small-group teaching, practical teaching, some office-based activity
2	COVID-19 is present in the UK, but the number of cases and transmission is low	Return of all/most activity with minimal social distancing
1	COVID-19 is not known to be present in the UK	Normal functioning – no social distancing

UK Government COVID-19 Alert
Level

University Activity Permitted/Likely

The UK is currently under COVID Alert Level 4. More recently, the government has defined local Restriction Tiers ([LINK](#)) as follows:

Tier 1	Medium Alert
Tier 2	High Alert
Tier 3	Very High Alert

Across all tiers, everyone:

- must [wear a face covering](#) in most indoor public settings, unless they have an exemption
- should follow the [rules on meeting others safely](#)
- should attend school or college as normal, unless they are self-isolating. **Schools, universities, colleges and early years settings remain open in all tiers**
- should walk or cycle where possible, plan ahead and avoid busy times and routes when travelling
- must follow the gathering limits at their tier except for in specific settings and circumstances. These [exemptions are detailed at the end of this guidance](#)

In addition to the local Tiers, the Department for Education released its guidance for universities based on SAGE advice ([LINK](#)). The key additional elements relevant particularly to delivery of teaching, include guidance on government's tiered restrictions ([COVID-19 contain framework: a guide for local decision-makers](#)) as they apply to higher education:

- *Tier 1 (default position): HE providers are expected to provide blended learning, with face-to-face tuition, following the provisions of this guidance, and public health guidance, including, for example, the appropriate use of face coverings.*
- *Tier 2 (fall-back position): HE providers should move to an increased level of online learning where possible. Providers should prioritise the continuation of face-to-face provision based on their own risk assessment. We expect that, in the majority of cases, this will be for those courses where it is most beneficial (for example, clinical or practical learning and research)*
- *Tier 3 (where stricter measures are needed): HE providers should increase the level of online learning to retain face-to-face provision for priority courses (for example, clinical and medical courses), and in as limited number of situations as possible. Students should follow government guidance published as part of any additional restrictions applied locally, including where this says that students should remain in their current accommodation and not return their family home or other residential accommodation to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus through travel. In these circumstances, providers should support students to do so by keeping services for students, such as university libraries and catering facilities, open.*
- *Tier 4 (last resort): We expect the majority of provision to be online, with buildings open for essential workers only. This should include the continuation of essential research*

The University will regularly review our tier position in discussion with the Director of Public Health for Manchester and will communicate any changes to staff and students.

Considered and controlled activity on campus is necessary to ensure we do so in a safe manner, managing any risks associated with the pandemic and ensuring compliance with all relevant statutory requirements.

2. Assumptions

- a. COVID-19 epidemic is likely to remain in the population for at least further 6 months and still represents a risk to the health of our students and staff.
- b. The UK Government Alert Status is unlikely to drop below Level 3 in the foreseeable future.
- c. The UK Government Local Restriction Tiers may vary which may require rapid adjustments to activity on the campus.
- d. Under **current conditions**, the Government has removed restrictions for individuals classified as vulnerable or extremely vulnerable from 1st of August, 2020. However, with agreement of DPH, we have implemented stay at home advice for extremely vulnerable staff during Tier 3 Local restrictions in Manchester. Under tier 2 we would review this.
- e. Government advice on use of public transport has also been modified to support use of transport where there are no alternatives.

3. Implications

- a. Significant 'COVID-secure' measures are likely to be necessary for the foreseeable future.
- b. There will be no full or unrestricted return to campus; any activity on the campus will need to be carefully managed.
- c. Optimal social distancing (2m) measures will result in a significant reduction of capacity (<30%) on the campus but remain the most safe option. In addition, face coverings can reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission further and will be mandated for all public indoor and multiuser spaces, except for those with a recognised exemption.
- d. Priority will need to be given to business-critical activity (see below).
- e. Other activities onsite **where possible and safe** are necessary to ensure a 'vital' campus environment
- f. Under **current conditions**, all staff **except those who are extremely vulnerable**, who need to return to campus should be able to return to campus with appropriate allowances for protecting the vulnerable staff in the work place.

Staff and students will need to be provided with guidance on vulnerability in relation to COVID-19 and asked to self-declare if the nature of their work or interactions on the campus require measures beyond those already in place to make the campus COVID-secure. ('COVID-Secure Measures').

- g. We will need to continue monitor local and national restrictions as well COVID-19 infections on the campus and adjust activity as necessary.

4. Principles for Return to Campus

- a. Safety of students and staff is paramount
- b. Decisions and actions will be informed by current UK Government and Health and Safety Executive guidance, and scientific evidence.
- c. Consensus agreement on business-critical activity for prioritisation
- d. Reopening and return to activity subject to thorough risk assessments
- e. Transparent and impartial decision-making

5. Business Critical Activity - Priority

- a. Teaching & Learning
 - Preparation and delivery of online teaching
 - Delivery of small group face-to-face teaching, including practical classes
 - Library, computer clusters and study spaces
- b. Research & Innovation
 - Prioritised areas – already in place
 - Other areas not prioritised previously
 - Library front-facing and specialist support teams, and collections
 - Increased capacity if possible (longer opening hours, weekend opening)
- c. Student services and student experience
- d. Some student administrative services (notably card collection)
 - Occupational Health Service
 - Counselling and Mental Health Service
 - Disability Advisory and Support Service
 - Advice and Response and some School Support team provision
 - Residences

- e. Campus core services
 - Estates and Facilities
 - Safety Services
 - Library
 - Office-based activity
 - Campus presence required
 - Necessary for wellbeing

6. Other activity - if possible

- a. Office-based activity that can be done remotely but some campus presence is desirable if possible in keeping with the COVID-secure measures and health and safety.

7. COVID-Secure Measures

- a. Baseline and ongoing risk assessments
- b. Communication: electronic and paper-based guidance, videos, area specific induction
- c. Social distancing
 - 2ms with defined exceptions where reduced to 1m but with face coverings. Common areas with signage and floor markings.
 - Reduced capacity to be managed by rota working (locally determined).
 - Work 'bubbles': working in small defined and non-overlapping teams- to be locally determined and unlikely to be possible with students or in some work areas.
 - Buildings with defined entrance/exits, one-way systems, signage etc.
- d. Face coverings (re-usable) in indoor public spaces (mandatory)
- e. Face coverings (disposable) in multi-user laboratories (mandatory)
- f. Hand sanitisers near common touch points and individual areas
- g. Adequate handwashing facilities
- h. Sanitisation

- Enhanced cleaning
 - common areas (managed by Estates and Facilities)
 - local area (managed locally)
 - personal work areas, equipment etc

8. Managing Staff Return

a. Business critical activities

These should be managed and coordinated locally within each area.

In Teaching and Learning, once timetabling is complete, staff who need to come in can be informed by the Faculty T&L teams.

In Research and Innovation, the existing processes can be extended to permit researchers who have not restarted activity to return.

In centrally provided Student Services staff who need to come in will be informed by the relevant Division Head. For School-based support teams the Head of School Operations will inform relevant staff.

In Core Services, each service should extend current processes to allow staff to return as appropriate to the service.

b. Other activity

These largely involve office-based academic and professional services activity. This needs to be managed at Faculty/School/Directorate level using the criteria outlined in the general and Faculty level guidance, and in keeping with COVID-secure measures.

9. Managing Compliance

- a. High level of communication with regular reminders about expectations of behaviour and conduct on the campus during this period to reduce risk of COVID-19 on the campus.
- b. Agreed protocols for managing non-compliance for staff and students.