



Safety Note

28 April 2022

Reducing COVID-19 transmission in teaching, learning, research and meeting environments

Overarching principles

To maintain the safety of staff and students, it is important:

- to get [vaccinated](#) and have your booster;
- to physically distance (1.5m) from others to the extent possible;
- that an individual can make the decision to wear a [face mask](#) when unable to keep 1.5 metres away from others and maintaining high levels of personal hygiene;
- to not attending campus if:
 - unwell;
 - have any COVID-19 like symptoms;
 - waiting on test results for COVID-19;
 - have tested positive with a PCR or Rapid Antigen Test (RAT)
- get tested if you have any COVID-19 symptoms immediately and stay home until your results are known **and** your symptoms have resolved;

Why is this is still important?

COVID-19 is circulating in our community and we must practice our good habits.

Maintaining your up to date vaccination is the most effective thing you can do. Physical distancing and personal hygiene is important as we know 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 48 hours before their symptoms appeared;
- close and prolonged contact with a person with a confirmed infection; or
- touching objects or surfaces (such as door handles or tables) contaminated from a cough or sneeze from an infected person, 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 continue to support measures to minimise any future spread of COVID-19 for the good of the entire UQ community, and the community at large so that we can all continue to be well and healthy. As Government reduces restrictions in the general community, individuals must take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.

General measures

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

- Stay home if you are unwell.



- Anyone who has symptoms such as a fever, respiratory symptoms (cough, sore throat, shortness of breath), runny nose, fatigue, diarrhoea, vomiting or nausea or loss of smell and/or taste, should get tested immediately through a self-administered Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) or PCR at a healthcare facility. If your RAT is positive, the result must be registered through this link - <https://www.qld.gov.au/rat-positive>.
- Practice physical distancing by:
 - Keeping a distance of at least 1.5 metres between people to the extent possible, and if you can't, you are encouraged to wear a mask.
 - Continuing to use technology for meetings where complying with physical distancing requirements is not possible.
- Ensure impeccable personal hygiene practices:
 - Frequent washing of hands with soap and water or using hand sanitiser, especially after going to the toilet and before and after eating,
 - Avoiding touching your face with your hands,
 - Stop the practice of handshaking as a greeting, and
 - Sneeze/cough away from others and into your bent elbow.
- Wipe down surfaces and equipment used, or if there is a requirement to share equipment, after you have used it.
- Dispose of tissues and rubbish immediately in the general waste bin, don't leave rubbish on tables or the floor.
- Physical distancing across the University i.e. maintaining a separation of 1.5m, should be observed.
- Consider how you will travel to campus. See [Safety Note – Public Transport, taxis and ride share](#).

Supervisor advice and responsibility

Supervisors and managers must remind and monitor people within their area of responsibility that they apply the *general measures* above and assist in the development of risk assessments.

Encourage staff that are considered vulnerable to make themselves known to supervisors and managers so that appropriate steps can be taken to mitigate COVID-19 risks as far as practicable.

For further general information on responsibilities see [Health and Safety Responsibilities](#).

Specific guidance for teaching

- Physical distancing (1.5m) should be observed to the extent possible- this means to spread out in the space allowing as much distance as possible between you and others e.g. no overcrowding at tables.
- Ensuring minimal crowding at entrances and exits for rooms and buildings; give people time to enter and leave.
- Maintaining and promoting good hygiene standards, including sanitising hands and desk space at the beginning and end of teaching and learning sessions.
- Encourage the use of face masks if density is an issue.

Use of laboratory and specialist learning spaces

- For each lab, learning and teaching space:
 - Physical distancing should be implemented to the extent possible which allows teaching to continue.



- Cleaning protocols and ensure high touch surfaces, such as benches, door handles, etc. are regularly wiped down.
- Relevant personal protective equipment (PPE) is available and used, where appropriate as determined through a risk assessment.
- Appropriate waste disposal methods are available taking into consideration of the COVID-19 risk (e.g. participants dispose of their own PPE).
- Disposable face masks may be required as PPE based on laboratory activities. Reusable cloth face masks cannot be used in laboratories.

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

- Practise physical distancing, avoiding unnecessary close contact with others attempting to keep a distance of at least 1.5m between participants.
- Encourage the use of face masks if distancing is difficult.
- Ensure impeccable personal hygiene practices.
- Reduce opportunities for direct transmission e.g. sharing items, unnecessary touching.

Clinical / human participant

- Participants who are unwell should be advised to leave immediately to seek medical advice and get a COVID test. They are not to return to campus until they exhibit no symptoms.
- Clients and staff should maintain physical distancing requirements to the extent possible.
- Where physical distancing is not reasonably possible, individuals should be encouraged to wear a mask in addition to other strategies to mitigate the risk should be considered.
- Cleaning protocols should be developed for communal equipment and areas.
- Management strategies for waiting/reception spaces, access and egress should also be considered.
- Masks are required in healthcare settings where face to face services are provided. For more information, see [Qld Health webpage](#).

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 either in person or in virtual mode if necessary.
- Maintain a distance of at least 1.5m from others to the extent possible.
- 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.

Lab Based

- For each laboratory, physical distancing should be implemented which allows research to continue within guidelines.



- Each lab should review cleaning protocols and regularly clean 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.
- In certified facilities, reusable cloth masks are not to be used, the appropriate PPE for that environment must be used and disposed of appropriately within the facility.
- Where there are contractors and other 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.
- Activities should comply with physical distancing, to the extent possible.
- Sufficient PPE and cleaning products should be made available in the field.

Risk Assessments for preventing transmission of COVID-19

A risk assessment evaluates the risk of illness to staff and students through the transmission of COVID-19. The best way to mitigate the risk of transmission is to have your vaccination up to date. Also important is to maintain appropriate physical distancing and decrease the time spent in close contact with others. This may not always be possible. A risk assessment is a tool to consider other measures that can be taken. A risk assessment can be completed online through [UQSafe](#) by the person in charge of the activity (research or teaching) or event. 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.
- 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 possible establish clear separation between people.

Public facing areas

- Physical distancing should be maintained.
- Appropriate hand hygiene products should be in place in each public/counter area.

Library

- Self-service access (e.g. checking out/in books) is 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
- Observation of physical distancing to the extent possible, no overcrowding at tables.



- Where physical distancing is not possible given the nature of the work process or physical environment, masks should be encouraged.
- Consider other options through a [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, open plan work areas and internal meeting rooms

- Shared workspaces (e.g. hot desk) should be minimised where possible. However, if unavoidable, there should have an agreed disinfection protocol between users.
- Face masks may be worn if physical distancing cannot be maintained (i.e. workers are closer than 1.5m apart when working at workstations).

Shared 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 where possible.

External Guests/Patrons

Meeting rooms

- Face masks may be worn should an individual choose to do so if meeting participants are unable to maintain distance of 1.5m from others.

Eating Areas

- Adhere to the physical distancing arrangements. If in a café, restaurant, bar follow any instructions provided by the venue.

Resources

<https://www.covid19.qld.gov.au/government-actions/how-you-can-help-keep-queensland-covid-safe>

<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/legislation/cho-public-health-directions-under-expanded-public-health-act-powers/public-health-and-social-measures-linked-to-vaccination-status-direction>

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/queensland-restrictions-update/public-health-and-social-measures-linked-to-vaccination-status>

<https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/health-alerts/coronavirus-covid-19/current-status/public-health-directions/mandatory-masks>