



Guidance on

Managing the Risk of Covid-19

Transmission when Restarting

Teaching Activities

Issue 1.0 - July 2020

Version Control

Version	Date	Summary of changes from previous version
Draft 1	June 2020	Initial Draft for H&S Committee on 24 th June
Draft 1.1	July 2020	With very minor amendments from the above for Campus Planning Group on 7 th July.
Draft 1.2	July 2020	Amended with feedback from Campus Planning Group members and others, mainly with respect to timetabling matters, to sections 5.1, 5.3, 5.8.
Issue 1.0	15 th July 2020	As issued, with minor amendments to Sections 5.1 and 5.2, in relation to food provision and cleaning, from Campus Planning Group on 14 th July.

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1.0 Introduction

In mid-March 2020 the University was instructed to cease face to face teaching, so it closed its campuses and moved rapidly to on-line delivery only.

Since then, except for training for medical students transferred to supporting the NHS, no face to face teaching has occurred in University controlled buildings.

However, as the “lockdown” period has extended, and there have been signs that the UK and Scottish Governments will gradually reduce the restrictions on movement, there is a need to plan for the time when some, prioritised teaching, and teaching related, activities will take place in University controlled buildings.

This will be followed by more face to face teaching in due course, but it is anticipated that this will be restricted for some considerable time.

Neither staff nor students will be permitted to re-enter University controlled buildings, carry out any activities, until certain criteria have been met, to ensure it is safe to do so, as described in this guidance and authorised by the Covid-19 Campus Planning Group. See section 4 for the details.

2.0 Scope

This guidance is needed to control the increased risk of transmission of the virus between people when they leave home and re-enter University controlled buildings.

It is focussed upon teaching and teaching related activities. Staff carrying out research, and other work activities, should refer to the separate guidance for returning to University controlled workplaces.

It applies to **anyone** involved in these activities with any relationship with the University.

It does not cover Student accommodation, or teaching or learning undertaken:

- On-line, from home or away from University controlled buildings;
- On Placements (i.e. in premises under the control of other organisations);
- Outside the UK, such as at the Qatar campus;
- Fieldwork.

Note: Qatar has its own Campus Planning Group and local laws apply.

3.0 Definitions

The terms below are used throughout this document and are defined as followings:

Building – Any University owned and/or occupied workplace;

Workplace – Any Building or space where work activities take place (excluding employees' own homes);

Campus – The geographical area under the control of the University, including all spaces between the buildings;

PPE – Personal Protective Equipment as defined in the Personal Protective Equipment (Enforcement) Regulations 2018. This includes gloves, respiratory protective equipment (RPE), but not medical type face masks or face coverings;

Face Coverings - Material that covers the nose and mouth but is not manufactured to any recognised standard for PPE or medical masks.

Users – Any staff member or other person permitted to enter the building concerned.

4.0 Risk Assessment for “Returning to Campus”

Before anyone is permitted to enter a building, for any purpose, a risk assessment will have been carried out which has shown that it is safe for them to do so.

This risk assessment will only be carried out if the Campus Planning Group agree that the proposed activity meets the criteria needed to justify the activity taking place.

The risk assessment will only be carried out by the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team, in conjunction with Estates and Facilities and representatives from the intended building users.

Departments and Schools will be required to participate in the discussions and to provide all information necessary to complete the risk assessment and to satisfy the Campus Planning Group that building entry should be authorised.

The minimum criteria the risk assessment will consider, and document, are explained in the sub-sections which follow.

4.1 – General Measures to Control Virus Transmission

These will include measures which will apply to all occupiers of the building concerned which are designed to prevent, or reduce to a minimum, the transmission of the virus.

They will aim to make the use of the most effective control measures (i.e. those highest in the hierarchy of control measures) and thus make the use of less effective ones (most notably PPE) unnecessary.

These are described in greater detail in Section 5.0.

4.2 – General Building and Building System Related Risks

Following a period of “mothballing”, decommissioning or reduction in maintenance, the building must be checked to ensure that the structure itself and the systems within it are safe.

