



Safety Note

6 July 2020

Returning to Campus – planning guidance on **health aspects** to reduce the transmission of COVID-19

Overarching principles

Refer also to the Principles outlined in the [UQ Safe Return to Campus Roadmap](#).

With the welcoming and transitioning of staff and students back to campuses, it is important that:

- appropriate physical distancing guidelines are implemented to the extent possible;
- high levels of personal hygiene are maintained; and
- people must not attend campus if:
 - they are unwell;
 - waiting on test results for COVID-19; or
 - have been instructed to self-isolate.

Why is this important?

Physical distancing and personal hygiene are important because COVID-19 is most likely to spread from person-to-person through:

- direct close contact with a person while they are symptomatic, or in the 24 hours before their symptoms appeared;
- close and prolonged contact with a person with a confirmed infection (particularly if they cough or sneeze); or
- touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from a person with a confirmed infection, and then touching your mouth or face.

The more space between you and others, the less likely it is for the virus to spread.

As a large organisation, we need to ensure that we support measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 in the community for the good of the entire UQ community, so that we can all be well and healthy and to transition our people back to our campuses.

General measures

The measures below apply to all staff, students and visitors:

- You must stay at home if you are sick or are directed to self-isolate by Queensland Public Health. Anyone who has fever (or history of fever) OR have acute respiratory symptoms (cough, sore throat, shortness of breath) should see a doctor immediately.
- Reduce opportunities for direct transmission e.g. sharing items, unnecessary touching.
- Ensure impeccable personal hygiene practices.



- Staff and students who are in vulnerable populations are encouraged at this time to continue to work or study from home, or seek medical advice from their health practitioner to support informed risk assessment and decision-making regarding the suitability of returning to university environment.
- It is preferable for meetings involving multiple participants to occur using technology. Face to face meetings can be held with physical distancing measures in place if required. These meetings should be as short as possible and technology should be used where there are multiple participants.
- To encourage better contact tracing capability, staff and students are encouraged to download the COVIDSafe app.
- Physical distancing across the University i.e. maintaining a separation of 1.5m, should be observed to the extent possible.
- Consider how you will travel to campus and apply the general principles of not travelling when you are ill, impeccable hand hygiene, not touching your face and maintaining physical distance where possible. See [Safety Note – Public Transport and Covid-19](#) in the Resources section.

Specific guidance for teaching

Use of laboratory and specialist learning spaces

- For each lab and learning and teaching space, physical distancing should be implemented which allows teaching to continue within guidelines. Physical distancing will largely be observed in these spaces by adjusting room capacities during the timetabling process.
- Each lab and specialist learning space should review cleaning protocols and ensure high touch surfaces, such as benches, door handles, etc. are regularly disinfected.
- Each lab and specialist teaching space should ensure relevant Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is used, where appropriate, to avoid contamination and for personal protection.
- Each lab and specialist teaching space should ensure appropriate waste disposal methods are available taking into consideration of the COVID-19 risk (e.g. participants dispose of their own PPE).

Principles for physical distancing while attending group study, practical or problem-based learning (PBL) sessions:

- Practise reasonable physical distancing wherever possible, avoiding unnecessary close contact with others attempting to keep a distance of at least 1.5m between people.
- Ensure impeccable personal hygiene practices.
- Where physical distancing is not reasonably possible, other strategies to mitigate the risk must be implemented.
- Reduce opportunities for direct transmission e.g. sharing items, unnecessary touching.

Clinical / human participant

- Participants in a vulnerable risk group or who are unwell should generally be advised not to participate until further notice.
- Clients and staff should maintain physical distancing requirements to the extent possible.
- Where physical distancing is not reasonably possible, other strategies to mitigate the risk must be implemented.
- Cleaning and disinfecting protocols should be developed for communal equipment and areas.
- Minimise the number of participants and consider how interactions may be completed without physical contact (e.g. via videoconference).



- Management strategies for waiting/reception spaces, access and egress must also be considered.

Specific guidance for research

Supervision / Instruction / Induction (including HDR students)

- Appropriate supervision must be in place for all researchers on-site to ensure that both physical distancing and appropriate health and safety measures are undertaken.
- Research students should be adequately supervised by a staff member with appropriate expertise.
- Inductions should include information on physical distancing and local COVID-19 Management Plans, either in person or in virtual mode if necessary.
- Consideration of a roster of researchers may be developed, where necessary, to ensure that research can be completed with optimal compliance to physical distancing requirements.
- The requirement for 1.5m separation should be adhered to, to the extent possible.
- Student, Supervisor and Trainer must evaluate whether any steps of the training that normally might require being closer than 1.5m can be avoided entirely and substituted by other means. This might include online resources, pre-recorded training video, and/or integrating workflow changes so that the trainer may be able to demonstrate a procedure while student is 1.5m away, then step back while student attempts procedure, providing verbal guidance from a distance.
- A risk management plan is required where strict compliance with physical distancing requirements cannot be met. i.e. other strategies to mitigate the risk must be implemented.
- PPE appropriate to the task must be used at all times.
- Ensure impeccable personal hygiene practices including frequent handwashing and avoid touching face.
- Cleaning down of desks and training equipment between users and after use should occur at every occasion.

