

## **Update: Flexible Workspace Pilot Program and Return-to-Campus Planning**

The development of our **pilot program** continues as we work to finalize the formal framework, processes, and resources necessary to support implementation later this fall. The **pilot program** remains focused on **how best to enable opportunities** for administrative employees to alternate between on-campus and remote-work locations, all within a system that promotes a culture of inclusion, engagement and innovation.

Ultimately, unit leaders will continue to decide how best to manage their operation and will determine the combination of on-campus and remote work (if any), and the pilot will aim to ensure the conditions and infrastructure are in place to enable these individual employee arrangements. The features of the pilot program will provide a structured approach to flexible workspace arrangements with resources for employees to feel well-supported and guidelines for unit leaders to effectively manage within a new setting.

In the appendix you will find a **Return-to-Campus Checklist**. This checklist has been developed by members of the university's Pandemic Response Team with COVID-19 protocols in mind. It offers direction and considerations to unit leads on how to prepare individual work spaces and common areas within their departments for the gradual return of staff beginning in August. Managers are encouraged to review the content and protocols, all of which are designed to ensure a safe return to campus for staff leading into the fall.

### **Should staff begin returning to campus?**

The university has begun preparing its physical space in alignment with public-health guidelines for the return of staff, faculty and students. Doing so will allow units to gradually welcome back staff who need to be on campus based on the nature of their work and the discretion of unit leaders.

### **How is this aligned with the Flexible Workspace Pilot Program?**

In advance of the pilot program's rollout, the **Return-to-Campus Checklist** provides managers with a series of initial steps and protocols to prepare their work spaces so staff can begin returning to the office where needed. The checklist focuses on planning for a safe return while considering what the future pilot program may look like. **If nothing else, the checklist is an encouragement for leaders to start planning with their staff.**

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## Appendix: Return to Campus Checklist

The purpose of this checklist is intended to provide high-level guidance to units as they plan for a safe return of faculty and staff. We ask each unit to **ensure protocols are created and posted for how to operate in each of their areas**. To elaborate, as required, there will be university-wide protocols posted in each classroom and researchers have worked on individual plans for their labs. We require units to look at their common spaces (such as support rooms, reception areas, meeting spaces) to ensure protocols are posted.

Employees will gradually return to campus from August to October. It's important to consider that some of our colleagues may experience anxiety with the prospect of a return to social settings such as the workplace. For this reason, and noting that each unit has different roles, we ask units to prepare return-to-campus plans for their respective faculties/ departments and have conversations with your staff.

Many of you would have seen recent articles that our Ministry expects physical-distancing requirements to be lifted by the start of term. Please remember this is just an assumption at this time but a good one to have in the back of your mind as you make plans. The actual directives as of July 16, 2021 are enclosed below. We will update this as the provincial and regional regulations are altered.

