

Frequently asked questions Guidelines for managers and staff 14 August 2020

Dear colleagues,

I do hope you and your families are keeping well and you manage to enjoy some well-deserved annual leave during the next few weeks. Although we might not have been able to travel to the destinations we planned, we have at least been able to experience some very sunny and warm weather. It has been great to be able to catch up with colleagues returning to our campuses and to feel a sense of community returning. We continue to monitor the latest government advice and guidance on Covid-19 and we are keeping on top of any changes as they arise. Our aim is to enable our staff and students to work and study safely and effectively, both where this needs to be on campus and where this can be remotely.

Perhaps the biggest leadership lesson from lockdown is a new perspective on treating employees as individuals. Everyone has had a different experience of lockdown; some may have been ill, bereaved, or caring for others. Some may have experienced financial hardship, relationship breakdown or isolation. Whilst some have been furloughed, others may have worked all out during lockdown, covering for others. Some have worked at home predominantly whilst others have worked on campus. As we return to working on campus, this perspective will remain vital to ensure we continue to recognise our unique needs and experiences and support each other.

Through the work of many of our managers and staff, Heads and Directors of Department/Institute and our campus unions, we are developing our return to work plans as we hear about questions or concerns being raised by you. We will need to continue to review and reconfigure our work as the situation and guidance around COVID-19 changes. As we all plan for the start of the new academic year 2020-21, we expect more staff to return to work on campus to join colleagues who are already returned. This return will continue to be undertaken following the careful planning of working environments.

I would like to thank all of you who participated in our recent Health and Wellbeing survey, circulated by our professional development colleagues. We were pleased to receive 323 responses to questions across two focus areas: how you have been managing across the past few weeks working either predominantly at home, on campus or a mix of both; and a range of questions modelled on the Health and Safety Executive's Wellbeing and Stress Indicator tool. Your survey responses have helped to inform the questions and answers in this document. You can find a link to the first part of the survey outcomes here - <https://staffnet.chi.ac.uk/?q=human-resources/content/wellbeing-survey-2020> Colleagues will be preparing a summary on the second part of the survey and this will soon be available. Our HR/professional development team are working through the content of the professional development survey and again, feedback on this has been enormously helpful.

Thank you all for your hard work and support across the past few months – we have all been working in exceptional circumstances and whilst COVID-19 continues to be with us, this means inevitably we will continue to have our own personal anxieties and concerns. Where we can share these, and put in place mitigating actions as far as possible, we won't feel quite so alone in dealing with this evolving situation.

You are welcome to get in touch should you have a particular question you feel will be helpful to share with colleagues. All previous Q&A's remain available on our Internet page for reference. Take good care of yourselves and I will look forward to welcoming you back to campus upon your return.

Warmest wishes, Lissie

1. What can I expect when I return to working on campus?

For many staff, the transition to remote working happened very quickly and many have become accustomed to this way of working and adapted well. Whilst it will be important for us to ensure we do not lose the flexibility and creativity in working that we have developed during the period of lockdown, it is inevitable that we will need colleagues to return to working on campus in some form or another over the coming weeks.

The expectation is that where staff need to be present on campus to perform all or some of their role, Heads and Directors of Department/Institute and line managers are responsible for managing their work areas, compliant with their Covid-19 risk assessments. These detailed risk assessments will be updated regularly to take account of changing circumstances and will be shared with you. Please make yourselves aware of these risk assessments to make sure that they are being complied with. It may be necessary to make changes to working practices whilst we adhere to government guidance.

Once you are back working on campus, there will be expectations around conduct and behaviour that won't be quite the same as during normal times. These are mostly concerned with social distancing and hygiene. Please note and follow all new directions/guidance. When moving around buildings, please be patient and observe the wait and pass rule. Use your face covering and the hand sanitiser on entrance to buildings and where located in your department. Continue to wash your hands regularly throughout the day with soap and water or hand sanitiser, especially before using touch points such as door handles, stairs, printers and other appliances.

