

## **Using Our Spaces – 2021-22 Approach**

### Summary

Following discussion with Public Health through the summer planning meeting –

Following initial discussions with Public Health through the summer planning meeting, the Gold Sustain Group as well as insights shared by sector groups, it has been identified that a holistic approach and continued use of controls that remain available to us, through layering, will be taken to support the use of our spaces, by staff and students. This is the core of our approach for the new academic year, whilst recognising that other restrictions have been lifted and our obligations to deliver on the requirements set out by the Department for Education.

To ensure a holistic approach, our approach has been assessed against; nature of the space (environmental considerations); use of the space (activities and users); behaviours and culture.

This approach is underpinned by our Corporate Risk Assessment.

### Context

The HE COVID-19 Operational Guidance (19 July) indicates we should not put in place measures which limit the teaching and learning outcome for students, or significantly limit the wider activities offered by the HE provider.

Our use of spaces during 2021-22 will reflect this clear requirement, alongside the wider changes in regulation, including the removal of social distancing. It will also reflect the changed public health context, including vaccination levels across our communities.

Our approach will be framed by risk assessment aligned to the changed context, to ensure we have proportionate control measures and processes in place, and will include active arrangements to monitor that controls are effective and working as planned.

In developing our thinking, we have sought Public Health feedback, which has highlighted the appropriateness of a holistic approach and our continued use of controls that do remain available in spaces, whilst recognising that other restrictions have been lifted and recognising our obligations to deliver on the requirements set out by the Department for Education.

Operational feedback, through discussions with Silver Operations, Restart Coordinators and with union representatives, has highlighted the need to ensure that communications and steps required by managers and individuals are as clear as possible and that we enable local risk management, as per usual business process (to enable consideration of the local context and the nature of activities being undertaken).

Guild and Cornwall colleagues have provided feedback and highlighted the alignment of the approach with the principles they are developing for space usage.

### Considering the Diversity of our Estate:

The University has a broad range of spaces, and uses of spaces, reflecting the broad nature of the organisation.

With input from Colleges and Services, Estates and Health and Safety teams, we have considered examples of different space types, to check the suitability of our approach. Space types considered:

- Teaching standard
- Research and teaching labs
- Creative Practice / Drama
- Sport
- Office (including PGR)
- Residences
- Retail
- Entertainment

The Framework of Controls:

Reflecting the holistic approach, alongside the need for clarity and operational effectiveness, we have identified a common framework of controls that will be relevant in our use of spaces during the next academic year.

<b>Environmental Controls</b>	<b>Use Controls</b>	<b>Behavioural Controls</b>
Hand gel and sanitisers located across the campus	Risk assessment checklist	Community charter for students and staff
Cleaning stations remain and enhanced touchpoint cleaning undertaken	Strong expectation of face coverings in shared indoor spaces that are crowded and enclosed where you come into contact with people you don't usually meet	Encouragement of testing– access to support twice weekly lateral flow testing for staff and students
2m teaching zones remain available	Escalation routes for queries and concerns to the Rapid Response Hub	Advice regarding response to symptoms: however mild, stay at home and take a test
Mechanical ventilation and / or signage on windows in naturally ventilated spaces to support airflow.	Ongoing review of spaces and their usage	Strongly encouraging, wherever possible, active engagement with the government vaccination programme
Principles of using space effectively in manager guidance	H2H support for checks and reporting, drawing on best practice highlighted by DHSC / DfE	Updated teaching protocols, induction materials, communications and training
Where in situ, Perspex screens will remain in place for term 1 and will be reviewed subsequently	Support for turnover between sessions in spaces, where appropriate	Regular communications to all staff and students

In identifying these controls and the next steps, we have considered their application against a number of different space types, as mentioned above. This has indicated their suitability, as a set of measures, layered together, to enable our use of spaces.

The framework of controls incorporates the outcomes of the work that has been undertaken in considering ventilation. This is reflected in the continued use of windows being opened in naturally ventilated spaces, with clear signage to support this, and also in our ongoing monitoring controls. It is also reflected in the layering of controls approach. It is recognised that opening windows does impact comfort factors and to mitigate Estates have coordinated work in increasing the heating capability in a number of rooms.

