University Operations: Rebound & Recovery, Measures to Prevent COVID-19 in the Workplace

As the University gradually phases in activities and operations, we all have a part to play in keeping our workplace and University of Guelph community safe and healthy. The University is committed to supporting the health and safety of our students, staff and faculty. This will be our priority as we move forward with plans to rebound and recover University operations and consider measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 at our campuses and research stations. All measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 will be done in compliance with requirements under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, associated regulations and applicable directives from the public health agencies, as updated from time to time.

Here are some general guidance and tips to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the workplace.

- Do not come to work if you are sick.
- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others.
- Practice proper hand hygiene.
- Practice respiratory etiquette when coughing or sneezing.
- Regularly clean and disinfect high touch spaces and personal work areas.
- Incorporate cleaning and disinfection of work areas.
- Be considerate of others in shared areas.

Do not come to work if you are sick

- If you feel sick, DO NOT come to work and inform your Supervisor.
- If you become sick while at work, STOP working, isolate yourself from others, inform your Supervisor, and go home as soon as possible, avoiding public transportation and taking measures to protect others around you.
- If you are ill/have symptoms or may have been exposed to COVID-19, do not come to campus/work. Ensure that you complete the Ontario COVID-19 Self-Assessment [1] and follow the directions given. Also complete and submit the University Employee Self Declaration Form [2]. For a complete list of COVID-19 related symptoms, refer to the Ministry of Health’s COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms [3].
- If you have tested positive for COVID-19, contact Occupational Health and Wellness (OHW) at ohw@uoguelph.ca [4] or extension 52647. OHW will follow the guidance and directions from Public Health.
- Surfaces that were touched by the ill worker need to be disinfected as soon as possible in accordance with enhanced environmental cleaning procedures and protocols. See Public Health Ontario’s Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings [5].

Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from others.

The following measures can be incorporated into workplace design and practices in order to support physical distancing:

- Limit the number of people working in one space at the same time.
- Consider moving meetings online wherever possible.
- Where it is not possible to schedule online meetings, schedule meetings in a suitably large space, or outdoors, where physical distancing can be maintained. For example, participants can slide their chairs back and keep to the edges of the room. If at a conference table, leave at least a chair open between each
person.

- Limit unnecessary in-person interaction with other people (e.g., co-workers, students, visitors, contractors and outside service providers).
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact such as shaking hands or hugging.
- Avoid shared spaces if possible.
- Use technology for communication (e.g., text message and mobile phones) rather than in-person conversations whenever feasible.
- Evaluate the possibility of staggering relief periods and meal breaks as necessary.
- Where feasible, consider alternate work schedules to limit the number of workers in a space, for example, stagger start and end times, alternate office days with “work from home” days, wherever feasible.
- Add floor markings and barriers, if practical, to manage employee mobility and physical distancing.
- Assess and reconfigure workspaces / workstations to promote physical distancing.
- Post signs and/or posters that promote physical distancing.
- Consider creating work teams with minimal cross over between teams– This way, if one employee gets sick and their close contacts need to self-isolate, this group can be isolated for 14 days without shutting down an entire work function.
- Consult with Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) at ehs@uoguelph.ca [6] when work activities cannot be maintained with physical distancing.

Practice proper hand hygiene

- Wash hands [7] frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer [8] with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Wash or sanitize hands at the start of shifts, before eating or drinking, before and after in-person meetings, after touching shared items, after using the washroom, and before leaving work.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed/unsanitized hands.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or clean/sanitize hands afterwards.
- Consider having hand sanitizer available for faculty, students and staff, in high touch areas (e.g. in front of elevators or stairwells) or in general reception areas.

Practice Respiratory etiquette when coughing or sneezing

- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or the bend of an arm, not into a hand.
- Dispose of any tissues as soon as possible in a waste bin and wash hands afterwards.