If you, or a member of your household, develop symptoms of COVID-19, then you must follow the government's isolation procedures and not come to campus. You should advise your manager as soon as possible of any test outcomes. If the test is positive you should not risk making your health worse by continuing to work remotely unless you feel able to and you should report sickness absence as per the University's Guidance on Managing Sickness Absence.

2. How will I know when I should return to campus?

Your manager, Head or Director of Department/Institute, will ask you to return when it is appropriate for you to do so and will confirm that on-campus working may resume. It is likely that returns to campus will be phased over the next few weeks, depending on role requirements. Your manager will discuss with you the plans that have been shared for your department/building and the practical measures that are being put into place. It is important to adhere to guidance established by your manager. All Heads/Directors of Department/Institute have produced a 'return to work' plan so that you can work together ahead of any return to campus.

3. I am anxious about returning to work. What should I do?

This pandemic has had a big impact on people's lives and there will be differing levels of anxiety about the prospect of returning to work on campus. It is understandable to feel apprehensive about returning to work, but you can be assured that work is taking place to make appropriate arrangements. In the first instance, it is important to have an honest dialogue with your manager about any health reasons or other anxieties you have about returning to campus. You should speak with your manager about your specific concerns as they will be able to reassure you as far as possible and support you. Where necessary, an individual risk assessment will be undertaken.

Sources of support

The Charity, Mind, have created useful resources that colleagues can access.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/coronavirus/coronavirus-and-your-wellbeing/>

Alternatively, online resources are available via our professional development team:

<http://wordpress.chi.ac.uk/staffdevelopment/covid-19/>.

Get in touch with your lead HR contact: Helen Girling, Charlotte Meneely, Kevin Botto, Lucy Harper, Cecile Mould, or Lissie Whitaker.

4. What has been put in place already to support our return?

The safety, physical and mental health and wellbeing of all of our staff is of huge importance and is the first consideration when planning a return to working on-campus. Heads and Directors of Department//Institute have taken into consideration how work is carried out in your department by members of your team and whether there are any responsibilities or tasks that need to be altered to reduce risk. This has included identifying work activities or situations that could potentially cause transmission of the virus, deciding how likely it is that someone could be exposed and taking actions to control the risk.

Planning has reflected that returning to work on-campus will be different for different people, depending on role requirements. You may be asked to work in a particular way to maintain social distancing, for example there may be one-way systems in place within your own department or limits on the number of people who can work in one area or office. There will be changes in teaching spaces and room set-ups to allow for social distancing. This is to ensure the safety of all colleagues working in a team and across the University - this may mean some members of staff will continue to work from home for a longer period where this is considered possible/appropriate to the role requirements.

It is worth noting that the University is working closely with the campus unions – UCU and Unison, via the Joint Consultative Group, on return to work arrangements. As a minimum, a range of checks and procedures have been implemented, including, for example (but not limited to) the following:

- physically arranging work areas and teaching rooms to keep people one plus metre apart
- reconfiguring teaching spaces, including revised seating/capacity arrangements
- implementing campus adjustments to allow for further teaching spaces
- aligning the teaching timetable to allow for social distancing where required
- physically moving chairs/tables so they maintain social distancing measures
- marking floors and entrances across both campuses with one-way signage
- providing signage/marked areas to remind people to keep their distance and to maintain good hygiene/handwashing technique
- using Perspex screens to create a physical barrier between people
- locating hand sanitisers across campuses and at entrances
- requesting staff, students and visitors to bring face coverings with them to campus
- placing electronic thermometers across our campuses

If you have any particular questions about returning to campus please discuss with your manager in the first instance.

Sources of support

You can access further information (animated video) via this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ftwnezTsz8A>

The Environmental Health and Safety Team have produced guidance for all of us on social distancing measures via this link:

https://staffnet.chi.ac.uk/?q=system/files/social_distancing_guidance_for_students_and_staff_1.pdf

If you have any particular concerns about social distancing and/or moving around the campuses safely, please get in touch with Kevin Hickman, Health and Safety Manager, at K.Hickman@chi.ac.uk, or John Kingdon, Director of Estate Management.

