University of Manchester COVID Secure Ecosystem

Estates and Facilities Ventilation Frequently Asked Questions

A good and adequate supply of fresh air ventilation to indoor spaces is part of the university’s wider campus COVID-secure risk management strategy to keep everyone safe. Ventilation is a COVID control measure that must be used in a combination with other controls such as hand hygiene, enhanced cleaning, social distancing and face coverings.

The University continues to comply with the advice provided by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) on ‘ventilation and air conditioning in the transmission reduction and protection of occupants due to the risk of COVID infection.

These Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) will summarise the actions taken by the Directorate of Estates and Facilities (E&F) and provide advice on how you can support keeping everyone safe in respect of ventilation.

| Qu. | Question | Answer |
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| 1 | Who provides health and safety guidance in the UK for reducing the risk of the virus spreading through ventilation systems? | The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) sets the strategy, policy and legal framework for health and safety in Great Britain.  Within the HSE guidelines, additional guidance from the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE) is referenced, where the workplace has complex ventilation systems and recirculation units (e.g. air conditioning units, fan coils etc.).  <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation/index.htm> |
| 2 | How do I know if the ventilation system in my building is safe in reducing the spread of the virus? | University buildings meet Building Regulations requirements for the supply of adequate fresh air.  This can be by natural means such as opening windows or by mechanical systems comprising central ventilation plant, providing ventilation for maximum occupancy in habitable spaces/room. |
| 3 | What practical adjustments have been made to building ventilation and air-conditioning systems to reduce the risk of spread by airborne virus? | The University has evaluated building ventilation systems at the whole building / facility level and optimised and adjusted systems so that buildings are ready for occupation in line with HSE guidance including implementing measures such as :  **Central Ventilation Plant**   * Adjusting ventilation recirculation systems so air is no longer taken from a room and conditioned (e.g. heated/cooled/filtered) via central air-handling plant and returned to the room, but operates on providing full fresh air (heated/cooled/filtered) to the room only. * Adjusting air heat recovery units (thermal wheels/heat exchangers) to either be off or by-pass where appropriate to avoid recirculating air from rooms. * Increasing ventilation operating periods by starting earlier and shutting off later by two hours. This will provide purge and flush of the air in spaces they serve when not in occupation. * Adjusting central toilet extract ventilation systems to run continuously.   **Local / Room Dedicated Air-Conditioning Equipment**   * Based on current HSE guidance, recirculation units (including air conditioning units), can remain in operation, as long as there is an adequate supply of fresh air and ventilation. Therefore, local air conditioning systems (heat pumps and fan coils units) remain unchanged. |
| 4 | What can I do to reduce the risk of the airborne virus spread | Good ventilation will help reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus, and in naturally ventilated buildings occupants should;   * Where possible, consider ways to maintain and increase the supply of fresh air, for example, by opening windows and doors (unless fire doors) during occupation. * In some instances, (e.g. interview rooms, teaching areas etc.) natural ventilation can be further enhanced by airing the space as frequently as possible. Where safe to do so, occupants should open vents and windows for 15 minutes prior to and after occupation/use. |
| 5 | How will ventilation and air conditioning systems be effected by different strains of the virus | The current advice by the HSE is for the coronavirus (COVID-19) only and for reducing the risk of spread by the supply of adequate fresh air and ventilation. At this moment in time the HSE guidance does not distinguish COVID strains or provide alternative control measures for various strains of the coronavirus. |
| 6 | How do I raise particular concerns in the space I work? | E&F is working with Faculties and School Safety Managers to ensure actions undertaken are understood, and to communicate any local measures required by occupants. I.e. opening windows where possible to increase ventilation, potential thermal comfort issues and undertaking specific local risk assessments.  Any windows opened must be closed properly by the end of the session/working day for security and safety reasons, particularly during inclement weather or high winds.  Where required, Faculty and School Safety Managers will review local risks and concerns outside the control of the E&F, alongside the Government’s coronavirus guidelines.  Where Faculty and School Safety Managers are concerned over the ventilation within a specific space they will escalate this to E&F who will incorporate this into the ongoing ventilation monitoring program. |
| 7 | What is the University doing to check my space is adequately ventilated | All spaces comply with Building Regulations if the ventilation systems are utilised as designed. The E&F team have implemented a ventilation survey and monitoring program to check that mechanical and natural ventilation continues to work as designed and users are implementing guidance provided. This includes desktop risk assessments using a published tool (Cambridge University Airborne tool) supported by physical surveys of rooms.  Where there are known restrictions on ventilation due to the nature of spaces use (preserving artefacts for example) mobile air purifiers may be used. |