Estates and Facilities will, prior to allowing re-occupation, check that:

- The building is structurally sound, by visual inspection and reference to relevant information, such as previous surveys and maintenance records;
- There are no serious hazards to occupants which have arisen as a result of a long period of being left vacant (such as vermin infestation, water ingress, rot, etc.);
- Any systems previously decommissioned have been reinstated and tested (e.g. lifts).
- All statutory checks have been reinstated and arrangements made for them to continue at the required frequency/intervals (including those for the Fixed Electrical System and Gas, where present);
- Where present, the air handling system has been adjusted so that it will:
 - i. Not allow recirculation of air;
 - ii. Where practicable, will be run at a higher volume flow rate;
 - iii. As far as is practical be operated in accordance with REHVA Covid-19 guidance;
- Water systems have been flushed and, where parts of the system are unlikely to be used frequently (due to the low occupation) arrangements are in place to do this on an ongoing basis and so minimise the risk of legionella;
- Legionella tests have been done as an additional safeguard and;
- Any remedial actions identified by the water risk assessment or tests have been programmed in order of priority.

Note: Asbestos Management plans are in place for all buildings. Pro-active checks, prior to re-occupation will not be possible. Any suspected damage to asbestos containing materials must be reported immediately.

4.3 – Fire and Emergency Arrangements

Appropriate arrangements must be in place which take into account the new circumstances, (which are likely to include reduced numbers of trained Fire Marshals/Floor Checkers, Evacuation Lift/Chair Operators and First Aiders).

These will include:

- A Fire Risk Assessment in place which is entirely valid or, where some aspect is inadequate, arrangements are in place to compensate for the risk concerned;
- The Fire Alarm System, Fire Extinguishers and Emergency Lighting Systems (where present) are maintained, and statutory checks are in place;
- A “roll call” system is implemented (to ensure all occupants can be accounted for) in place of the more usual “all clear” system where this is not practical;
- No one is to be allowed into any building, or part thereof, from which they cannot be safely evacuated¹ (i.e. those with physical, and possibly other impairments, may not be allowed if they needed assistance which would breach the social/physical distancing guidelines);
- Adequate arrangements for summoning emergency assistance, including First Aiders from within the building concerned or an adjacent one.

Note: In an emergency evacuation all exits may be used observing physical distancing whilst doing so, where possible. Once outside go to the fire assembly point and continue to stay 2m apart if possible.

Directional rules do not apply in an emergency as everyone should be moving in the same direction, and physical distancing rules may be broken in order to preserve life. However, in most circumstances, if people stay calm and use all available exits, the 2m separation may still be maintained as occupation levels will be far below the maximums for which the building escape routes were designed.

No-one is expected to move against the flow of people to check spaces if this will compromise their safety in any way. However, anyone in control of an activity (e.g. a tutorial) must ensure that the room(s) they use are clear, before they leave themselves and they can report this to the Fire Marshall in charge of the assembly point – or report if someone is unable or refuses to evacuate.

Upon return to the building, after the roll call has been done and the “all clear” is given, wash your hands to remove any contaminants which may have been picked up whilst opening doors.

¹ Note: Discrimination on grounds of safety. para.1 of sch.22 to the Equality Act 2010 in effect provides that any action taken to comply with health and safety legislation will not amount to discrimination because of protected characteristics, including disability.

4.4 – Activity Specific Related Risks

This risk assessment will not cover the risks associated with the specific activities proposed to be undertaken within the building.

However, those responsible for the activities must risk assess them both in terms of the usual risks associated with them and any additional risks in relation to the virus or any other changes.

They will be expected to be able to demonstrate that they have taken all relevant risks into account before being allowed on site.

In some cases, they may need to recommission, test or ensure maintenance of equipment which is their responsibility (e.g. portable electrical or portable gas cylinder related equipment) and/or to have raised with Estates and Facilities any assistance they require. See also Section 7.0.