5. Personal circumstances

We understand the risk of coronavirus can create an increasing level of anxiety. The University is a welcoming, diverse and inclusive community and we need to strike a balance to minimise risk by following the Government's advice, while continuing to treat people with dignity, care and respect, particularly those staff who might be feeling vulnerable.

There are a number of personal circumstances that may affect your confidence and ability to return to campus working. These include:

- having an underlying health condition that makes you particularly vulnerable to Covid-19
- being from part of the population disproportionately affected by Covid-19, such as members of the BAME community or those over the age of 70
- being pregnant
- having a close family member that you are living with or have caring responsibilities for who falls into any of the categories outlined.

The University aims to ensure that personal circumstances are considered as far as possible. An individual risk assessment is available for managers to complete where employees raise with their manager personal circumstances such as those listed above. Therefore, all managers/staff are required to remain discrete and to respond sensitively to the individual concerned whilst respecting the individual's privacy and UK data protection law requirements.

Shielding is a measure to protect you if you are clinically extremely vulnerable by minimising all interaction between yourself and others. Shielding came to an end at the beginning of August 2020 as determined by the Government. If you have a serious underlying health condition that may put you at very high risk of severe illness from coronavirus, you are strongly advised to discuss your circumstances with your manager so that an individual risk assessment can be carried out. It may be necessary to arrange a referral to Occupational Health for an assessment (who may liaise with your health professional/GP) in relation to providing further advice on your working arrangements.

Sources of support

An Individual risk assessment template and guidance on carrying out an individual risk assessment has been produced by our Health and Safety/Estate Management colleagues:

https://staffnet.chi.ac.uk/?q=system/files/individual_risk_assessment_0.docx

Individual risk assessments will remain confidential between the employee and line manager. Any actions arising out of the risk assessment will only be referred to others (for example, the Environmental Health and Safety team where further practical, estate-related mitigations may be required) following discussion with the employee. Otherwise actions arising out of individual risk assessments will be supported as far as possible by managers in discussion with the employee.

Guidance on completing the risk assessment can be provided by Kevin Hickman, K.Hickman@chi.ac.uk, or James Corrie, J.Corrie@chi.ac.uk.

6. I work in a customer-focused role. What measures will be implemented to protect me?

Visible social distancing measures will be implemented. For example, in some areas temporary barriers will prevent staff or students coming too close to desks and this may include Perspex shielding or barriers. Entry to high traffic areas will be regulated to keep the numbers of people in the space as low as possible. Signs and taped markings across entry or exits points have been put in place where required. Face coverings should be worn in front-facing roles where they are in shared University spaces to provide further protection.

7. I share an office. What will I be required to do?

Your manager will have considered your working environment in discussion with Health and Safety colleagues when carrying out a risk assessment and this may have required a change in the number of people in the office or area at any one time. For example, some colleagues will continue to work remotely in the short-term or there will be a rota system in place to reduce the number of people at any one time from using the space. You may be asked to work at a desk or in an office which is not your own/is not in its usual location in order to maintain safe distances and working practices.

8. What will be in place in shared University spaces such as Otters and other food outlets?

Otters Restaurant and Cup Cafe will have a take-away or sit-down option, but seating will be limited to allow for social distancing, i.e. there will be not be quite so many tables/chairs available. To allow for social distancing, a secondary food outlet will be available at the ZEE Bar providing 'street food' and other dishes and refreshments. Hand sanitisers should be used at the entrances and one-way systems will be in place. You do not need to use a face covering whilst eating, but you should replace your face covering when entering/leaving the restaurant/café.