Incorporate Cleaning and disinfection of work areas

- Depending on circumstances, cleaning/disinfection may be performed by custodial services or through the use of an appropriate vendor in off-campus locations. Personal workspaces should be regularly cleaned/disinfected by those staff that work in the area using appropriate cleaning solutions as recommend by Physical Resources.
- Regularly clean/disinfect high-touch work surfaces, such as door and sink handles, paper towel dispensers, counter tops, wheelchair access buttons, kitchen equipment, elevator buttons, vending machines, printers/photocopiers, etc.
- Clean/disinfect all areas, including offices, cafeterias, change rooms, and washrooms.
- Frequency of cleaning and disinfection can be determined based on frequency of uses. Clean at least once per day but more frequent cleaning (e.g., every 2 to 3 hours) may be necessary.
- Introduce more fresh air by opening windows where possible.
Be Considerate of Others in Shared Areas

For all shared areas, strictly adhere to physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and cleaning/disinfection practices as described above.

In addition, the following measures should be considered for kitchens, washrooms, and elevators:

- In shared kitchens, do not share cups, mugs, cutlery or plates. Remove these shared items from the kitchen where possible. Never leave containers open in the fridge. Store food and drink in sealed containers. Leave space between containers.
- In washrooms, maintain physical distancing of 2 metres. If the washroom is too small to maintain 2 metres from others, confirm if it is empty before entering.
- In elevators, limit the number of people and keep at least 2 metres away from others. One-person occupancy is recommended for small elevators. Take the stairs if possible.

Use of Non-Medical Mask

- For the purpose of this document, “non-medical mask” refers to various forms of self-made or commercial, disposable or reusable masks or face coverings made of cloth, other textiles or other materials.
- When worn properly, a person wearing a non-medical mask can reduce the spread of his or her own infectious droplets when physical distancing is not possible. Non-medical masks do not provide complete protection against viral particles because of a potential loose fit and the materials used.
- Use of non-medical mask should only be considered as a compliment to other preventative strategies including physical distancing, hand hygiene and cleaning/disinfection of work areas.
- Recent information from Public Health Ontario (PHO) [9] indicates that consistent and appropriate use of either 2-layer or 3-layer non-medical masks where physical distancing is not possible, continues to be an important factor in lower transmission rates of COVID-19.
- There is a theoretical basis as to why 3-layer non-medical masks may offer additional protection; however, there currently are no epidemiological studies evaluating the effectiveness of 3-layer vs 2-layer on COVID-19 transmission.
- The non-medical mask may be 2- or 3-layer and should
  - completely cover the nose, mouth and chin without gaping
  - allow for easy breathing
  - not contain an exhalation valve
  - fit securely to the head
  - fit comfortably to avoid frequent adjustments
  - maintain their shape after washing and drying
- Commercial or self-made disposable or re-useable 3-layer non-medical masks are not considered personal protective equipment (PPE) and must not be used in situations where PPE has been deemed necessary.
- In the current context of PPE shortages associated with COVID-19, medical masks (e.g., surgical, medical, procedure masks and N95 respirators) should be conserved for use in healthcare settings, except where previously required or approved by Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) for work processes
- Use of non-medical masks must not replace respirators required for performing the work safely (e.g., use of respirators by agricultural workers for spraying pesticides). Employees are expected to use the proper PPE as assigned.

Additional Resources to Prevent COVID-19 in the workplace
• Ontario Resources to prevent COVID-19 in the workplace [10].
• Ministry of Health, COVID-19 Guidance: Essential Workplace [12].
• Public Health Agency of Canada, Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic [13].
• COVID-19 Guidance for Reopening Businesses, Employers and Employees [14].
• University of Guelph, COVID-19 Tools and Resources [15].

For any concerns or inquiries related to COVID-19 and working safely, please contact Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) at ehs@uoguelph.ca [16] or extension 53282 or Occupational Health and Wellness (OHW) at ohw@uoguelph.ca [4] or extension 52647.

Source URL: https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/about-hr/environmental-health-safety-ehs/ehs-programs-policies-guidelines-and-forms/ehs-5

Links
[4] mailto:ohw@uoguelph.ca
[6] http://ehs@uoguelph.ca
[8] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDUJ4CAYhpA
[15] https://www.uoguelph.ca/hr/covid-19-tools-and-resources
[16] mailto:ehs@uoguelph.ca