Lab Based

- For each laboratory, physical distancing should be implemented which allows research to continue with guidelines. This should include managing access to equipment and may consider staggered access times to facilitate research.
- Each lab should review cleaning protocols and regularly disinfect high touch surfaces, such as benches, door handles, shared equipment, etc.
- Each lab should ensure relevant PPE is used, where appropriate, to avoid contamination and for personal protection.
- Where there are contractors and other essential visitors, appropriate physical distancing measures should be established and managed.
- The process for managing external participants, volunteers and sample collection should be developed in line with physical distancing to the extent possible.

Fieldwork

- Research team leaders should consider how researchers can access the site safely, including determining what form of transport is appropriate to comply with 1.5 metre distancing requirements to the extent possible.
- Activities should comply with physical distancing, to the extent possible. A risk management plan is required where physical distancing requirements cannot be achieved.



- The number of participants should be minimised with consideration as to how interactions may be completed without physical contact or staggered over a different period of time.
- Sufficient PPE, disinfectant and cleaning products should be made available in the field.

Risk Assessments for transmission of COVID-19

A risk assessment evaluates the risk of illness to staff and students through the transmission of COVID-19. While the best way to mitigate the risk of transmission is to maintain physical distancing of at least 1.5m and decreased the time spent in close contact with others, this may not always be possible. A risk assessment is a tool to enable other measures to be taken. A risk assessment can be completed online through [UQSafe Risk](#) by the person in charge of the activity (research or teaching). The local Work Health and Safety Coordinator can assist – a list of local contacts can be found [here](#). For more information, see the [Safety Note – Risk Assessments – Reducing transmission of COVID-19](#) in Resources.

Students and Staff on Campus

- Hand hygiene facilities and products should be visible, and their use promoted widely.
- Local COVID-19 Management Plans must be complied with.
- Physical distancing guidelines and good hygiene practices should be promoted, and staff/students reminded of avoiding physical greetings.
- Cues to encourage physical distancing should be in place for common areas.
- Strategies to avoid queuing should be in place and where necessary establish clear 1.5m separation between people.

Public facing areas

- Physical distance plans should be established for each public facing area. Assess the risk through a risk assessment and determine if the availability of technology (phone, through audio visual) to address enquiries can be used, moving public back from counters via a visual or physical barrier (e.g. tape, bollards), use of floor decals to assist with suitable queue spacing etc.
- Appropriate hand hygiene products should be in place in each public/counter area.

Library

- Self-service access (e.g. checking out/in books) should be encouraged.
- Online support services, via digital platforms (e.g. video conferencing, email, etc) should continue where appropriate.
- Use of electronic, rather than hardcopy resources should continue to be promoted
- The layout of the library space, to enable physical distancing should be adjusted where possible (e.g. limit number to access, limit chairs/tables, install screens, etc.).
- Where physical distancing is not possible given the nature of the work process or physical environment, and where this cannot be reasonably modified, consider other options through risk assessment e.g. use of technology (phone, through audio-visual) to address enquiries, moving public back from counters via a visual or physical cue.

Shared office environments and open plan work areas

- Local management plans should be developed to ensure appropriate physical distancing is in place – 1.5m separation. Plans may include staggered hours or rosters (e.g. rotating between working from campus and working from home).



- Shared workspaces (e.g. hot desk) should be minimised where possible. However, if unavoidable, there should have an agreed disinfection protocol between users.

Eating Areas

- Adhere to the physical distancing arrangements, e.g. takeaway only, barricading, marked standing points, no congregating in public areas, use online ordering if available, PayWave rather than cash.

Computer facilities

- Appropriate hand hygiene and cleaning products should be available in all computer labs with signage to promote pre-use and post use cleaning.
- Physical distancing should be implemented e.g. staggering the numbers of computers that are used at any one time (e.g. every second computer).
- Remove or bar access to seating to ensure compliance with maximum occupancy of rooms, place signage on external doors. Spaces to be monitored to ensure compliance with room requirements.

Resources

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-information-on-social-distancing>

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources>

Universities Australia – Principle and protocols for reducing the potential risk of COVID-19 transmission at universities

COVID-19: Guidance on clinical trials for institutions, HRECs, researchers and sponsors

Chief Health Officer public health directions - <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers>