**Guidance on Risk Assessment for COVID-19**

This guidance is based on the DfE’s Higher Education COVID-19 Operational [Guidance](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/999780/HE_operational_guidance.pdf) (Updated: 6 July 2021) in line with the Step 4 of the government’s COVID-19 roadmap which took effect on 19th July 2021 and the government’s latest update 14 September 2021.

The COVID secure control measures should be sensible and proportionate and follow the health and safety hierarchy of controls to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level in a manner commensurate with the risk level for on-campus activities.

To reflect the dynamic nature of the pandemic, risk assessments should be reviewed regularly and revised accordingly. The outcome of the reviews and any revisions should be discussed at the local safety committee and any management decision appropriately documented, and records retained.

A risk assessment template has been provided to accompany this guidance to support local managers in documenting and communicating their risk assessment with examples provided to aid completion.

The emphasis is on local decision making according to local conditions and risks. So whilst there may be no universal mandatory requirement for e.g., face coverings indoors, in certain situations or in certain areas (e.g., confined spaces), they may be required because of a greater risk of transmission.

The university continues to ‘strongly encourage’ the wearing of face coverings provided when circulating indoors and in crowded areas, e.g. corridors and stairwells, at lecture change over times. It is critical that all teaching finishes on time (10 minutes to the hour) to reduce any risk of crowding.

Key mitigations for preventing COVID-19 infection on the campus:

**Individuals (staff, students and visitors)**

1. Responsible conduct

Staff, students and visitors should follow all relevant guidance and act responsibly on the campus to minimise the risks.

1. Symptomatic individuals

Individuals with [COVID-19 symptoms](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/symptoms/main-symptoms/) should isolate as per NHS guidance (LINK).

1. Contacts

Contacts of individuals with confirmed COVID-19 infection may be required [to isolate for 10 days](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/) from the day of contact.

1. Regular testing

Staff and students should be advised and encouraged to undertake twice weekly testing and isolate if their test is positive. Individuals who test positive should report using the [established reporting procedure](https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/coronavirus/report/) and support Test & Trace efforts by University and/or NHS.

1. Vaccinations

Staff and students should be encouraged to take up vaccination/boosters based on current guidance on eligibility for COVID and ‘flu vaccines.

1. Clinically Extremely Vulnerable (CEV) groups/individuals unable to have vaccinations

These individuals remain at a higher risk and currently, provision should be made to either work from home or if necessary safely on the campus. Factors such as the mode of travel to work should also be considered in any risk assessment.

1. Risk Assessments

Staff should be aware of any risk assessments in their area and the appropriate mitigation actions required. Access to the up to date versions and compliance with the risk assessments is mandatory to ensure the health and wellbeing of staff, students and visitors.

**Place**

1. Social Distancing

The legal requirement for social distancing will no longer be in place, however, consideration should be given to continue with social distancing measures in areas of the campus where it is possible to do so without restricting activity or where risk assessment necessitates this.

1. Face Coverings

It is strongly encouraged that everyone wears face coverings whilst moving around and it is expected face coverings will be worn in lecture theatres and other teaching spaces. In some areas, face coverings will be required if indicated by risk assessment.

Staff may remove face covering whilst teaching or use masks with clear panels.

1. Ventilation

Estates and Facilities (E&F) controlled **mechanical ventilation** will continue to be set to optimise fresh air intake and to operate at increased levels. This has been implemented across campus and no action is required locally other than to record this in the local risk assessment. In the event that any mechanical ventilation requires attention there will be an alert on the Building Management System (BMS) triggering an urgent investigation by E&F who will advise users impacted on what action if any needs to be taken or has been taken to mitigate any risk.

Where **natural ventilation** is provided (openable windows, vents), occupants must optimise the supply of fresh air, for example, by opening windows and doors (unless fire doors) during occupation. In colder weather windows and vents must still be operated to provide ventilation but can be reduced to balance thermal comfort. The Health and Safety Executive advice will be adopted and followed to maintain minimum regulatory compliance standards:

* windows and doors partially open can still provide acceptable ventilation while keeping the workplace comfortable. Opening higher-level windows (where available and safe to access) will probably create fewer draughts.
* if the area is cold you could relax dress codes so people can wear extra layers and warmer clothing

The requirements for operating natural ventilation must be recorded in the local risk assessment and communicated to occupants, particularly where occupants must take action. Where it is identified that windows or vents require repair or attention contact E&F helpdesk.

A risk assessment template has been provided to accompany this guidance to support local managers in documenting their risk assessment with examples provided to aid its completion.

Your local safety advisor can support a ventilation assessment in locally managed spaces using the Cambridge Airborne tool. This tool can help assess current ventilation levels to reduce infection risk from aerosol transmission beyond 2m based on room size and capacity. An ‘infectious person rate’ of 1% is used in this assessment giving a safety factor of 3 (agreed with CMG), based on the current community infection case rate in Manchester (0.3). Training on the use of this assessment tool has been provided by E&F to local safety advisors and technical managers. It’s primary purpose is to help identify spaces where ventilation may require improvement or further mitigation measures need to be considered should the tool show a higher than anticipated risk level. If the risk cannot be mitigated using local measures, then this must be reported to the Estates Helpdesk. The E&F ventilation sub-group will monitor risk mitigation and ventilation performance. **The tool cannot provide a definitive position on individual risk** but it is helpful to support our overall assessment of risk and implementation of controls, so far as is reasonably practicable. The Airborne tool does not need to be used in every space; judgement should be applied to use it where it will best support decision making.

