

COVID-19 SECURE

Staff guidance for safe working on campus

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Introduction

As we transition out of the Covid-19 pandemic, the experience of working on campus will need a period of readjustment as we all move to new ways of working and living with Covid-19. This guidance has been produced to outline the University's procedures in relation to workers and other staff returning to the campus. Government guidelines have changed the focus on personal responsibility, asking each one of us to take the necessary precautions based on our own circumstances and beliefs. This document will also serve to provide additional guidelines aimed at minimising the spread of the virus on campus, enabling staff to make informed decisions about protecting themselves and others.

This document covers the measures being put in place to ensure employees and other staff can return to campus and work safely in a Covid secure workplace. The protective measures detailed in this guidance are based on a university level risk assessment which can be accessed on the University Covid-19 secure web pages.

This guidance exists in addition to all current policies and guidance. Remember that all health and safety policies and guidelines must still be followed in addition to the measures taken to minimise the spread of Covid-19.

You should be clear that Covid-19 spreads from person to person by close contact and to a lesser degree touching surfaces which have been contaminated with the virus. Whilst the University will take steps to minimise the risk each of us have a personal responsibility to protect ourselves and others by following the guidance in this document.

For the foreseeable future, being on campus is going to look and feel different, and we need your help to support the University in implementing this guidance. If you need additional support or advice this is available from the Health and Safety Unit: safety@aston.ac.uk.

Staying COVID-secure

We confirm we have complied with the government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19

FIVE STEPS TO SAFER WORKING TOGETHER

- ✓ We have carried out a **COVID-19 risk assessment** and shared the results with the people who work here
- ✓ We have **cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures** in line with guidance
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to help people work safely from a **COVID-19 Secure workplace** or work from home
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to **maintain social distance** in the workplace, and encourage the community to test regularly for Covid-19
- ✓ We have taken all reasonable steps to **provide adequate ventilation** in enclosed spaces

Signed on behalf of employer



Employer **Aston University** Date **19th July 2021**

Who to contact: **Scott Trim Director of Health, Safety and Business Continuity** (s.trim@aston.ac.uk)
(or the Health and Safety Executive at www.hse.gov.uk or 0300 003 1047)

The University's guiding principles to manage the transmission of Covid-19 and ensure the physical and mental wellbeing of staff and students:

- ▶ Staff and visitors should maintain a suitable social distance when interacting with others, based on their own risk, beliefs and circumstances.
- ▶ If displaying symptoms, you must self-isolate, get a test and inform the Health and Safety Unit by emailing **Covid-19Reporting@aston.ac.uk**.
- ▶ Wash your hands regularly with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser if available to maintain good hand hygiene.
- ▶ Whilst the wearing of face coverings is a personal choice we encourage staff to consider others and wear face coverings in indoor crowded spaces.
- ▶ Where workers can work in an agile way you should discuss this with your manager.
- ▶ Staff should adhere to information and directional signage to protect themselves and others whilst on campus.
- ▶ Staff are strongly encouraged to utilise the check-in functions on the Safe Zone mobile phone application.

Lone working and Safe Zone

The University strongly encourages those occupying buildings to register their presence on campus for health and safety reasons. The University has invested in a mobile phone application which supports health, safety and welfare on campus by allowing staff and students to check-in at regular intervals to indicate that they are safe and well. This is especially useful when staff and students are working in university buildings but remote from others for periods of time.

We strongly encourages staff and students to use the check-in functionality in Safe Zone as a part of the safe working arrangements for using university buildings. Where staff do not have access to a smart phone they can call campus safety on 4803 at regular intervals to confirm their wellbeing.



Access to entrances and exits of buildings

Where safe to do so, we will arrange the use of just one door for general access and one door for general exit to each building to help control the flow of people in and out, though building design and circumstances will be taken in to account.

Fire doors will all remain operational as per normal (pre Covid-19) operations and therefore only used in emergencies.

At all entrance points to buildings, we will display the NHS Track and Trace posters and we encourage all staff to check-in using the NHS mobile phone application.

Hand sanitiser units will be made available at access points or within buildings and you are advised to use these when entering and leaving buildings. If you cannot use the hand sanitiser units for personal reasons you should wash your hands as soon as possible once in the building.

Additional signage reminding staff to wash and sanitise their hands will be posted around university buildings.

