COVID-19 Return to Work Guide

(Version 2.2 – August 2020)

Introduction

This guidance document sets out the University's approach to COVID-19 secure working for colleagues returning physically to work, as part of the Campus Restart programme, following the Vice Chancellor's communication and as the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown continues to be lifted across the UK. It is intended to provide colleagues with general information.

We recognise that, as the University returns to a new normal operation, it has to adapt to new ways of working where required, as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. This guidance document sets out some of the changes to our working environment and some new ways of working.

These adaptations have been informed by our institutional level COVID-19 risk assessment, which is published on the University's website here https://www.bolton.ac.uk/assets/Uploads/covid-19-riskassessment-uni2-converted.pdf

We have consulted with the Employee Forum and also the recognised Trade Unions locally about the University's plans and these arrangements. The University continues to follow Public Health England and Government guidelines.

We encourage you to let us know if you have any concerns, have identified any potential risks, or have any suggestions for further adaptations we can make - you can do this by raising concerns or making suggestions by email to or email askHRCV19@bolton.ac.uk.

In Advance of your Return

We have identified some colleagues who are required to physically return to work for the needs of the institution in order to assist with the essential activity of preparing the campus for the September Campus Restart re-opening - while maintaining social distancing and following Government guidelines.

We are requiring employees to attend work only where their role requires their physical presence or where the management believe it is imperative for the operation of the institution. Workers who can work remotely from home (e.g. academic staff and many in professional support roles), should continue to do so unless told otherwise. Some of our workforce are on furlough and such arrangements will be kept under review – the University reserves the right to require employees on furlough to return to work.

Confidential

The Interim Protocol for Employee Access at Appendix Two of this guide is to be used until the 14th September 2020 (i.e. Phase 3 of the Campus Restart programme) and access must only be for the essential business critical activity that has been approved).

Heads of School / Service and/or line managers will undertake a Return to Work Briefing with those due to return to work. A summary is provided at Appendix One. In addition, from August staff will be required to watch an Employee Reorientation Guidelines video and a Survey Monkey Employee Reorientation Questionnaire to help with their return to work and ensure that colleagues understand what is required of them.

These can be accessible via the HR A to Z on the University web pages under Campus Restart or via
https://moodle.bolton.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=14488

To support Heads of Service / Schools regarding planning local return to work arrangements HR are running a series of remote drop in surgeries in August.

Employees who are officially deemed to be clinically extremely vulnerable by the NHS or their Doctor (i.e. those with serious underlying health conditions) and who have been advised by the NHS to shield against coronavirus, should continue to do so for the duration of their shielding period or until Public Health England advise otherwise. However, if they can work remotely from home, they should continue to do so unless this is entirely impossible. They should expect to be available during normal working hours. Employees in other vulnerable groups, such as pregnant workers and those aged 70 or over, should speak with their HR Business Partner individually about their return to work and any potential adaptations to their role. Employees who are unable to work remotely and who are the lead carer for children during their normal working hours and who have childcare issues affecting their ability to attend work should similarly contact their HR Business Partner.

We understand that some employees may be anxious about returning to work. However, we have to remind you that the nation is now returning to work and employees who refuse to return to work must take their annual leave, unpaid leave or be put on furlough (subject to the Government Job Retention Scheme arrangements in force at the time). Employees who are required to return to work physically, but do not do so without good reason, may be subject to disciplinary action.

If you or someone you live with has coronavirus symptoms

It is absolutely essential that if you or anyone you live with develops a:

- fever, particularly a high temperature (i.e. a temperature of 37.8 degrees or over);
- continuous cough; or
- loss of sense of taste or smell;

you do not attend work and must self-isolate in accordance with the Government's guidance at www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection.

In line with our Sickness Absence reporting procedure, you should notify your line manager by telephone before you are due to start work, or as soon as possible if that is not practical.

Employees are able to access tests for Covid-19 via the NHS. The University reserves the right to request evidence in support of any sickness absence.

Please note that the University is installing fixed temperature scanners at key access points. Therefore, you should expect to be temperature screened on your arrival at work and moving around the campus. You may be asked to return home and/or contact your line manager should you be identified as having a high temperature [i.e. a surface temperature of 38 degrees or above is recorded]. Do not come to work if you have COVID-19 symptoms.

These non-contact temperature scanners are operated by trained operatives to identify people who may have elevated temperatures – they measure skin temperature and do not detect if people have the virus.

In the interests of health and safety and also in interests of everyone in the University community images and temperatures are taken of employees passing thorough the scanner. Employees are assured that images/data recorded by the temperature scanners are not retained by the University. Such images/data are not collected, recorded, stored, used or disclosed for any purpose aside from determining whether the employee should be permitted to enter the location.

Employees are expected to comply with any instructions given by operatives of these scanners.

If employees arriving at a scanner believe that their temperature may be temporary elevated (e.g. due to having just undertaken excise) they should advise the operator and wait for a period before passing the temperature scanner.