9. Do I need to continue social distancing when I return to campus?

Yes. You will need to ensure you maintain social distancing on campus, both within buildings and shared campus spaces and also outside. Please refer to guidance on social distancing in Point 4. All staff are encouraged to regularly check advice available on the University's home page and in regular email updates/questions and answers and to follow the guidance indicated. The health and wellbeing of our students, staff and our community is of utmost importance.

10. What is being done to minimise the spread of infection?

The University's Estate Management team is reviewing its domestic cleaning programme regularly as part of our Coronavirus response. Our Cleaning Services staff are doing fantastic work to keep us as safe as possible through re-prioritised, regular cleaning schedules. Enhanced cleaning services will help with additional cleaning requirements across each campus. You may see Cleaning Services staff regularly cleaning door handles and shared kitchen and toilet facilities. Hand Sanitiser will be available at entrances and staff/students will be encouraged to utilise on entering a building. Additional hand sanitisers will be available across campus to use as required. Toilet facilities will have soap and paper towels available.

11. Remind me of my health and safety obligations

The University has a duty to protect the health and safety of employees. Employees also have a duty to take reasonable care for the health and safety of both themselves and others who may be affected by their acts (or indeed omissions) at work. The safety and wellbeing of staff and students is paramount, and the University is continuously monitoring the situation as government guidance is received.

12. Do I have to wear a face covering at work?

All employers will be assessing the use of face coverings on a case by case basis depending on the workplace environment, other appropriate mitigations they have put in place, and whether reasonable exemptions apply. The University is no exception and very careful consideration has been given to the use of face coverings in our setting, alongside our obligation to ensure we provide, as far as practicably possible, a safe working environment. Face coverings are not classed as personal protective equipment (PPE) as they are generally not manufactured to a recognised CE marked standard (such as surgical face masks which are limited to healthcare activities).

Social distancing and good hand hygiene remain the primary methods of reducing the spread of the virus. All staff, students and visitors to the campus are asked to bring a face covering with them and to wear face coverings in all shared spaces/facilities on our campuses where other forms of mitigating action are not possible.

Sources of support

Government guidance on the use of face coverings is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own/face-coverings-when-to-wear-one-and-how-to-make-your-own>

13. I have to isolate due to Testing and Tracing requirements

If you are isolating because you have been contacted by NHS England Test and Trace you can return to working on campus after the requested period as long as you remain well.

Sources of support

Please review this government guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nhs-test-and-trace-how-it-works>

14. I was required to isolate on return from holiday abroad in Spain due to government advice – what happens if I have to isolate after travelling?

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office currently advises British nationals against all but essential international travel. The announcement about travel from Spain was made on less than a day's notice. Employees travelling would have already arrived in Spain for their holidays, or were on route, having travelled when the country was included in the travel corridors list. Today we learnt other travel corridors are affected requiring people entering the UK from France and the Netherlands to isolate.

We are all aware that government advice can be amended quickly and caution is advised when making any overseas travel arrangements. You are obliged to self-isolate for the required amount of time should the situation arise where other travel corridors are affected and you are currently on holiday in that country.

Where you knowingly intend to travel abroad where there is already a requirement in place requiring you to self-isolate on your return, this will very likely affect your ability to return to work and/or deliver role requirements. Please discuss annual leave commitments, travel and holiday arrangements with your manager. Covering a period of self-isolation after travelling will either be by taking outstanding annual leave (or annual leave from the next annual leave year) or a period of unpaid leave where work cannot be undertaken remotely due to the nature of role requirements.

Sources of support

The government foreign travel advice website is available here: Government Foreign Travel Advice: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

15. Are all of the University buildings currently open?

We are beginning to re-open buildings on campus to enable staff access to work in offices and to make campus alterations or where decorating and deep cleaning is being carried out. If your manager has asked you to return to campus you will be able to access as agreed with your manager.

16. I have childcare responsibilities. Schools are hoping to open in September but my child's holiday facilities are not open and this is affecting my return to work, what should I do?