When using building entrances and exits staff are reminded to consider the needs of others and respect their personal space, and not congregate around building entrances.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and face coverings

From the 19th July 2021 the legal requirement to wear face coverings in certain settings has been removed and the UK Government has changed the focus to individual responsibility

There are some circumstances when wearing a face covering may be beneficial as a precautionary measure to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The evidence suggests that wearing a face covering does not protect you, but it may protect others if you are infected but have not developed symptoms.

Staff are requested to be respectful to others when in crowded indoor spaces and wear a face covering where appropriate. This is a personal choice and we ask staff to respect others who choose not to wear a face covering.

Packs of reusable face coverings are available from Main Building reception for those who wish to wear them.

Where required for the task or directed by professional practice staff should continue to wear personal protective equipment.

Advice for those who choose to wear a face covering:

- ▶ Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitiser before putting a face covering on, and after removing it.
- ▶ When wearing a face covering, avoid touching your face or face covering, as you could contaminate them with germs from your hands.
- ▶ Change your face covering if it becomes damp or if you've touched it.
- ▶ Continue to wash your hands regularly.
- ▶ Change and wash your face covering daily.
- ▶ If the material is washable, wash in line with manufacturer's instructions. If it's not washable, dispose of it responsibly in the waste bins provided.



Face coverings are recommended to be worn in indoor crowded spaces to help prevent the spread of the virus. Please respect the views of others who may be exempt from wearing a face covering.

Help us all to stay safe,
protect others by wearing a face covering

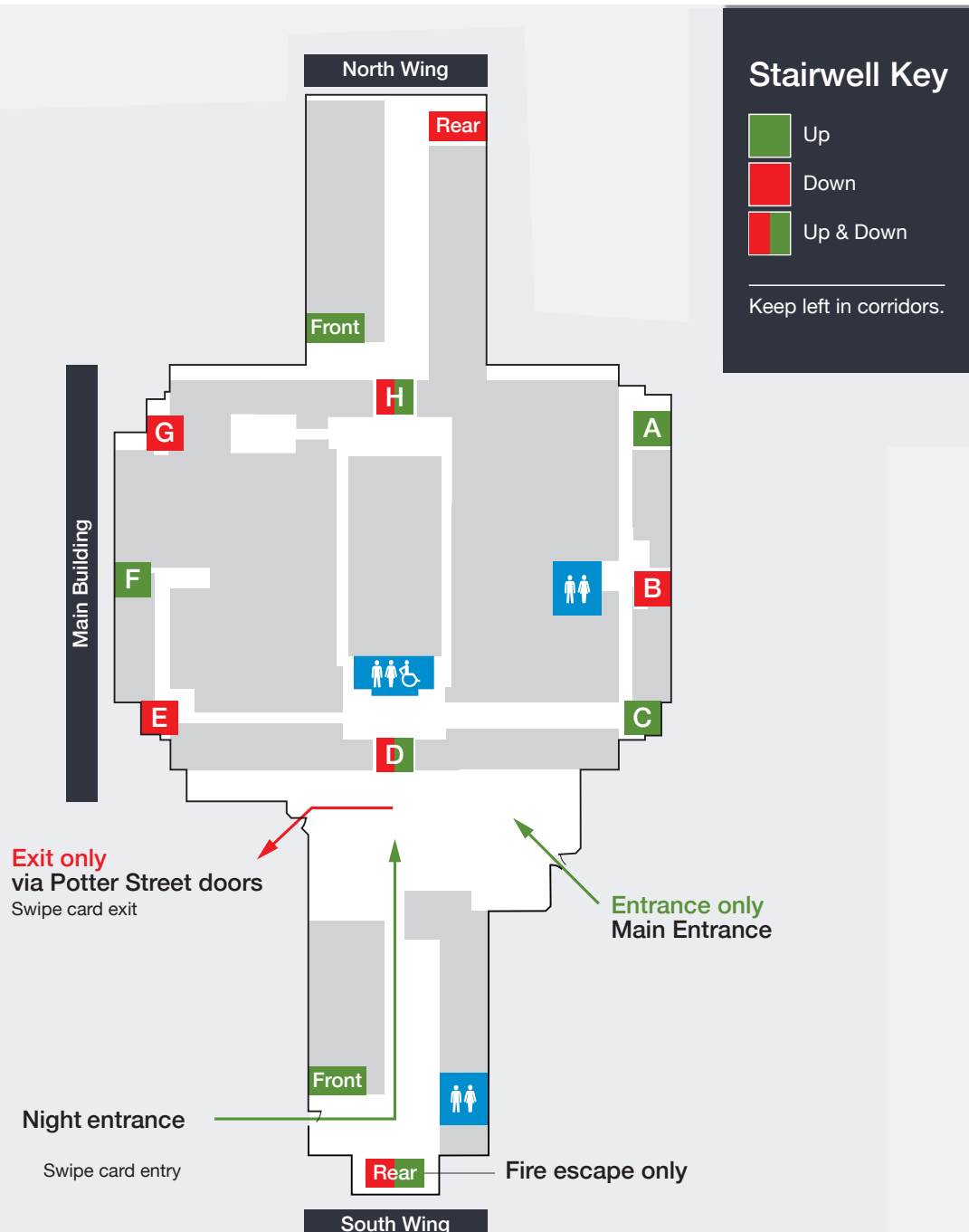
Corridors, stairs and other circulation areas