The University assumes that all employees consent to temperature screening. However, should employees not agree to have their temperature taken then they should raise the matter with their Head of Service / School and/or HR Business Partner at the earliest opportunity.

Travel to and from Work

We encourage colleagues to minimise their use of public transport, including by walking or cycling where possible. If travelling by car, you must not car-share with anyone outside your household. Colleagues are reminded of the Cycle to Work Scheme accessible by employees. For further details please visit https://www.cyclescheme.co.uk

Where you need to use public transport, please think about social distancing, where possible staying two metres away from others and avoiding touching surfaces. If you can, wear a face covering on public transport.

Workers using public transport may find it helpful to refer to the Government's guidance at www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers and www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering. The University can provide you with gloves, should you require them, which can be used on public transport and then disposed of when you disembark.

You should wash your hands thoroughly when you arrive at work, using the handwashing facilities or hand sanitisers provided. You should also wash your hands thoroughly as soon as you get home from work.

Gloves will also be made available on campus for those who may find it helpful to use them.

Working Patterns

To reduce the risk of infection spread, subject to any departmental level Risk Assessment, the following arrangements may be considered:

- staggering employees start/end times and breaks;
- using "fixed teams or partnering" so each person works with only a few others;
- rotating groups of workers, for example via a shift system or short-time working.

You should speak to your Head of Service / School if you have any specific needs around your working patterns, for example because of childcare responsibilities or travel difficulties.

Hygiene and Cleanliness

General measures
In line with our institutional level Risk Assessment to reduce the risk of infection spread, we have introduced the following measures:

- installing additional handwashing facilities/hand sanitisers, including at entrances and exits;
- cleaning work areas and equipment frequently;
- having signage and posters to provide regular reminders to workers to maintain hygiene standards;

Playing your part
While we are taking these stringent additional measures, we would like to remind you to play your part by:

- washing your hands often and thoroughly;
- avoiding touching your face, particularly your eyes, nose and mouth;
- coughing or sneezing into a tissue, and binning it safely, or into your arm if a tissue is not available; and
- avoiding touching colleagues (to include handshaking).

Social Distancing Measures

General measures

While at work, you must maintain social distancing of two metres wherever possible – one meter in classrooms. To assist with social distancing, we have introduced the following measures:

- spacing workstations out;
- having floor markings to help workers to maintain social distancing;
- installing screens or barriers to separate workers from each other;
- working back to back or side to side (rather than face to face) where possible;
- introducing one-way managed walk way systems to reduce instances of workers having to pass each other in close proximity; and
- having signage and posters advising on limits to numbers entering specific areas such as lifts, refreshment locations (e.g. Employee Lounge and catering facilities) and toilets.

You should continue to practice social distancing in common areas, including at workplace entrances and exits and in lifts, break areas and toilets.

Whilst it may appear inconvenient to have to follow a long route on a one way system, there are no reasons, apart from a fire evacuation, that you should not follow the one way system.

Meetings

As part of our social-distancing measures, employees should conduct meetings remotely where possible. Meetings could take place using Zoom or MS Teams with some staff on campus and some off campus. When physical meetings are necessary:

- only essential participants should attend the meeting;
- meetings should be kept as short as possible;
- social distancing of two metres should be maintained throughout;
- objects such as stationery should not be shared; and
- meetings should be held outdoors/in a well-ventilated room whenever possible.

Visitors on Campus

To reduce the risk of the spread of infection, visitors (i.e. those not part of the University community) should be kept to a minimum and only come onto campus if deemed essential, (officially organised University events are deemed essential) are overseen by the host department and are briefed on and follow our COVID-19 secure working arrangements (e.g. requirement to maintain social distancing).

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Our approach to additional PPE

Confidential

In line with our University level COVID-19 risk assessment, the use of additional PPE such as specialist face masks are not required as an infection-control measure while at work. However, face coverings are mandatory inside whilst in University buildings on campus.

You should continue to wear the PPE you normally require to carry out your work or if additional PPE is required and has been issued to you.

Face coverings
The use of a face covering (which is not considered PPE) is required and mandatory on campus. The Government's advice regarding face masks can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering.

Irrespective of Government advice, it is mandatory to wear face coverings in University buildings.

This advice includes that you:

- wash your hands thoroughly before putting a face covering on and after removing it;
- change your face covering if it becomes damp; and
- change and wash your face covering daily.

The use of a face covering is not a replacement for observing our social distancing guidelines.

Access to Campus

Prior to the Campus Restart in September employees needing to visit the campus physically are required to following the Interim Protocol for Employee Access issued by the University Registrar. Details can be found at Appendix Two.

Wellbeing Support and Advice

The University understands that any impact from the COVID-19 outbreak can be psychological as well as physical – e.g. anxiety about the significant changes as a result of the ongoing health crisis, fear of infection and social isolation due to the lockdown and anxiety about returning to work.