The Health and Safety Executive only require that we identify and improve ‘poor ventilation’.

E&F have assessed ventilation in the following priority spaces agreed with CMG:

1. CTS managed spaces
2. Teaching labs
3. Libraries
4. Computer clusters

Any action required to optimise mechanical ventilation will be taken by E&F and documented. Where additional action is required to mitigate risk in these spaces then E&F will advise occupants of such action to be taken in the actual room e.g. operating windows for natural ventilation. Where additional covid risk mitigation may need consideration then E&F will engage with the relevant Faculty, School, Directorate or Cultural Institution. Individual **requests for room ventilation assessments will not be required** on this basis but will be made available upon completion of the initial air quality audits scheduled throughout Semester 1.

All teaching staff should be informed by their Faculty that centrally timetabled space (CTS) has been assessed by E&F and is suitable for teaching with any necessary changes made to ventilation. Where there is natural ventilation, windows must be operated by teaching staff.

If it is determined by risk assessment that face coverings need to be worn in any teaching space this will be indicated clearly to the lecturer at the PC with instructions to read out. IIR 2 ply mask type face coverings continue to be provided by the university at main entrances and clear masks will be made available for teaching staff to facilitate accessible learning.

Air quality audits using CO2 monitors will be carried out by E&F across campus in all space types where identified as being appropriate following Health and Safety Executive guidance.

1. Sanitation

Individuals will continue to be advised to clean/wash their hands thoroughly and frequently, and encourage good respiratory hygiene practice by promoting ‘catch it, bin it, kill it’ approach.

1. Cleaning

E&F will continue with regular cleaning of communal areas particularly common touch points with long-acting antiviral agent. Cleaning of other areas and equipment under local management control will be undertaken in accordance with any defined schedule and risk assessments. The University has carefully selected and provided long acting anti-viral Covid cleaning products for use by Estates and locally by staff and in some instances students e.g. wipes in study spaces.

Local managers must print the ‘cleaning touch points’ safety poster and display it in locally managed spaces to communicate roles and responsibilities for cleaning. Long acting anti-viral cleaning products/ wipes continue to provide protection after use. Please follow the information provided in the safety poster.  The poster is available on the ‘keeping you safe on campus’ staffnet web pages for all up to date advice and guidance:

<https://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/campus-management/keeping-you-safe-on-campus/>

Following COVID outbreaks, liaise with the E&F team to risk assess any additional cleaning.

**Outbreak Management**

The University’s outbreak management plan is being updated. Current plans should be followed until new guidance is issued.

The latest information on infection and vaccination rates is [available on gov.uk](https://coronavirus.data.gov.uk/)

Appendix 1

**Approach to risk assessment and mitigation**

1. We have a legal responsibility to students and staff from risk to their health and safety, including from the risks of COVID-19.
2. We should complete a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace and identify control measures to manage that risk, based on relevant government guidance and best practice.
3. We should continually check, revise and update their risk assessments, especially when there is new advice and guidance.
4. Following Step 4 of the Government’s Roadmap for relaxation of restrictions, we should continue to make efforts to reduce the risk of transmission where possible. However, we “*should not put in place measures which limit the teaching and learning outcome for students, or significantly limit the wider activities”* we offer.
5. We should implement *sensible and proportionate control measures* which follow the health and safety hierarchy of controls to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level.
6. The hierarchy of controls include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Elimination | * Individuals who are symptomatic or have tested positive should isolate * Regular self-testing and isolation if positive * Vaccination (public health measure) * Hand sanitation * Allowing clinically extremely vulnerable staff or those unable to have vaccinations, to work from home or have appropriate adjustments to their work onsite. |
| Substitution | Can something be done in a less hazardous way? This does not mean working from home if there is a requirement to carry out the activity on campus. |
| Engineering controls | For example,   * Good ventilation * Enhanced engineering controls to supplement existing ventilation * Social distancing – *only* *where possible* *without limiting activity or required in areas where other significant mitigations not possible.* * Perspex screens * Give priority to measures which protect collectively over individual measures. |
| Administrative controls | * These are all about identifying and implementing the procedures you need to work safely. For example: Performing risk assessments * Reducing the time workers are exposed to hazards e.g. working for limited time in confined spaces with limited ventilation or other mitigations. * Installing safety signage |
| Personal protective equipment and controls | Only after all the previous measures have been tried and found ineffective in controlling risks to a reasonably practicable level, must personal protective equipment (PPE) be used. |

*The table above sets out an ideal order to follow when planning to reduce risk from construction activities. Consider the headings in the order shown, do not simply jump to the easiest control measure to implement.*

1. There will be generic risk assessments and mitigations for most activity on campus. However, for locally managed spaces (e.g., laboratories), *local risk assessments are required* and any specific necessary mitigations (e.g., mandatory face coverings, social distancing) to manage risks should be implemented.
2. If you need help then in the first instance, contact your local safety advisors.