

COVID-19 risk assessment for the University of Kent

This risk assessment applies to all University of Kent UK sites. The University's European sites must follow country specific rules. This risk assessment is being carried out as a requirement of the Health and Safety at Work Act and is based on the Government's Working Safely guidance. It is a generic risk assessment describing high levels controls. Where relevant the risk represented by COVID-19 must be included in all local risk assessments.

Hazard: Spread of COVID-19 through contact and airborne transmission

Risk: COVID-19 transmission is increasing, new more transmissible 'Delta' variant predominant in UK, risk of infection and serious disease outcome reduced through national vaccination programme

Those at Risk: All University Staff, Students and Apprentices; contractors; delivery drivers; visitors

Hierarchy of Control

1. Disease control

Identification and self-isolation of confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 is the best way of controlling the disease.

- Anyone who comes to or lives on a University site should stay at home or in their accommodation if they feel unwell.
- Anyone showing COVID-19 symptoms must self-isolate at home or in their University accommodation immediately. They must book a [COVID-19 PCR test](#) as soon as possible. If the test result is negative, self-isolation can end and the individual can return to work or study as soon as they feel well. If the result is positive, the individual must follow the self-isolation instructions given by NHS Test and Trace or the University. They can return to work or study after the period of self-isolation if they no longer have a fever.
- Anyone without symptoms but who tests positive for COVID-19 must follow the self-isolation instructions given by NHS Test and Trace or the University. They can return to work or study after the period of self-isolation ends.
- Anyone living in the same household as someone who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms must self-isolate until the result of that person's coronavirus test is known. If the test is negative, they can return to work or study immediately.
- Anyone living in the same household as someone who tests positive for COVID-19 must self-isolate for 10 days from the point the positive individual started showing symptoms or if the individual is asymptomatic, from the date the test was taken. If during that time anyone else in the household contracts COVID-19, self-isolation must continue for a further 10 days from the point when the second individual's symptoms started, or from the day they took the test.
- If they have a suitable device, members of the University are strongly encouraged to download the NHS COVID-19 app.
- Any instructions received through the NHS Test and Trace programme, or the NHS COVID-19 app must be followed. Anyone receiving instructions to self-isolate must inform their line manager. The formal notification from NHS Test and Trace / COVID-19 app can be used as evidence that the individual must self-isolate.
- All members of the University accessing campus are strongly encouraged to take COVID tests twice a week. On the Canterbury campus this can be at the [Asymptomatic Test Centre](#). The University community can also use Symptom-free test sites across [Kent](#), [Medway](#) or their local areas. [Home test kits](#) are also available free on-line, through test sites or many

pharmacies. Home test kits, Asymptomatic or Symptom-free test centres must not be used if you are showing symptoms of COVID-19. If you have symptoms, you must book a PCR test.

2. Ventilation

Aerosols produced when we breathe and talk can spread COVID. Ventilation removes aerosols and is an effective way of controlling disease transmission.

- The University will set building and room ventilation as [recommended by the HSE](#).
- Where natural ventilation through safely openable windows is the only ventilation available in a multi-occupancy space, windows must be opened. In mechanically ventilated multi-occupancy spaces, natural ventilation can be increased by opening windows when rooms are occupied.
- Where possible doors can be kept open to increase ventilation. This must not apply to any designated fire door unless it is automated.
- Any rooms that have poor ventilation, e.g., rooms with no safely openable windows or mechanical ventilation, will have their occupancies reduced such that the HSE recommendations are met. Any room where it is not possible to meet ventilation recommendations will not be used. Occupancy of poorly or unventilated areas that are accessed temporarily must be limited. Examples would include windowless store cupboards / storerooms, basements, lifts. Queuing in corridors / stairwells that are not directly serviced by external doors to queuing is to be discouraged.
- If sharing a vehicle for a work-related journey, ventilation must be set to draw in fresh air and windows should be at least partially opened.
- Where possible use outdoor space for any social interactions. Consider if it is possible to use outdoor space for any work-related gatherings, particularly those that involve colleagues from outside your immediate team.

3. Hygiene

Good hygiene is effective at reducing the risk of contact transmission.

- All members of the University and any visitors are advised to follow good personal hygiene: washing / sanitizing hands regularly, using proper hand washing technique, using tissues to catch coughs and sneezes, avoiding touching the face. Signage reminding the University community of this must be placed around buildings.
- Hand sanitizer is provided at some building entrances.
- High touch surfaces in communal areas, e.g., door handles, electronic door openers, banisters, light switches, toilet seats and flushes, etc., are to be cleaned frequently during the day. This includes any open changing rooms and workplace showers.
- Self-clean materials are to be made available for use in all lecture theatres and seminar rooms for those who wish to use them to clean their work area.
- People are advised to wash their hands after using communal equipment. Where local hand washing facilities are not available, hand sanitizer or wipes for cleaning the equipment must be provided. Sanitizing materials must be placed away from all electrical equipment and other combustibles.
- Those receiving incoming goods must have specific hygiene procedures in place, for example washing or sanitizing hands after handling received goods.