Employees are reminded of the support and services available from its Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) provider, VIVUP. The details of which are below:

Telephone: 03303800658 (local call rate)
Email: help@vivup.co.uk
Web: www.vivup.co.uk

Mind, the mental health charity, has some useful information available via the following link; https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/

Other Considerations

The University continues to strive to have an organisation culture that is inclusive and tolerant. Every employee should feel they are returning to a supportive and caring environment.

If you have a sight impairment and need guidance around the campus, please report to Senate House Reception for advice and support.

To help assist with the University plans for the campus to be Covid-19 secure all employees should feel able to politely remind / challenge those on campus who are not following these guidelines.

Further Information

The Government's guidance to help employers, employees and the self-employed understand how to work safely during the coronavirus pandemic can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19

ACAS has also published information available here:

https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus

Confidential

Appendix One - Return to Work Briefing

Heads of Service / School are expected to hold 'Return to Work Briefings' with team members remotely in advance of any return to work as part of the Campus Restart. The following is a suggested agenda to be covered:

- Outline rationale behind return to work
- Discuss when it is proposed for employee(s) to return to work and nature of work to be undertaken
- Remind employee to read the Return to Work Guide, watch the Employee Reorientation Guidelines (Video) and complete the Survey Monkey Employee Reorientation Questionnaire and familiarise themselves of the latest information contained in the Employee FAQs in advance
- Discuss travel arrangements and social distancing requirements etc
- Review any medical, home issues (e.g. childcare, shielding)
- Share University level Risk Assessment and seek feedback
- Share draft departmental Risk Assessment (measures to safeguard employees returning) and seek feedback (to include arrangements related to revised layouts to office space, teaching rooms and laboratory areas)
- Discuss any adjustments to facilitate a return to work
- Consider when working arrangements to be reviewed with employees
- Consider any questions / concerns with a view of reaching agreement
- Consider mental health of employee and note support also available through the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) ViVUP
- Seek mutual agreement to return to work
- Confirm that they must not return to work if they have any of the Covid-19 symptoms and let their line manager know asap

Notes for Heads:

- Heads should give employees as much notice as possible regarding a return to work and provide HR a schedule of employees to return at least one week before employee recommences work as part of the Campus Restart.
- Heads should take a note of the discussion and confirm in wiring any agreed return
- If possible, on the first day of return, a walk thru of work area should be undertaken (following social distancing requirements)
- Any proposed changes that may affect the written terms of employee's contract the University must consult with the employee
- For guidance on developing a Service / School level risk assessment the University Health & Safety Manager can be consulted.
- If employee refuses to return Heads to contact their HR Business Partner. Annual leave, unpaid leave or furlough could be considered at this stage.
- Note - if someone refuses to attend work without a valid reason, it could result in disciplinary action.

Confidential

Appendix Two - Interim Protocol for Employee Access (for use until Phase 3 – 14th September 2020)

1. The Head of Service or Head of School of the individual concerned, must e-mail (at least 2 working days prior to the proposed visit unless there are exceptional circumstances) the Registrar and copy in the H&S Manager to the Vice Chancellor and the Executive Director HR with:

- The reasons for attendance
- The date (if this is a one-off visit)
- The days (if this is a regular visit) – with the date of the first visit
- Confirmation that the employee has been consulted and is content with attendance, if approved, and HR Business Partner advised if any concerns
- Confirmation that the task cannot be undertaken at home/remotely
- Confirmation that the individual is NOT:

    i. Shielded (has a letter from the NHS);
    ii. Self-isolating (as a result of an infection in their household or a notification through track and trace);
    iii. Currently experiencing the recognised symptoms of Covid(19):
        a) High fever
        b) New continuous cough
        c) Change / loss of sense of taste / smell

2. The Registrar, will approve the single visit the series of visits to campus/or not.

3. If the visit(s) to campus is approved then:

If the member of staff needs to use public transport, then they must think about social distancing, where possible staying two meters away from others and avoiding touching surfaces. The member of staff should wear face coverings on public transport. The member of staff MUST NOT travel to campus sharing a car with someone outside their own household.

4. On arrival on the first day the member of staff must undertake a Covid (19) secure induction and must:

- Sign an induction attendance sheet to confirm their understanding of the Covid(19) secure measures that are in force and their agreement to adhere to them on campus;
- Collect face coverings, and if required gloves.

Note*: Induction arrangements in 4. above will be updated by the new protocols (i.e. Return to Work Briefing conducted by the Head, Employee Reorientation Guidelines (Video) and the Employee Reorientation Questionnaire).*

5. The Head of School/Head of Service is responsible for ensuring that the member of staff is notified of any induction / *new protocol arrangements*, and that the individual undertakes that induction prior to working on campus.

The University has put in place the interim protocol shown above to ensure the safety of its staff during this pandemic and expects all staff to adhere to it. Please remember that 'Health and Safety' is everyone's responsibility, and any breach of this interim protocol will be viewed as a serious matter.