



Safety Note

24 March 2010

Physical distancing¹ – the latest Government requirement to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 (v2)

What is the latest Government requirement to assist in reducing the transmission of COVID-19?

1. The Government's message is to avoid physical gatherings to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.
2. In situations where this is not possible, the restrictions below apply:
 - a. On Friday 20 March 2020, the Prime Minister announced that for indoor gatherings of less than 100 people, there will be a further requirement to observe that there is **4 square metres provided per person in an enclosed space**.
 - b. The Prime Minister stated that this is in addition to the practice of maintain a healthy distance between individuals i.e. around at least 1.5 metres wherever possible.
 - c. The rule banning non-essential indoor gatherings of 100 or more people remains in place.

UQ will implement these wherever possible in order to reduce health risks to the UQ community.

How do we implement the one person every four square metres in UQ spaces?

Implementing this new requirement will require local management to understand the new physical distancing guideline, be able to source the size of the work area footprint, understand the usual use and occupancy of the space and implement local arrangements to meet these additional requirements. The process is outlined below and a number of scenarios attempt to provide guidance on how these additional requirements may be implemented.

Process-

1. Local management should determine the size of the footprint of the workspace in question. There is no need to be absolutely precise, however we recommend that the relevant floor plans are consulted. These can be easily accessed at <https://campuses.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/maps/floor-plans>. Alternatively, step out the length and breadth of the space (one large pace = approximately one metre).
2. Local management determines the usual number of occupants in the space. If there are a greater number of occupants than the new requirement allows, local management will need to determine the feasible options to introduce to meet the new physical distancing requirement.

For example, for professional staff workspaces, options may include:

- (i) Finding other work areas that fall well under the one person per 4sqm rule and temporarily placing staff there; or
- (ii) Negotiating working from home arrangements that are approved by your supervisor, meet the needs of your area, and ensure your team can continue to be productive and support the University's

¹ In recent days the World Health Organisation commenced discouraging the use of the term "social" distancing, replacing it with its preferred term of "Physical" distancing.



operations. These working from home arrangements may also “dove tail” with business continuity arrangements of your work area i.e. the splitting/rotating of teams, separating critical staff/staff responsible for essential services.

For work and study spaces where there are moving and transient populations e.g. libraries, customer service areas/counters, refectories, local management will need to implement strategies that adhere to current physical distancing requirements i.e. no more than 100 people indoors; no more than one person per 4sqm; and individuals being at least 1.5m apart. Options may include:

- (i) Ongoing monitoring of the numbers of people entering and exiting the space and if required, limiting the number of people entering the space;
- (ii) Providing clear information on physical distancing (visual and/or perhaps, announcements where practicable);
- (iii) Encouraging the movement of people to underutilised areas in the same vicinity (e.g. to move between floors of a library, to move to other library or study spaces, move to external eating areas rather than internal areas etc.).

Scenario One - The Prime Minister’s examples:

In his announcement, the Prime Minister gave the following examples of how this new guideline should be interpreted: “if your indoor space is 100 square metres, for example 10 metres by 10 metres, you can only have 25 people in it. If your space is 400 square metres, you can have 100 people in it”.

Scenario Two

The main workspace in the UQ Health, Safety and Wellness Division at St Lucia is just over 88sqm. According to the new requirement, up to 22 people could work in this space at the one time and in this case there are 18 workstations in this space. Therefore, at full occupancy, this work area meets the latest physical distancing requirements. In addition to this, local management will need to ensure that local adjustments are put in place to ensure that wherever practicable, there is at least 1.5m between individuals.

Scenario Three

The main workspace of the XYZ Division has a footprint of about 120sqm and there are 40 workstations in this area. According to local management the maximum occupancy of the area, given planned and unplanned leave patterns and current vacancies, there is never more than 35 staff working in this area. This is still over the threshold for meeting the new requirements, which would be a maximum of 30 staff. Local management consults with staff and puts in place arrangements where a number of staff are included into a rotational working from home arrangement. This will bring them into compliance with the physical distancing guidelines, plus assist with their business continuity actions.

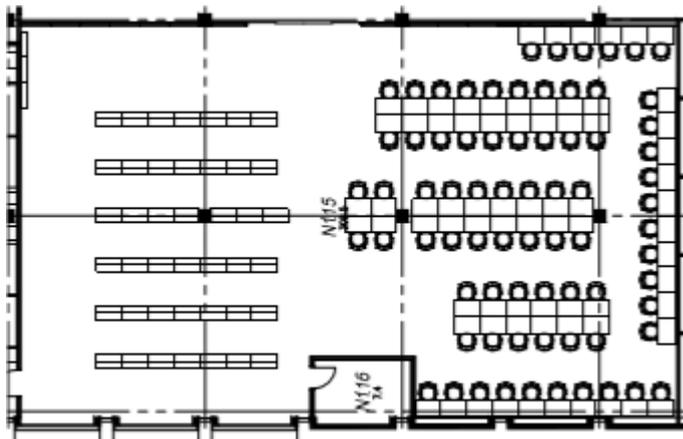
Scenario Four

Room 220 in the Michie Building is used by a number of Schools in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science as a room for tutorials and has a footprint of 42sqm. Therefore, according to the new physical requirements, a maximum of 10 people would be allowed in this space. The person in control of the class/local management would need to put in place arrangements to ensure that only 10 people worked in this area at any one time. Local arrangements may include limiting numbers to 10 for this space and

repeating tutorials if necessary or relocating to a larger space. The person in control of the class would need to ensure the 1.5m guide is also implemented.

Scenario Five

The High Frequency Use Room in Duhig North building is an open plan study space of 309.5sqm. This space can accommodate 77 students according to the new physical distancing requirements, and there is current seating for 74 students. However, because study carrels are concentrated on one side of the room and shelving is concentrated on the other, the Library has also opted to remove every second chair from the study carrels area to ensure there is 1.5m between students.



Scenario Six

The Student Services Centre, level one, J D Story, is an open plan area that includes a public area and staff working area and is around 198sqm. According to the physical distancing requirements no more than 49 people can be in this area at any one time, local management will need to put in place arrangements to ensure this. Local arrangements may include monitoring numbers for this space and delaying entry at the door until people leave. If the student demand was high, consider options for relocating professional support staff if practicable. The person in control of the area would need to ensure the 1.5m guide was also implemented e.g. marking the queue lines to indicate spacing of 1.5m, providing visual information/cues around physical distancing.

For further information, contact your local Work Health and Safety Manager/Coordinator or the UQ HSW Division, phone: +61 7 336-52365 or email hsw@uq.edu.au.

Current Safety alerts are available at <https://staff.uq.edu.au/information-and-services/health-safety-wellbeing/health-safety-workplace/governance/communications>.