These framework controls are additional to the measures we have to support individuals, including our COVID age tool, personal risk assessments, and manager support and guidance.

Given the diversity of the estate, the relevance and extent of each individual control may vary between spaces. But by layering them together, we will ensure effective and proportionate risk management.

These framework controls reflect our use of spaces across our diverse estate. These controls are complemented by the additional and detailed measures we have to enable managers to support individuals and teams, as detailed in our [On Campus Working – Guidance for Managers](#). Consideration and support for individuals will be undertaken through the 10 steps outlined in the manager guidance.

These controls will also be supplemented by additional controls to reflect local contexts and activity types. Managers will locally assess for requirements of this type, as is our institutional custom and practice (for example to support the nature of the activity being undertaken).

Other estate-wide controls that were utilised in 2020-21, given the change in regulatory and public health context, and the requirements set out in the DfE guidance to universities, are no longer applicable and are being physically removed as per our previous communications. This includes the removal of 2020-21 occupancy limits, and one way systems.

#### Implementation:

Our framework controls, as detailed above, are either already in place (and familiar for staff and students) or are the process of being updated for the new academic year. Together, they form the layers of control that support our use of spaces with 2020-21 occupancy limits removed. These controls will be reflected in an overarching **Risk Assessment for Use of Spaces**, which will be available on the website. This replaces the current 1As, which will be archived.

The framework of controls will also be reflected in an updated **Teaching Risk Assessment**, and will be incorporated into teaching protocols, both of which will be available on the website.

In addition, **standard risk assessments** will be undertaken by managers, using a **framework of controls checklist** which will be published on the website. This will ensure managers are able to reflect any local and activity-specific controls appropriately. These general risk assessments will be approved and retained locally, and should be communicated with teams through usual business operations. These standard risk assessments will replace the current 1Bs, which will be archived.

The practical removal of one way systems and occupancy limits signage will be supported through Estates (working in collaboration with other teams as required). It should be noted that these changes will take time to complete (up to 6 weeks for one way systems, for example).

### Ongoing Review:

Best practice indicates the importance of our continued review of our controls. Teams will review and monitor our approach and test this against the latest context in relation to guidance and also the latest position regarding cases. These reviews will be undertaken aligned to the overall risk context for the University and the regions.

Our reviews will include:

- Gathering feedback through on-site teams (including regular H2H feedback sessions)
- Gathering information from reports received from space users
- Continually evolving our understanding of spaces through data and walkarounds

This will enable us to continue to review the effectiveness of control measures. It will also support teams to continue to reflect on evolving guidelines and the application of further control measures. Controls relating to the built estate will be coordinated through Estates teams.

Updates will be regularly provided to Silver groups, and provided through to Gold via the standard Silver reporting.

### Proposed Next Steps:

- Completion of the overarching Use of our Spaces risk assessment (to be published by 19<sup>th</sup> August)
- Completion of the framework of control checklists to support managers in completing local risk assessments, including for research (to be published by 19<sup>th</sup> August)
- Completion of the overarching teaching risk assessment and teaching protocols (to be published by 23<sup>rd</sup> August).
- Updating of websites to reflect risk assessment changes.
- Communications w/c 23<sup>rd</sup> August regarding revised risk assessment approach, signage, and advising Managers to complete or update their local risk assessments.
- Managers completing/updating local risk assessments for activities through usual management practice.
- Management having an approval process for risk assessments.
- Management reviewing EDI requirements.
- Management regularly updating the Senior Leadership Forum.

## Appendix 1: Framework of Controls Checklist

A risk assessment is required to evidence how we comply with health and safety law and we have proportionate control measures and processes in place. We must regularly review and update your risk assessments - treating them as 'living documents' - as the circumstances in your setting and the public health advice changes. This includes having active arrangements in place to monitor whether the controls are effective and working as planned.

