

Covid-19 Guidance for Researchers on Face- to-Face Human Participant Research on Campus

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Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This guidance is supplementary to the high level University guidance on office and general teaching space. This guidance document specifically relates to face to face research involving human participants only.
- 1.2 The audience of this guidance is research scientists conducting studies with healthy human participants.
- 1.3 These guidelines supplement the University's existing research ethics and risk assessment proceduresⁱ and also provide details about the criteria for studies seeking to and the approvals required, to resume research or start new research projects.
- 1.4 A risk assessment considering the hazards and controls described below is required as part of any submission to Cross School Research Ethics Committeesⁱⁱ. The responsibility for signing off any risk assessment remains with the School carrying out the work, however ethics committees may comment on the suitability of any risk assessment.

2. Criteria for resumption of research or starting new research

- 2.2 Specific Covid risk assessments are no longer required other than where target groups are clinically vulnerable, unvaccinated or there is an increased risk of covid due to the demograph represented in the research study (see section 7 below for guidance on when this may apply). Other risks to the safety of staff or participants must still be risk assessed. Under these circumstances the process below should be followed to produce a suitable risk assessment.
 - a) Submission of a Risk Assessment completed for the work and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) specifying risk prevention measures required to carry out the research safely. Guidance on how to do so appears below. A [template risk assessment is available here](#). An example risk assessment appears below in appendix 3.
 - b) Risk assessments should be signed off by the Group Lead or Chief investigator (this is the individual that leads the research group or the primary person running the study) and copies should be retained by the relevant school Safety Coordinator
 - c) All projects previously approved by a University Cross-School Research Ethics Committee (C-REC)¹ are required to submit a project amendment application to resume such research. The amendment is submitted together with new versions of any documentation that may have been subsequently changed (including Risk Assessment and SOPs), to the online ethical review application system in Sussex Direct. Confirmation of C-REC Approval is required before the research may safely recommence.

¹ University Cross-School Research Ethics Committee comprise the SCITEC C-REC; SSARTS C-REC; BSMS Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEC) and School based School Research Ethics Officers (SREOs)

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3. Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Staff Lead Projects

- 3.1 Undergraduate projects can resume subject to any increase in covid alert level. Where practical it is best practice to ask an individual to confirm their vaccination status as part of the criteria to participate.
- 3.2 Research Masters Students, PhD projects can resume subject to covid alert level. Where practical it is best practice to ask an individual to confirm their vaccination status as part of the criteria to participate.

4. Changes in Covid-19 Alert Level

- 4.1 Prior to undertaking work the local Covid-19 Alert level should be consulted. Details of this can be found [here](#). Most research activities involving subjects are likely to cease in the event that the alert level is “very high”. Exceptions may be made for studies involving patients at the Clinical Imaging Sciences Centre where subjects will be on site anyway due to therapeutic reasons.
- 4.2 You will be informed of any changes by the responsible C-REC. This guidance will be reviewed every 2 months.

5. Covid-19 Testing for Participants

- 5.1 All staff and students attending campus are encouraged take an LFD (lateral flow device) tests twice a week. Ideally 2 tests would be taken weekly 3 days apart.

LFD tests are available via the following routes

- From on campus home testing kits [distribution points](#)
- From the [on campus pharmacy](#)
- Direct home delivery from [UK gov](#)
- Community LFD testing operated by local councils and or Public Health England

- 5.2 If you have access to home testing kits provided to students and the parents of students in primary or secondary education there is no requirement for double testing. All members of staff are welcome to use the on campus ATC regardless of other testing opportunities.
- 5.3 Participants in research projects should be asked to take an LFD test either the day before or on the day of their participating in the study. This is best practice but is no longer mandatory outside of CISC.
- 5.4 Individuals that have had a confirmed case of covid within 90 days should not take an LFD test as this can provide a positive result in individuals that are no longer infectious. In these cases an NHS text or email notification of a positive result can be requested
- 5.5 Individuals that have been vaccinated should still be tested for covid-19, as the current information is that vaccinated individuals are unlikely to develop serious symptoms but can still be a vector for transmission of Covid-19. The effectiveness of current available vaccines in blocking transmission is being reviewed.