If you haven't already, you should discuss your personal circumstances with your manager so that they are aware of your situation. They can then factor this in when making plans for work to be carried out on campus. The University will seek to ensure that any working arrangements accommodate as far as possible childcare responsibilities due to the closure of out-of-school activities (and more recently, Schools). Many staff have responsibilities for childcare and this has been facilitated by working from home arrangements, altering working patterns and taking annual leave.

Of course, it isn't always childcare commitments that require cover arrangements as this can also apply to other caring responsibilities. As above, please discuss with your manager in the first instance.

17. Am I allowed to move around campus, e.g. at lunchtimes or to other offices/campus locations?

Yes, you can move around campus in outside areas across pedestrian walkways but you must maintain social distancing when moving around. You should only take essential trips within buildings, departments and across campuses, maintaining social distancing whilst doing so.

It is not advisable to enter departments that may have social distancing measures in place as a result of a risk assessment if the occupiers of the department do not know of your arrival. This is to avoid too many people in spaces where social distancing measures would be compromised. Do contact colleagues first so that they can help you/support meeting arrangements and/or suitable locations and/or arrange the meeting online. Although colleagues will be very happy to see you, a helpful indication of the time of your arrival beforehand will be welcomed.

18. I am worried about using public transport when I return to work on-campus

Many staff have indicated that doing without the daily commute and/or travel arrangements has been helpful whilst being able to work remotely. If you are worried about using public transport to get to work, you should discuss with your manager in the first instance. It might be possible, for example, to temporarily alter your arrival time or leaving time to avoid travelling at peak times. If you have personal circumstances that may be causing you a concern (e.g. an underlying health issue) an individual risk assessment will help to support discussions where an employee raises with their manager.

The current cycle to work scheme is being reviewed to see whether there are further opportunities for staff to access schemes for bike purchases. Whilst it is not possible for everybody to travel to work by car, walking or by bike, you should follow

government advice about face coverings and social distancing when using public transport.

19. Are there any changes being made to the inter-campus bus service?

The capacity of the inter-campus buses has been assessed in line with government guidance. The frequency and number of inter-campus buses will be increased during peak travel/demand times where this is required. The inter-campus bus service, provided by Stagecoach, will require all users to wear face coverings, as required on all public transport. Enquiries about the inter-campus bus service/timetable can be made to colleagues in Estate Management in the usual way or via Charles White, Head of Campus and Residential Services.

20. I am able to work from home but I would really like to work on campus now, can I come in?

It is important your manager is aware before you return to campus so that they can ensure all arrangements within your department/area are prepared in line with their risk assessments. If you have particular personal circumstances that mean you need to come onto campus to work and your department/area is not quite ready, your manager will arrange as far as possible for you to work in one of the buildings/areas that is open/ready. You are very welcome to return and to be working on campus.

21. I am a manager and I have a member of staff who wants to work from home permanently. What should I do?

All eligible employees have the right to ask their manager to consider a proposal for flexible working conditions via the University's Flexible Working Policy (available from the HR page of the Staff Intranet). However, it is very unlikely that permanently working from home will be suitable in the University's context, particularly if the role provides frontline support for students or staff in a teaching and/or professional service capacity.

Working from home for a proportion of time is appropriate for academic staff and may be appropriate for a limited number of professional service roles in the short-term/current Covid-19 situation and where suitable. Managers and staff should note that staff have a right to request flexible working and not an automatic right to alter their work patterns/arrangements. However, the University takes all such requests seriously and is committed to following best practice in this area and to helping staff to balance work and home life where possible.

22. What happens if I find myself in a situation where I am required to self-isolate or quarantine?

For information, the latest advice on Coronavirus is available here: [the NHS website](#).