Whilst the University is not imposing social distancing requirements on staff we are maintaining a number of the Covid-19 mitigations to help protect the Aston community. The one-way systems will be retained on staircases and some corridors, creating a series of routes that staff and students should follow when moving around buildings. You should keep to the left on all corridors to respect others using the space.

In buildings where more than one stairway connecting floors is available, stairways are designated as an 'up route' or a 'down route' to help us to respect others' personal space. Staff are asked to follow these routes when moving around the buildings.

The cleaning team in Estates will continue to clean frequently touched surfaces in circulation areas to the pre-covid standards. Staff will need to practice good hand hygiene after moving around corridors, washing or sanitising their hands regularly.

Staff should be aware of congregating in circulation areas to demonstrate respect to colleagues and maintain sufficient space for others to move around the building.



Service desks and receptions

For those departments and teams across the University which offer staff and student facing services, e.g. reception desks, IT Helpdesk, The Hub, etc screens were installed during the pandemic to maintain the safety of colleagues. During the Covid-19 transitional period these will remain in place where installed.

Staff should operate good hygiene practices for these areas to limit the spread of all virus and bacterial illnesses as this is good practice beyond the requirements for Covid-19 mitigation. Good hygiene practices includes regular hand washing or sanitisation, disinfecting surfaces regularly and wiping down screens at the end of each day.



Ventilation

Good standards of ventilation in indoor spaces is recognised to be a significant factor in minimising the spread of the virus from person to person.

Indoor spaces within University buildings are ventilated by mechanical ventilation or natural ventilation. Larger spaces such as lecture theatres are mechanically ventilated using supply and extract systems which introduce fresh air from outside into the space and extract used air to outside. Other smaller spaces and offices are naturally ventilated using opening windows.

When using indoor spaces that are naturally ventilated staff are advised to open the windows to ensure a supply of fresh air into the room.

External visitors and contractors

The university is now able to welcome visitors and contractors subject to them following this guidance and understanding their responsibilities to keep our community safe. Contractors who undertake work on the building or the building infrastructure need approval from estates before commencing work. Visitors and contractors should register at the reception in main building on arrival.

Open plan/communal offices

Many staff work in open offices which may prevent staff in working in a social distance that they feel comfortable. To overcome this, managers need to make suitable arrangements to ensure the wellbeing of their teams, respecting the views of others and working to the principles set out in the dynamic working policy.

Managers should consider the number of staff in any given area, limiting the number of different people colleagues can encounter. In other scenarios, changing work patterns could be considered if practical or staggered start and finish times so that unnecessary face-to-face contact is reduced. Scenarios across campus will differ but under normal working conditions, where workers can work from home in line with the dynamic working policy this should still be discussed with their line manager to agree suitable arrangements.

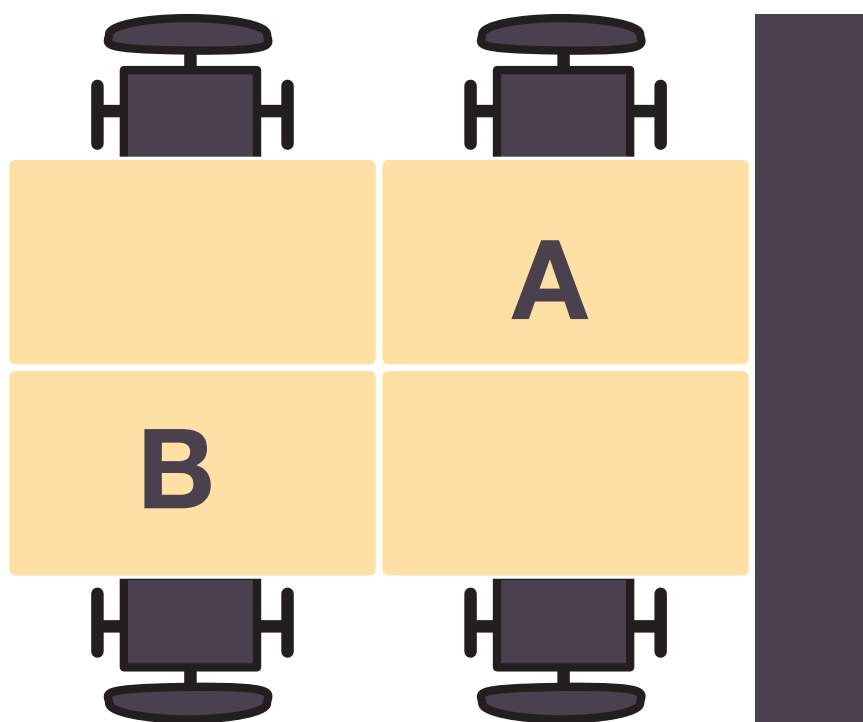


Fig. 6 shows a typical four worker station at reduced capacity. It would be appropriate to limit areas such as these to one person per side to ensure acceptable social distancing if required to meet individual teams needs.

Individual offices

Where staff occupy individual offices they should maintain good standards of ventilation by opening windows wherever possible. When meeting with visitors in individual offices staff are encouraged to keep meetings as short as possible and leave the door and windows open to maintain a good supply of fresh air.

Meeting rooms

Where possible team meetings should be undertaken using video conferencing technology such as Microsoft Teams, even when colleagues external to the University are required to attend. This is so that those staff members who are working remotely have the option to attend and take part in discussions in a hybrid way, i.e some attendees on site and some working remotely. Where on site meetings are best undertaken on campus, and there is a need to use meeting rooms, normal room occupancy should apply, but the organiser should consider the needs and wishes of the attendees. Meeting room surfaces should be wiped down before and after use so that the facility is available for the next users.

Break-out areas and social spaces

There are a number of spaces around the University where there are facilities for staff and students to take breaks and collaborate with others. These spaces are inside and outside of buildings and will remain open but staff and students must consider the views and beliefs of others when using these spaces.

Teaching and Learning Spaces

Teaching and learning spaces will be open and used at pre-Covid occupancy, although it is likely that all large lectures will continue to be delivered remotely in line with the Teaching and Learning Strategy. Ventilation in teaching and learning spaces has been assessed and will continue to be monitored, however the ventilation in these spaces reduces the risk of person to person transmission.

Teaching and learning spaces will be cleaned regular by Estates to pre-covid standards, self cleaning materials will be available for those who wish to use them.

We ask that staff using these spaces ensure the session finishes at least 10 minutes before the start of the next session to facilitate safe exit before the next group arrives.

Communal kitchens

Many buildings on campus have small, communal kitchen areas and tea points for use by members of staff and research students. These spaces will operate at normal occupancy and we ask staff to show respect for others when using these facilities.

Users of these facilities are asked to maintain good standards of hygiene and ensure the facilities are left clean for other users.