5.0 General Measures

The measures described here are intended to apply to all occupiers of the building concerned and are designed to prevent, or reduce to a minimum, the transmission of the virus. In order to achieve this, occupancy levels are likely to be well below the maximum previously permitted, or lower. The actual capacity can only be determined after detailed assessments are completed for individual buildings.

These will, when properly implemented, make the use of PPE unnecessary for general access and routine tasks. If specific activities are necessary and only possible by breaching the physical distancing guidelines, then advice should be sought on the use of appropriate PPE. This is outside the scope of this document.

Similarly, the control measures are designed to make the use of face coverings unnecessary in terms of controlling the risk. However, this is subject to other factors and national guidance and covered in a separate guidance document.

5.1 Avoiding Congestion on Campus

Before teaching is allowed in a building an assessment must be made of whether the number of users allowed into a building, and the rooms within them, may exceed that which makes maintaining physical distancing practical, and numbers restricted accordingly.

In order to ensure the building does not become congested and physical distancing measures compromised:

- Building users must only access specific buildings, and the rooms within them, for their timetabled activities;

- It follows from the above, therefore, that visitors should not be invited into any buildings unless by prior appointment and for justified reasons;
- Staggering of the timetable (as suggested in national guidance) is impractical in most cases, due to different course combinations. However, where possible Undergraduate and Post Graduate teaching sessions will be staggered, to reduce congestion in circulation areas;
- Where cleaning is necessary between sessions this will normally take place within the session times, but longer turnaround times may be introduced to allow for this in some cases (Estates and Facilities will not provide this so Schools and Departments will need to manage it themselves);
- All occupants are expected to leave immediately after their session but take their time doing so, in order to maintain the physical distancing;
- Similarly, staff and students should arrive in good time to allow for the slower movement into and around buildings to reach their timetabled room in good time.
- Staff will be permitted to access their offices, when on site to deliver teaching and learning, but are expected to leave the building if they are not involved in an activity which means accessing the offices is necessary;
- Congregating in groups should always be avoided, especially around entrances and exits to buildings;
- Facilities for eating and drinking inside buildings will be minimal, or none existent, before the bulk of courses restart in late September 2020. Building users should not eat or drink in common areas within buildings (unless they are arranged for physical distancing and cleaning is in place) but may wish to do so outside, weather permitting;
- Some routes across campus are narrow and unsuitable for two-way traffic and so may become one way or have other limitations placed upon them.

5.2 Physical Distancing in Common Areas

The following apply the receptions, foyers, stairs, lifts, corridors and other areas used for access and circulation within buildings where teaching and learning related activities can take place.

Wherever possible 2m physical distancing will be maintained. In order to achieve this the following principles should be followed wherever practical:

- A one-way system should be designed, creating a series of loops that persons should follow when moving around buildings;
- If corridors are sufficiently wide (i.e. exceeding 2m in width), a marking down the corridor centre may be made to provide two 'lanes', in which a one-way system should be implemented (e.g. always keep left);
- Signs should be used to remind persons to maintain a distance of at least 2m from others;
- Where queues are likely to form (e.g. outside kitchen areas, toilets etc.), corridors should be marked at 2m intervals to ensure social distancing is maintained whilst queueing;

- The use of lifts in buildings should be avoided, for routine access, and used only by disabled persons, or for the transport of large/heavy/hazardous materials where transport on stairways would not be possible or safe;
- Where there is more than one stairway, separate ones should be designated as the 'up route' and 'down route' to prevent face-to-face interaction of persons, and to ensure 2m distancing is maintained;
- Where only one stairwell to a floor is present, one of two options should be implemented: on wide staircases where a 2m distance between persons is possible, a central marking should be placed, and a one-way system implemented (e.g. always keep left);
- Where staircases are narrow and passing would result in close proximity (or if using a one-way stair system increases risk, such as when transporting hazardous materials), a verbal alert procedure (i.e. shouting "Is anyone using this stairwell?") should be put in place before using a stairwell to ensure there is not another person already using it.

5.3 Physical Distancing in Teaching Spaces (including labs and computer labs).

No lectures will take place in lecture theatres. These activities, involving large numbers of people, are, and will continue to be delivered on-line instead.