<p><b>Determine who returns to campus</b> or whether tasks/responsibilities can be completed remotely. Unit leaders should assess the minimum number of individuals who require a presence on campus to maintain faculty/ department operations. Whenever possible, leaders should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage their team to continue working remotely to reduce the risk of exposure to the virus;</li><li>• Minimize the impact on those who need to return to provide support services (i.e. develop plans to minimize the amount of time team members are on campus or how to maximize physical distancing); and</li><li>• Consider requests from those employees who express concerns with returning to campus.</li></ul>
Assess whether team members can complete their tasks/responsibilities remotely.
Determine the maximum number of personnel required on campus to complete the tasks in a safe environment.
Consider factors where employees cannot return to campus (e.g. workplace accommodation, extended approved absences) or that may induce barriers for individuals if asked to return to campus.
Consider reduced hours or staggered days in the office to limit the number of team members present at any time.
<b>Develop and post procedures, where required</b> , that outline COVID-19 mitigation strategies for each area a unit lead manages (e.g. copy rooms and individual offices). If there are more than one user, select a person to post protocols. Virtual meetings are preferred, however if in-person meetings are required, leaders are required to develop plans to address the needs and circumstances of each unit or worksite.
Review offices/labs/etc. to determine if your space aligns with distancing and occupancy protocols, or if reconfiguration of space is required. <b>Note:</b> when physical-distancing requirements drop we propose continuing the practice for the fall term.
Make your unit aware of the plans for shared areas (e.g. meeting rooms, supplies location) and travel pathways (e.g. corridors) especially if unidirectional travel is required.
Ensure unit-specific protocols don't conflict with general safety protocols.
Evaluate shared spaces (e.g. lunchrooms, TA/sessional spaces, shared offices) and consider maximum occupancy restrictions. For some locations, we may need to work at finding alternate locations for the fall.
Restrict access to areas where physical distancing can't be maintained or other sufficient protocols can't be implemented.
<b>Personal protective equipment (PPE)</b> such as face masks, gloves, and glasses can provide effective protection from infectious diseases. At this time, it's required that all team members wear non-medical (i.e. cloth) masks while inside buildings. Leaders should assess the need for enhanced PPE after considering the effectiveness of the existing <a href="#">administrative and engineering controls</a> . Where appropriate PPE is not available, tasks will be suspended.
Ensure appropriate PPE is provided to team members (when they don't have their own), where distancing, barriers, and administrative controls are not sufficient to mitigate COVID-19-related hazards.
Wear medical-grade masks and safety glasses when two-metre distance can't be maintained. Contact <a href="#">Health and Safety</a> if you are unclear regarding these requirements.

**Additional [administrative controls](#)** including alternating days in the office and safe-work procedures change the way people work or act, and can be effective in reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19. Leaders should carefully assess their operations and implement additional administrative controls to address the specific hazards related to their workspaces and specific tasks performed. Consider developing Safe-Work Procedures (SWP) that describe how a task or situation should be handled (e.g. interacting with visitors).

Draft a return-to-campus schedule/calendar for your team members and communicate it widely.

Prepare workspaces and common areas for returning employees (e.g. update bulletin boards, check/clean fridges, small appliances, etc.)

Perform inventory of assets/resources for returning employees (e.g. computer, chair, etc.). More details to follow on the flexible workspace pilot process.

Review with team members the COVID-19 procedures and requirements for their task and work areas, which includes [Campus Training and Safety Plan](#).

Review safety plans, including the [Working Alone Procedures](#), with returning team members.

Review [illness/absence reporting requirements](#) with team members.

Ensure hand-hygiene stations are accessible and close to entry/exit points (complete a [service ticket](#) when required).

Include in your plan the ability to pivot back to remote work if required (e.g. assets that could be removed, safe shutdown of space regarding emptying of fridges, etc.)

We remain committed to following protocols that fully align with public-health guidelines in order to help keep our community safe. While we continue to observe public-health developments, we strongly encourage managers to accept requests to continue to work remotely from employees who experience concerns with this transition.

The most pertinent directives to post-secondary institutions is the updated [regulation](#) (amendments to O. Reg. 264/20 as of July 16), which includes the following:

- Masks are required indoors.
- Verifying that staff are actively screened before entry; therefore, designated entry points with Security performing active checks.
- Room-size restrictions: post-secondary institutions may provide in-person instruction if they comply with the following conditions:
  - The instructional space must be operated to enable students to maintain a physical distance of at least two metres from every other person in the instructional space, except where necessary for teaching and instruction that cannot be effectively provided if physical distancing is maintained.
  - The total number of students permitted to be in each instructional space in the institution at any one time must be limited to:
    - 50 per cent of the capacity of the instructional space, as determined in accordance with subsection 3 (3) of Schedule 1, or
    - 1,000 persons.

Again, we are using a number of communication mediums such as the website and townhalls; but, we believe the best method will be if each unit ensures their team is aware of expectations. These items are intended to help with your discussions.

We're here to help. If you have questions please contact the [Operations Taskforce](#) .