- There is a general requirement for high levels of housekeeping within all spaces. This is an individual responsibility. Areas must be kept tidy with surfaces kept clear as much as possible. This is particularly important in any communal areas such as break rooms and kitchens, where items used by individuals must be cleaned and removed immediately. Communal cutlery and tea towels must not be used.

4. Limiting contacts

While social distancing is no longer a legal requirement, taking small measures to reduce contact with others where possible, is an effective method of disease control.

- The University is following Government guidance that the return of more staff to the workplace should be gradual. Ahead of 20th September, when all staff are expected to be back working on campus, staff who have been working from home can return to campus should they wish to. To ensure staff return is phased, they must discuss this with their line manager before returning.
- In areas of the University where staff are eligible, consider whether patterns of Hybrid Working can reduce occupancy in communal / shared offices.
- If possible, workstations should not be positioned opposite each other. Staggered, back-to-back or side-by-side working is preferable to face-to-face.
- Where people work face-to-face in close proximity, for example in receptions, use screens as a barrier.
- Where possible assign staff designated workstations. Where this is not possible and desks or work areas are shared or hot-desking takes place, workstations must be cleaned between users.
- Hybrid Working will necessitate that most formal work meetings should preferably continue to be held by MS Teams. This is also a useful COVID control.
- One-way routes around buildings are no longer required but may be retained in some areas for operational reasons, e.g., commercial outlets where Government is still encouraging use of check-in QR codes. The University community is expected to follow any one-way systems that remain in place, except in case of emergency when the closest exit should be used.

5. Face Coverings

Outside of healthcare settings, government guidance does not recommend the use of PPE to control COVID-19 infection risk. Face coverings, which are not strictly PPE, limit the spread of aerosols produced when breathing and talking. Wearing a face covering helps reduce the chance of individuals unknowingly spreading COVID via aerosols and may provide some protection to the wearer.

- The University expects staff and students to follow the government advice on face coverings, strongly encouraging that they are worn in crowded indoor spaces where you are in contact with those you do not normally meet.
- Individuals who are exempt from wearing a face covering are encouraged to wear a Sunflower lanyard to indicate this.
- Where face coverings are worn, individuals should wash or sanitize their hands before putting them on or off wherever possible. They should be replaced if they get damp or soiled and be washed or replaced at the end of every day. Wearing a face covering is not a reason to reduce hand hygiene or social distancing measures.

- Face coverings must not be worn where a formal risk assessment shows that wearing one increases other risks.

6. Extremely Clinically Vulnerable individuals

Government Shielding advice has been paused as of 1st April. Current Government guidance is that those identified as extremely clinically vulnerable should follow the same advice as everyone else, this includes working on campus. [Guidance about individual actions to take to reduce risk](#) for those in this group has been published by Government.

Anyone who is classified as Extremely Clinically Vulnerable and is concerned about working on campus should discuss this with their line manager. Line managers should be familiar with the controls outlined in this risk assessment and the guidance for the extremely clinically vulnerable published by Government and try to reassure staff by detailing the controls that have been put in place.

7. Mental Health

The [COVID-19 Mental Health Risk Assessment](#) details all the Mental Health and Wellbeing support the University has in place. Staff who are anxious about working on campus should discuss this with their line manager who should try to reassure staff regarding the control measures put in place as well as direct them to this risk assessment and the support options detailed within.

8. First aid

Information and guidance for First Aiders can be found on the [SHE Unit website](#).

9. Overseas Travel

The University continues to deem Overseas Travel for work and / or study purposes as high risk. Travellers must follow advice provided on the UK Government [webpages](#). They should be aware of the UK Government [traffic light system](#) and how it will affect their travel and return. Government [country specific travel advice](#) now includes sections on Coronavirus rules and regulations in destination countries. Any local rules and regulations should be obeyed.

Travellers should be aware that the Coronavirus pandemic is affecting different countries in very different ways. They should be prepared for the possibility that local or national lockdowns could be imposed at any point and plan for that eventuality. It is their responsibility to check with those that they may be visiting, their accommodation and their travel provider to discover whether there are any specific rules imposed by those businesses and institutions that they will need to follow.

There are now strict rules for travellers returning to the UK and travellers must ensure that they are able to meet these requirements on return.

The Insurance Office must be contacted in every case to determine the level of travel insurance available for the trip.