In order to maximise the capacity, and so the efficiency of teaching and learning, both the layout of rooms and their maximum capacities will be fixed (as they are interdependent). The following guidelines must be followed:

- Where appropriate, signs may indicate maximum occupancies allowed in certain rooms and/or this information will be contained in the local procedures provided at induction;
- Those in control of timetabled sessions must ensure the maxima are not exceeded and the room layout is not changed, even temporarily;
- They should also try to minimise any need to share equipment or texts, including using on-line source materials and avoiding printing (thus avoiding shared use of printers and MFDs) wherever possible;
- The main control measure is the maintaining of physical distancing and avoiding shared use of desks and/or equipment (where possible) and good cleaning and hygiene (See section 5.5);
- Staff and students will normally be facing in the same direction, away from each other and/or staggered, rather than face to face if possible, unless individuals are over 2m away from each other;
- Where possible the mixing of classes will be minimised, to minimise transmission between groups should someone become infectious;
- Screens or barriers may be used in some locations where people are likely to be closer than 2m and may breathe directly towards each other, but this will not normally be the case;
- In labs and computer labs some spaces and equipment may be taken out of use to ensure adequate spacing;
- In labs, it is recognised that users may move around between equipment and so occupation numbers may be reduced below the calculated maximum to allow for this and/or other measures put in place to avoid sharing equipment;

- Schools will need to assess where their teaching activities increase the risk of transmission over the “norm” of a seated tutorial type session and adjust the use of the space or reduce the capacity accordingly. Examples of this are high volume speaking, singing, performance, use of shared musical instruments and equipment etc.). See section 6.0.

Note: There may be circumstances where users will need to pass others at a distance of less than 2m to get to their desks or facilities, but these must be kept to a minimum in number, frequency and duration in order to minimise the risk associated with Covid-19.

5.4 – Physical Distancing in Offices and other Non-Teaching Areas

As stated earlier in this document staff will be permitted to access their offices, when on site to deliver teaching and learning but are expected to leave the building if they are not involved in an activity which means accessing the offices is necessary. Where staff need to prepare for teaching and learning between sessions, or when only a short period of time is available between these, they should reduce to a minimum, interactions with others.

The following will assist with this:

- Staff should an empty office, and preferably not use a space used by someone else, wherever possible;
- Where staff work in open offices, staff need to communicate with the other teams to ensure physical distancing is maintained and avoid sharing of desks and/or equipment;
- Staff working on banks of desks, at the same time, should work parallel or facing away from each other and/or staggered, rather than face to face if possible;
- Where people work in teams, or the same location, reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using ‘fixed teams or partnering’ should be implemented (so each person works with only a few others);
- Tape or simple signs may be used to indicate who is to use which desks/chairs (at different times) or desks/chairs which are not to be used at all, in order to maintain appropriate separation;
- Screens or barriers should be used in locations where people are likely to be closer than 2m and may breathe directly towards each other.

5.5 – Catering on Campus

Particular challenges are associated with providing hot food and drink, as well as suitable locations to eat, not least because these are traditionally sociable activities.

At the time of writing (when only limited research activity and essential tasks are being undertaken) before face to face teaching restarts:

- Facilities to prepare, purchase or eat food and drinks are not available or provided;

- Staff are encouraged to bring in their own food, avoid sharing kettles etc. and to eat and take breaks outside, but on campus (weather permitting).

As restrictions are relaxed and the numbers of staff and students on campus grow, the provision, and arrangements for catering, are likely to change as follows:

- Disposable cups and utensils will be used, to avoid transmission via reusable items;
- Limited or reduced menus, takeaway food, “click and collect” and delivery of food may be offered, at various locations, in due course;
- Purchase will normally be possible only using contactless methods (not using cash);
- Screens will be installed at payment/collection points;
- Queues will be managed to ensure physical distancing;
- Where it is possible to enjoy food and drink purchases inside University controlled buildings, provision will be subject to physical distancing requirements and any other Government issued direction at that time.
- Provision may be made for eating in designated outdoor areas, set up for physical distancing and protected from extremes of weather.
- Eating inside University controlled buildings (other than in halls of residence) will be discouraged;
- Provision may be made for eating in designated areas, set up for physical distancing outside but protected from extremes of weather.