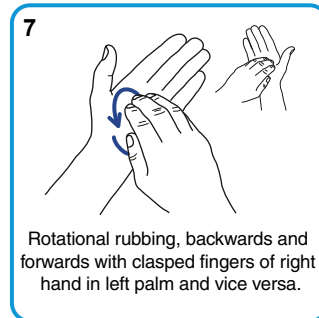
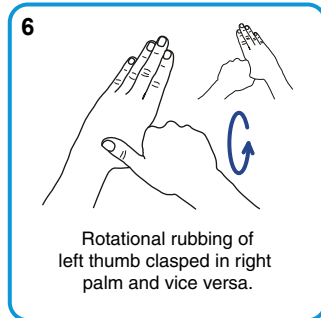
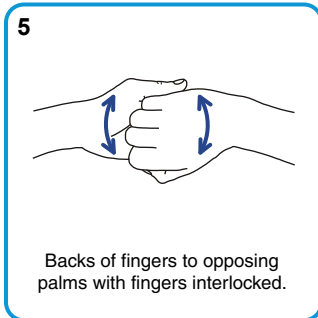
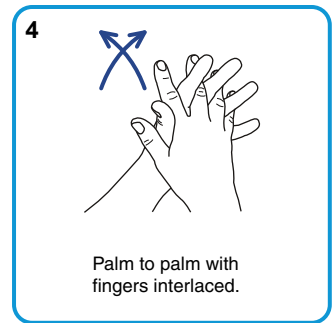
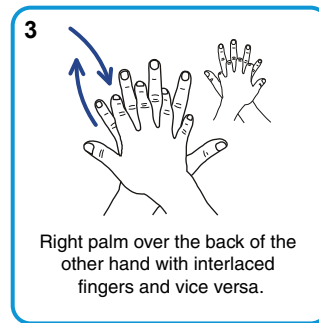
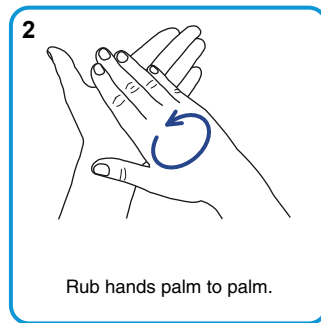
Toilets

Toilet facilities across campus will revert to normal occupancy and use with all limits on social distancing removed. Users of these spaces are asked to respect the space other may require and to leave the facilities clean and hygienic.

Any issues regarding cleanliness of these facilities should be reported to the Estates Help desk on 0121 204 4000

Best Practice: Step-by step guide on using alcohol hand rub

Duration of the process: 20-30 seconds.



Important FAQs

How to report a confirmed or actual case of Covid-19 on campus

If you show any of the following symptoms then you should self-isolate and not come on to campus. You should get a test as soon as possible:

- ▶ a high temperature
- ▶ a new, continuous cough
- ▶ a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

If you suspect that you have contracted Covid-19 you should let the University know by emailing **covid-19reporting@aston.ac.uk**. The University will monitor these cases and a response plan is in place to deal with them in conjunction with the Public Health Team In Birmingham.

The automated response will tell you what you should do and how to get a test.

What should I do if I think someone is unwell and showing the symptoms of Covid-19?

You should socially distance yourself from the person and ask if they need first aid assistance. If needed you should call campus safety on **0121 204 2922** (internal **2222**) and ask for a Covid-19 first aid response or use the green button on SafeZone to request first aid. The control room will dispatch a first aider to assist and support the person to the first aid room.

Social distancing requirements

whilst there is no requirement for social distancing, you should maintain a safe distance from others whilst on campus, it is within each person's gift to control how close they are to others. Where this is not possible, for instance to review a student's practical work, you should ask the student to step away whilst you undertake the review and then move away allowing the student to return safely.

Face shields will also be made available to teaching staff who need to be close to students for example in clinical environments.

Face coverings and PPE

It is recommended that staff and students wear face coverings in crowded indoor spaces. This will not be necessary in labs and workshops as students and staff will be working at a safe distance from each other.

There are a variety of reasons why individuals may be exempt from wearing a face covering and we encourage everyone to respect this and not challenge people who are not wearing face coverings. Exemption badges and lanyards are available for those who cannot wear a face covering.

Covid-19 outbreaks

In the event that the University has cases of Covid-19 we have established a robust tracking and tracing process in conjunction with the Director of Public Health in Birmingham. Local outbreaks will be managed by the Health and Safety Unit in conjunction with Public Health England

Cleaning arrangements

All pool teaching spaces will be cleaned regularly by the estates team.

This will include disinfection of:

- ▶ all work surfaces
- ▶ hard chair arms
- ▶ lecterns and AV equipment
- ▶ touchpoints such as door handles.

There will also be a supply of disinfectant wipes in teaching spaces and offices for intermediate cleaning. Should there be issues with the cleaning in teaching spaces, staff should call the estates helpdesk on **0121 204 4000**.

What to do in an emergency

In an emergency such as a fire alarm activation you should make your way out of the building when instructed to do so, by the nearest exit. You will not be expected to follow one way systems in an emergency.

If you need urgent help or first aid treatment you should call Campus Safety on **0121 359 2922 or 2222** from an internal phone. Emergency assistance can also be requested by using the Safe Zone mobile app.

Further information

Further guidance on social distancing measures can be obtained from the Health and Safety Unit by emailing safety@aston.ac.uk or telephoning the Health and Safety Help Desk on **(0121 204) ext 4976**.