



Safety Note

6 July 2020

Risk Assessments – Reducing 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 decrease the time spent in close contact with others, this may not always be possible. The risk assessment is a tool to enable other measures to be considered.

What happens when physical distancing is not always possible?

Generally if physical distancing is not possible, then a risk assessment should be undertaken to assess the contributing factors to the risk and mitigate them as far as practicably possible. A risk assessment can be completed online through [UQSafe Risk](#) and guidance can be found on the [HSW website](#).

Who is responsible for undertaking the risk assessment?

The Course Coordinator is responsible for completing a risk assessment. They are then to ensure that the lecturer, supervisor, tutor, event coordinator or research leader has a copy of the risk assessment and is aware of the controls.

Who can assist me with the risk assessment?

Each Faculty, Institute or Central Services Division has a HSW Safety Manager or Safety contact that can assist with this process – a list of local contacts can be found [here](#).

Who is responsible for monitoring that people are doing the right thing?

The person in charge of the class activity. This may be the lecturer, supervisor, tutor, event coordinator, research leader etc, they are responsible for ensuring the action items from the risk assessment are implemented and that people in their class/activity follow the protocols.

What factors should I consider?

The most effective control measures are to facilitate safe physical distancing (1.5 m) between people and encourage staff and students who are unwell to stay home and recover. In teaching and learning environments physical distancing can be effectively managed through appropriate timetabling which will avoid placing students in teaching venues above their safe maximum capacity. For other work environments, it is important to consider how the physical work environment and work processes may be modified to facilitate physical distancing and minimise transmission of COVID-19.

Each area is different but some of the common factors include:

- Number of people.
- Shared equipment.
- Duration of activity
- Whether the activity has a practical component using equipment or whether it is instructional in nature.
- Size of the room/space.



- Access to hand washing facilities/hand sanitising.
- Record keeping (list of attendees, time of attendance, etc.)

What controls could be considered?

The risk of transmission may vary from area to area and from activity to activity. See the Safety Notes - [Physical distancing in teaching spaces](#), [Physical Distancing in laboratories and practical learning settings](#) and [Returning to Campus](#).

Controls that can be considered include:

- Using technology to demonstrate or instruct e.g. Zoom, prepare a short video, FaceTime, etc.
- Modify the teaching space by adjusting furniture to allow more space in the environment.
- Reducing the duration of the activity by splitting the activity into a face to face and an online component.
- Use of PPE if there is a requirement to be in an enclosed area for an extended period of time or in close face to face proximity (ensure adequate training in use of PPE and ensure PPE is suitable for the purpose).
- Ensure participants wash their hands before and after activities.
- Wiping down shared equipment between users.
- At the beginning of the session/activity the person in charge to remind everyone to physically distance themselves to the extent possible, use the hygiene stations (wipes and sanitiser) to wipe their areas and sanitise their hands, wipe any shared equipment, and to advise if they are ill so they can leave (arrangements to be made to obtain notes from others or speak to the person in charge at another time).

Can I use face masks as a control?

If the risk assessment determines that masks or P2 respirators are appropriate for the task, then they can be ordered directly from [UQeMarket](#). The person conducting the risk assessment must ensure that the type of masks are appropriate for the activity and that instruction and training is provided to users. See [here](#) for the FAQs on use of masks in general public

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](#)