Note: The above are the University arrangements. Some commercial companies may operate differently.

5.6 Welfare Facilities and Hygiene

- Due to the design and layout of many toilet facilities it may be difficult to enable more than one person to use a “block” at a time. Therefore, in many cases a “one in, one out” system will be employed with a queue outside in a corridor;
- Male and female toilet facilities may be in the “wrong” ratio for occupants and so may be changed or supplemented by use of disabled toilet facilities;
- Sanitizer will be provided at entrances to buildings and in some other locations, dependent upon the occupancy and layout of the building concerned. This will be greater the more floors and the higher the calculated occupancy figure (See also section 5.6 below);
- Sanitizer is to be used if you have made contact with a “touch point” which others may have used when away from welfare facilities;
- “wash your hands” and hand sanitizer signage will be provided at entry/exit points to buildings and washroom/other high footfall areas, as defined through the reinstatement discussions;
- Staff and students must follow good hygiene practice (See 5.6 and 5.7 below).

Note: Although propping open of doors would reduce the need to touch door handles fire doors must not be held open, other than by devices which will automatically release them upon activation of the fire alarm.

5.7 – Cleaning and Removal of Waste

Initial cleaning will be done, by Estates and Facilities staff, before people return to site, and will continue thereafter. There will be alterations to the existing cleaning schedule for the foreseeable future.

There will also be additional, enhanced. cleaning during the working day, particularly in communal areas and at touch points including:

- Taps and washing facilities;
- Toilet flush and seats;
- Door handles (except to individual offices);
- Push plates;
- Railings or bannisters (e.g. on stairwells);
- Lift and hoist controls;
- Light switches;
- Keypads (including intruder alarms);
- Photocopiers and printer keypads;
- Keyboards and mice in IT facilities and computer classrooms.

Many of these will be labelled with reminders to wash or use sanitizer before and after touching them.

Note: In order to reduce risks of cross contamination from and to cleaning staff who are entering personal office space, cleaning in individual offices may be reduced.

Users may be asked to carry out cleaning of specialised equipment or other areas following use, using antiseptic wipes or cleaning materials provided, e.g.:

- Machinery and equipment controls, including scientific instrumentation;
- Photocopiers and other office equipment which is shared;
- Telephone equipment;
- Keyboards and mice (although not essential if they are not shared);
- Any areas used for eating (at the end of each break and shift, including chairs; door handles, vending machines and payment devices where applicable).

Sanitizer dispensers are provided near building entrances, and in some other locations within the buildings, dependent upon occupation and other factors. These will be filled up by the cleaning staff on a daily basis.

Schools will be expected to ensure their use and to supplement these with their own supplies as follows:

- Where equipment must be shared (e.g. keyboards and mice in computer labs) Estates and Facilities will provide sanitizer wipes and dispensers initially.

- It will be for those in control of the classes to ensure that students clean shared equipment before leaving the room and enough time is allowed for them to do so;
- Schools will be expected to take over provision of suitable cleaning materials and/or alternative arrangements to ensure that the hygiene standards regarding shared equipment are maintained (e.g. use of removable keyboard covers or swapping of used for pre-clean items between sessions).

Where arrangements are specific to a building the details will be provided to users at induction, either in the building user guide or local procedures agreed before entry to the building was granted.

Any specialist waste requirements will also be included in one or other of these documents.

5.8 – Personal Responsibility and Travel

All staff and students must take personal responsibility for their health and that of others with whom they may come into contact and follow the current government guidelines to minimise risk associated with Covid-19 as follows:

- If you have any symptoms which could be Covid-19 related (fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat or new loss of taste or smell) do not travel, report this to your line manager (staff) or in the normal way/via the absence reporting procedure through “My Aberdeen” (students) and self-isolate as per current Government guidelines;
- Make use of the reusable forehead thermometer strips provided to monitor your temperature, alongside the other noted potential symptoms of Covid 19, in advance of travelling to campus on a daily basis;
- If you feel ill when in a University controlled building, you should go home and follow Government guidelines;
- If you are “shielding” it may not be appropriate for you to return to the workplace/campus (depending upon the national guidelines in force at the time);
- If you have a disability which means you may need assistance to evacuate from a building in an emergency you must ensure you raise this with an appropriate member of staff, or disability support, before you enter the building concerned, so that appropriate arrangements can be put in place; (Note: Physical distancing may make the use of evacuation chairs and evacuation lifts unsafe);
- Plan your journeys to avoid or minimise contact with other commuters, avoiding public transport if possible or only using it when it is not busy if this is unavoidable;
- Only bring the minimum number of items into the building from home/student accommodation, and avoid or minimise taking equipment back and forth between the home/student accommodation and the campus;
- Wash hands regularly with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds before eating, drinking, smoking or vaping;

- Try not to touch your face;
- Coughs and sneezes should be covered with a tissue and disposed of immediately (into your elbow if no tissue) followed by the washing of hands;
- Maintain social distancing when greeting others, including avoiding shaking of hands;
- Avoid face to face meetings as far as possible;
- Comply with all signs and procedures for the building;
- Never allow any unauthorised person to “tailgate” or otherwise enter a building;
- Report any injury at work (or near miss, such as a break down in the physical distancing arrangements) to your line manager (staff) or an academic member of staff (students) who will report these to the health, safety and wellbeing team, via StaffNet, in the normal way.

Timetabling will try to minimise travel between the Old Aberdeen and Foresterhill Campuses. Where this cannot be avoided sufficient time will be allowed for travel.

The shuttlebus will not be available when face to face teaching resumes. It is not anticipated that it will operate until restrictions on physical distancing, such as “the 2m rule” are lifted. This is because of the increased risk of transmission if the vehicles become overcrowded and it is not economically viable for the operator to run the service with a substantially reduced number of occupied seats.

Staff and students should walk or cycle where practical and follow the current national guidance, with respect to the use of public transport, to minimise any potential exposure to the virus during travel.

Note: Please see national guidance and/or the current University advice on wearing of face coverings on public transport and in some enclosed public buildings.

6.0 Specific Activities

As stated in section 4.4 of this guidance, the risk assessment for re-occupation of a building will not cover the risks associated with the specific activities proposed to be undertaken within the building.

The managers responsible for the activities must risk assess them both in terms of the usual risks associated with them and any additional risks in relation to the virus or any other changes.

They will be expected to be able to demonstrate that they have taken all relevant risks into account before being allowed on site.

Where the activities to be undertaken are justified but not able to be carried out without individuals breaching the physical distancing guidelines, additional control

measures will need to be put in place, almost certainly including the use of PPE to control the risk adequately.

These issues are outside the scope of this document. However, separate guidance and advice is available from the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team and your Local Safety Co-ordinators.

7.0 References

7.1 University of Aberdeen Guidance Documents

This document should be read in conjunction with other guidance documents available at:

https://www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/working-here/coronavirus/approved_principles.php

7.2 External Reference Documents

The following are the main documents used as information sources for the writing of this guidance:

Recovery Readiness – A how to guide for reopening your workplace (Cushman and Wakefield)

COVID Return to Work Guidance (BOHS)

Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance documents for: “Offices and Contact centres” and “Labs and research facilities” (HM Government Guidance @.gov.uk)

Working safely during the coronavirus outbreak – a short guide (HSE)

COVID-19 guidance document – “How to operate and use building services in order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) virus (SARS-CoV-2) in workplaces” (REHVA);

COVID-19 – Building Maintenance SFG20 Mothballing and Reactivation and Member Guidance Note (BESA);

COVID-19 Framework for Decision Making – Scotland’s route map through and out of crisis (Scottish Government)- May 2020.