

Managing the Return to Campus: Schedule, Principles and Approach

Introduction

While some staff have returned to campus and many more are keen to do so, the University fully recognises that colleagues may feel apprehensive about returning to campus.

The health, safety and wellbeing of the University community is at the heart of decision making and a phased return forms just one part of extensive measures that have been introduced to keep people safe. It also paves the way for new more agile, flexible and adaptive ways of working that will become common practice across the university in due course.

Following these principles will allow us to deliver on our teaching and learning promises, ensure we create the University experience our students expect at Nottingham, while reducing the pressure on the infrastructure and facilities that support us all.

Purpose

This document should be used by senior leaders and managers in working with their teams to support a careful, safe and phased return by staff to our UK campuses between now and January 2021.

Leaders and managers should tailor local plans for staff to return to campus, informed by the principles and approach in this document, as well as the criteria which prioritise the need for staff to be present on campus, for example to resume in-person teaching, conduct research or support our students.

These will naturally be informed by and support individual staff health declarations, risk assessments and any adjustments due to changes in the national alert level or local restrictions.

Returning to Campus

The University intends to manage the return of staff to campus through three phases.

Phase 1: Early Returner – now until late September

Phase 2: Start of Session – from around 21 September

Phase 3: From beginning of January 2021

Approach to Date

The University's approach to date has been effective in strictly limiting the numbers of people on campus and therefore minimising the risk of transmission of Covid-19 in the course of University activity.

This has meant that the majority of University staff are still working remotely with all the wellbeing and cultural challenges that entails.

The return of students to campus for in-person teaching from late September makes this the right point to adjust the overall approach.

It is important for everyone to recognise that a number of staff – including those working in security, estates, halls, catering, grounds and some researchers and technicians – have remained on campus throughout the period since lockdown in March in order to ensure critical operations and services. Their experiences have shown that staff can work on campus in a safe and secure way, and they have successfully overcome their own concerns and anxieties about being on campus at this time.

Phase 1 – Early Returner (concludes 21 September)

Principles

This is the approach that has been taken to date and is expected to conclude by 21 September. The “Early Returner” phase has been working to the following principles:

1. If work can be undertaken remotely, it should be.
2. Building re-openings are phased according to decisions taken by the Recovery Board based on locations required for priority activity which cannot be undertaken remotely.
3. The numbers of people working in re-opened buildings are restricted to those supporting agreed priority purposes, centrally managed through the Recovery programme, and/or individuals invited by senior leaders to attend.

Phase 2 – Start of Session (from 1 September, leading up to 21 September 2020 onwards)

The “Start of Session” phase entails the return of many more staff to campus on a partial basis to deliver teaching and research and to support students and other campus services. It signals confidence in our arrangements to keep students and staff safe and offer increased opportunities for personal interaction for our community. Continuing to limit the numbers on campus at any one time will also:

1. Ease the burden on the facilities (e.g. public transport, catering, toilets) and maximise the available space and services for student-facing and research related activities and services;
2. Allow the new COVID-Secure procedures to embed with the smallest volume of people as possible;
3. Further reduce the opportunity for transmission of the infection from the external environment.

Principles

1. Continue to prioritise the safety and welfare of staff and students.
2. Implement the agreed “[return to teaching](#)” principles to ensure delivery of the timetable from start of session.
3. Expand resumption of on campus research activity.
4. The number of non-essential/non-student facing staff on campus on any particular day remains constrained.
5. Empower leaders and teams to take responsibility for managing their work and the working patterns of their staff in an appropriate way.

Approach

1. Staff in categories A, B and C (see annex) will be expected and supported to be present on campus for at least part of the week from the week leading up to 21 September onwards, up to the approximate 50% capacity limit of the relevant building.
2. Work will be done to clear categories for job roles (see annex) which each leader would be asked to use to identify staff who should be asked/permitted to work on campus, once a building is deemed COVID secure. This is to be implemented in line with the HR [return to work guidance](#) which will itself be kept under review, noting that the return to work is a management decision rather than a personal preference for the staff member concerned.
3. Faculties and Professional Services Departments will decide the appropriate organisational level for decision-making within the Principles.
4. Central support will be provided to resolve conflicting priorities, particularly within buildings occupied by people from multiple Faculties/Departments.
5. For each building, we will work to an approximate upper limit of 50% of normal occupancy at any time, and some exceptions may be identified to ensure we are able to adhere to social distancing and taking account of the variety of building layouts. This will be based on agreed 1m plus approach to circulation areas; and 2m approach to fixed workspaces.
6. The up to 50% calculation is based on the normal occupancy of the building, i.e. it does not take account of people moving in and out of the building for short periods, visitors, those going to classrooms etc.
7. Buildings for which a different limit is required may be identified, exceptionally, within the reopening risk assessment process.
8. All formal meetings, including University Committee, Board, School or team meetings should remain virtual until January. The format of smaller or informal meetings should be a matter for local discretion. All meeting rooms will have clear signage on their capacity and cleaning arrangements.

Enablers:

To move to this position by the end of September will require that we:

1. Achieve Covid-19 secure environments which emphasise the health and safety of all staff and students;
2. Implement effective outbreak response plans including clarity on test, track & trace arrangements.

Phase 3 – New Way of Working (from beginning of January 2021)

The “New Way of Working” phase will see the implementation of a new long-term model of blended, agile working with clear University-wide expectations for attendance on campus for at least some of the time for all staff.

It will entail a return to campus for all staff, with exceptions to support e.g. individual staff health declarations, and subject as always to HR guidance on individual circumstances.

Principles

The principles of this phase will be set out in the new model but will:

1. Continue to prioritise the safety and welfare of staff and students.
2. Ensure the most effective delivery of the full range of University operations.
3. Empower leaders and teams to take responsibility for managing their work and the working patterns of their staff in an appropriate way.
4. Require sensible planning for campus return where individual staff are anxious about coming back to campus and need support to enable it.

Enablers:

To move to this approach from January 2021 will require:

1. Successful operation of the Covid-19 secure environments for staff and students in phase two;
2. Successful management of capacity and utilisation of space on campus;
3. Successful management in the event of Covid-19 outbreaks;
4. Continued low transmission rates in the local community;
5. Completion of the new way of working model.

Annex: Staff Attendance Categories

All staff attendance is subject to risk assessment and individual health declaration and can take place only in Covid-19 secure environments. Typical building occupancy may be up to 50% of normal occupancy, but less if an individual risk assessment requires or where 2m social distancing is required.

The Attendance Categories do not indicate which job roles are more or less “important” – they simply relate to the ease or otherwise of undertaking the function on campus or remotely.

Category A: Minimum essential staff to support critical activity e.g. welfare of students unable to return home; maintenance of potentially dangerous facilities.	Lockdown and Phase 1: Early Return
Category B: Staff whose attendance is required to support priority activities such as agreed priority research; in-person teaching; student welfare. Team leaders and senior managers with staff in categories A or B.	Phase 1: Early Return and Phase 2: Start of Session
Category C Staff whose attendance in person is required in the interests of supporting the student experience; more efficient working or personal wellbeing; effective leadership and management.	Phase 2: Start of Session
Category D All other staff, whose attendance in person is required – at least partially - in the interests of wider team and University culture, more effective engagement with colleagues and students (noting that there may be a small number of exceptions to this as per HR guidance).	Phase 3: New Way of Working