If you develop symptoms requiring you to self-isolate whilst working at home, please notify your manager and a member of the Human Resources team:

- Helen Girling, H.Girling@chi.ac.uk, 01243 816120
- Charlotte Meneely, C.Meneely@chi.ac.uk, 01243 816320
- Kevin Botto, K.Botto@chi.ac.uk, 01243 816047
- Elisabeth Whitaker, E.Whitaker@chi.ac.uk, 01243 816119

Please provide your name, dates and circumstances. This will help the University to closely monitor incidences and take the most appropriate actions.

23. I'm living in a household with someone who has coronavirus

If you live in a household with others displaying symptoms of coronavirus, you should self-isolate in line with [government guidance](#) and notify your manager as soon as possible. Where possible, make the necessary arrangements for working remotely at home. If it has been agreed with your manager that working from home remotely isn't possible, you will still be paid for your period of self-isolation but you may need to be flexible in relation to covering role requirements when you return. You will also need to notify your HR lead to ensure that HR records your absence as being related to self-isolation due to living in a household with someone who has coronavirus.

24. What can managers/Heads/Directors/staff communicate about an employee with coronavirus?

Under UK data protection law, personal data concerning health is 'special category data'. This means that the University needs to ensure that any communication does not include any data about the individual who is unwell. For example, while it would be fine to let employees know that there has been a confirmed coronavirus case within its workforce, it would not be appropriate to provide any details from which the individual might be identified. Therefore, all managers/staff are required to remain discrete and to respond sensitively to the individual concerned whilst respecting the individual's privacy and UK data protection law requirements.

25. Will the University's Sickness Absence policy apply if someone has coronavirus?

The University's sickness absence policy will apply if a member of staff is unwell due to coronavirus. The sickness absence procedures indicated will adapt accordingly to take account of working at home arrangements (e.g. where meetings with managers are required these may be carried out online or by telephone) but it is important employees who are unwell/have been unwell due to coronavirus report this to their manager (as would be the case with any period of sickness absence). An employee should follow official medical guidance to self-isolate.

Sources of Support

The University's sickness absence procedures can be found here:

[https://staffnet.chi.ac.uk/human-resources/content/sickness-absence-guidance.](https://staffnet.chi.ac.uk/human-resources/content/sickness-absence-guidance)

26. Can the University take steps to prevent an employee who has refused to self-isolate from coming onto campus or coming into contact with other employees and students?

Yes. The University must bear in mind the duties that they owe other employees or students under UK health and safety law. If the University knowingly allows an individual who has been advised to self-isolate to attend their premises or come into contact with other employees, they may be in breach of those duties, particularly where other employees and/or students are more vulnerable to infection – for example, pregnant employees, those with long-term health conditions.

27. Are there any staff still on furlough?

Where staff have been unable to carry out their role as a result of COVID-19, the University has utilised the UK Government's Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme by placing a number of employees on 'furlough' where they and their role meet the requirements of the Scheme. The majority of staff on furlough returned to work in June and July and there are a very small number of furlough arrangements currently in place during August where departments or functions are unable to operate or open. Previous Q&A's referenced the Government's Scheme in more detail.

28. Will the University be offering staff 'flu vaccinations this year?

Influenza vaccinations will be available should staff wish to have one and this year vaccinations will take place as follows:

Dates	Venue and Campus
Tuesday, 29 September 2020	Student Treatment Room, New Hall, BOC
Thursday, 1 October 2020	Learning Resource Centre Annexe, BRC
Friday, 9 October 2020	Student Treatment Room, New Hall, BOC

Further details will be circulated by Suzanne Jones, HR/Wellbeing & Inclusivity Officer, including information on how to access/book. Influenza vaccinations are offered on a 'first come, first serve' basis. Contact Suzanne Jones:

S.Jones@chi.ac.uk

29. Do I have to pay for car parking when I return to work on-campus?

Car parking charges on campus have been waived since April 2020. Car parking charges will be reinstated from 1 August 2020.

30. Where will this Q&A document be available?

This document will be published on the University's homepage and the Human Resources page of the Intranet.

This document will be updated to reflect any changes in or to working arrangements where government advice or HE sector advice is received.