The University business covers many spaces, activities and people as such has developed a process that effectively and proportionately manages the risk to those spaces, activities and people as far as reasonably practicable. This risk assessment aims to show what risks we have and how we intend to manage these – this risk assessment sits alongside the [corporate risk assessment](#) the University has in place.

The below guidance and checklist is designed to enable managers to undertake a [general risk assessment](#) for their local context. Managers should discuss the new arrangements with staff to ensure the risk is managed and that staff also understand what we will continue doing at this present time.

Control available	Guidance	Applied in Local General Risk Assessment Yes/No
<b>Wellbeing assessments</b>	As detailed in the <a href="#">Working on Campus - Guidance for Managers</a> , staff should be encouraged to carry out a risk assessment to support their return to campus. This assessment has recently been updated to include a vaccination question. Staff should raise concerns/issues with their line manager, who will support them with their requirements and ensure they are linked with relevant advice and guidance from other teams.	
<b>Effective Space Management</b>	Managers should consider how their space can be used in effective ways to support on campus working, following the removal of social distancing and 2020-21 occupancy limits. Booking systems will continue to be in place, where those support operational needs. Responsible Principal Investigators (named escalation routes) continue to be an effective control and should be maintained in research settings. This can be an online / on call arrangement. The use of some remote working options in teams, where the activity permits as part of Service and Colleges planning, can also support effective space management.	
<b>Face Coverings</b>	Wearing a face covering can reduce the risk to individuals and others around them against the spread of infection. The University has a strong expectation that staff and students wear face coverings within shared indoor spaces that are crowded and enclosed where you come into contact with people you don't usually meet. Managers should encourage staff to be aware that people may have their own individual concerns and anxieties in relation to returning to greater freedoms and interacting with others.	
<b>Hand sanitiser station</b>	Hand sanitiser stations will remain until further notice and staff/students should be encouraged to use these	

	when entering/existing buildings, shops etc. and regularly throughout the day.	
<b>Self-Cleaning products</b>	Cleaning stations will remain and staff should be encouraged to use these especially at the beginning/end of the day and if using shared equipment, touch points and surfaces etc.	
<b>Cleaning regime</b>	The Facilities Management team will continue to carry out an enhanced cleaning regime to common areas and common touch points.	
<b>Ventilation</b>	Ventilation remains an important control. We have two types of ventilation; a. Mechanically ventilated spaces - such as some larger lecture theatres, laboratories, kitchens, some learning rooms and meeting spaces. b. Naturally ventilated spaces – these are spaces that rely on openable windows for ventilation and ventilation in these rooms will be improved by opening the windows when the rooms are occupied. Rooms have signs within them stating open windows indicating these rooms are naturally ventilated.	
<b>Here to help</b>	Here to help will remain in place at key areas across the University to support a variety of teaching and general activities.	
<b>Training/Inductions</b>	Staff should receive local training/inductions when they return to campus to ensure they understand the processes in place.	
<b>Perspex Screens</b>	Where in situ and appropriate, screens should remain in place for the first term and then reviewed.	
<b>Signage</b>	All signage relevant to the activity requirements should remain in place – in particular window opening, hand hygiene, NHS QR codes.	
<b>Lateral flow testing</b>	All staff and students are strongly encouraged to test regularly. Staff should follow the latest University/Government guidance following the outcome of the test and report results to the NHS and the University. This will remain a control for the foreseeable future and is important to help protect the University and wider community.	
<b>Vaccinations</b>	The University strongly encourages staff and students, wherever possible, to engage with the government's vaccination programme, including through its close working with the Clinical Commissioning Groups for Devon and Cornwall. The University provides access to and information around vaccination to enable engagement.	
<b>Business continuity</b>	Managers should consider the outcome of staff having to self isolate and what impact this will have on the business needs. Any issues identified should be escalated to their line manager. Managers can access the support and guidance available at Step 9 of the Working on Campus – Guidance for Managers, which includes details of the Business Continuity toolkit.	
<b>Local activity</b>	Managers should ensure they complete/update their risk assessment with aspects that are relevant for the activities they carry out.	

	Managers should consider very carefully those activities that may pose a greater risk including dance, singing, drama and sports.	
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