



## Safety Note

4 March 2021

# Government requirements and guidance: Reducing the transmission of COVID-19 in teaching, research and meeting environments

## Overarching principles

To maintain the safety of staff and students, it is important that Government requirements are followed, these include:

- appropriate physical distancing (1.5m) 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 by QLD Public Health.

## Why is this is still important?

Even though people have done really well so far, COVID-19 has not gone away – and we must continue to practice our good habits.

Physical distancing and personal hygiene are most effective 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 (particularly if they cough or sneeze); 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 stop 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.

## General measures

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

- Stay at home if you are sick, are awaiting test results or have been directed to self-isolate by Queensland Public Health.



- 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 see a doctor immediately.
- Practice physical distancing by:
  - Keeping a distance of at least 1.5 metres between people to the extent possible. Avoid overcrowding in common spaces.
  - Continuing to use technology to meet 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 horizontal 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 to the extent possible.
- Consider how you will travel to campus and apply the general principles of not travelling when you are ill, maintain 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.

## Supervisor advice and responsibility

Supervisors and Managers must remind and monitor people within their area of responsibility that they apply to the General Measures above and assist in the development of risk assessments.

## Specific guidance for teaching

- Capacity for teaching spaces >100 people is one person per 2 square metres.
- Capacity for smaller education and teaching spaces <100 people will be subject to no capacity restrictions, however 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.
- Observation of physical distancing to the extent possible, such as seating at normal spacing with 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.
- QR codes are available for use. If Queensland cases of COVID-19 increase, staff and students will be requested to use them.

## Use of laboratory and specialist learning spaces

- For each lab, learning and teaching space:



- physical distancing should be implemented which allows teaching to continue within guidelines to the extent possible.
- cleaning protocols and ensure high touch surfaces, such as benches, door handles, etc. are regularly disinfected.
- 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).

### 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 participants.
- 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 not to participate until they have a confirmed negative test and exhibiting no symptoms.
- 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 should be considered.
- Cleaning and disinfecting protocols should be developed for communal equipment and areas.
- Management strategies for waiting/reception spaces, access and egress should 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.
- The requirement for 1.5m separation should be adhered to, 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 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.
- 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 to the extent possible.
- Activities should comply with physical distancing, to the extent possible.
- Sufficient PPE, disinfectant 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. While the best way to mitigate the risk of transmission 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 enable other measures to 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.
- 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 possible establish clear separation between people.

## Public facing areas

- Physical distancing should be maintained to the extent possible.
- 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, such as seating at normal spacing with no overcrowding at tables.



- Where physical distancing is not possible given the nature of the work process or physical environment, 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, open plan work areas and internal meeting rooms

- Office environments and internal meeting rooms (used by UQ staff only for internal purposes) **are not** subject to density requirements (1 person/2square meters) although people should maintain physical distancing to the extent possible.
- Shared workspaces (e.g. hot desk) should be minimised where possible. However, if unavoidable, there should have an agreed disinfection protocol between users.

### 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

- Meetings held at UQ where external guests (non-UQ Staff) are in attendance **are** subject to the occupant density requirements of no more than 1 person/2 square metres.

### Meeting areas, foyers, reception areas

- These areas open to external guests or patrons **are** subject to occupant density of 1 person/2 square metres.

## Eating Areas

- Adhere to the physical distancing arrangements to the extent possible. If in a café, restaurant, bar follow any instructions provided by the venue from their COVID-Safe Plan.

## Resources

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

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>