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- 5.6 A draft letter to participants appears in appendix 5 below
- 5.7 Work undertaken within CISC must conform to their current internal requirements for Covid-19 testing. Due to the nature of the facility clinically vulnerable are likely to be present and as such tighter controls may be required based on local likely infection rate at the time of the study.

6. Linked Guidance

- 6.1 For guidance on laboratory or workshop areas please see the Guidance document "[Guidance for laboratory areas](#)". This Guidance document is available from the [Health & Safety Covid-19 Resources](#) page.
- 6.2 For guidance on office space please see the guidance document "[Guidance for offices and other low hazards spaces](#)". This Guidance document is available from the Health & Safety Covid-19 Resources page.
- 6.3 For guidance on of campus work please see "Travel on University Business and off-site working" available from the [Health & Safety Covid-19 resources](#) page.

7. Participant Exclusion Criteria and Vulnerable Groups

- 7.1 Recruitment for research projects should ensure processes to screen for 'at risk' groups. In the event that this is applicable see section 10 onwards for guidance on possible controls.
- 7.2 An example Covid-19 Health Screening questionnaire is shown below in appendix 1.

8. Information for Participants

- 8.1 Participants should be encouraged to download and use the NHS app for the purpose of track and trace while on campus. Details are available [here](#). Some phones may not be compatible with the application.
- 8.2 Participants should be instructed to complete the University of Sussex isolation reporting form available [here](#) in the event that they develop symptoms within 48 hours of being on site.
- 8.3 Participants with concerns about attending site can view the up to date information on covid controls [here](#).

9. Isolations

- 9.1 Anyone that develops symptoms of Covid-19 or test positive must [self isolate](#). Staff that this applies to must inform their line manager and complete the [UoS Covid reporting form](#). Individuals who test positive for Covid-19 will be able to leave self-isolation after a further five full days, subject to having two negative lateral flow results 24 hours apart.
- 9.2 The day symptoms begin or you test positive is day zero. The following day is day one of

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your isolation period. You can take your first test on day five. If it is negative, you can take another test 24 hours later on day six. Assuming this is also negative - and you do not have a temperature - you can leave isolation immediately.

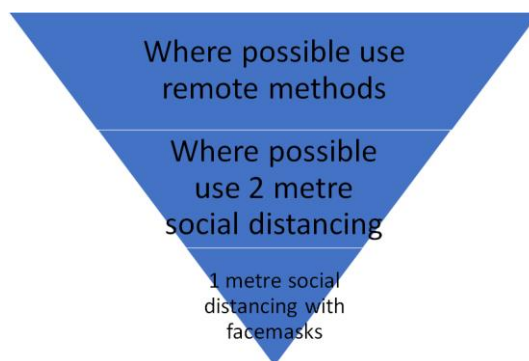
- 9.3 These rules apply to both vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals.
- 9.4 As of the 16th of August 2021 close contacts of covid positive persons are not required to self isolate if they are under 18 or have been double vaccinated, but the government strongly advises you take daily lateral flow tests (1 a day for 7 days). If you do not meet this criteria then you must self isolate and report as described in section 1.3 above.

10. Covid-19 controls for vulnerable groups. The sections below only apply where work involves vulnerable groups and is provided as information for groups where this may apply

- 10.1 The controls below are applicable in health care settings and or other areas where due to the nature of the research and or there is an identifiable increase in covid risk due to nature of the study.
- 10.2 The hazards from Covid-19 which have been considered in this guidance are;
- Transmission via hand contact
 - Transmission via droplet or airborne means
- 10.3 Controls for transmission via hand contact. Best practice for controlling the spread of Covid-19 between surfaces appears below organised by the type of activity or equipment. It is key to remember that Covid-19 is a respiratory virus and an individual having Covid-19 on their hand will not cause an infection unless they transfer it to their face. It is for this reason that hand washing and sanitisation are the preferred control rather than gloves as a gloved hand can still transfer Covid-19 to another surface.
- 10.4 Controls for transmission via droplets or airborne transmission re
- Social distancing
Adequate airflow, details of the checks that have been carried out on ventilation systems will be published on the Health & Safety Covid-19 resources page.
 - If you are conducting activities that may increase the likelihood of generating aerosols for instance loud vocalisation or physical exercise the area should aired before the next participant. See section 22 below for details on how to achieve this.
- 10.5 Room selection. When carrying out work with relevant groups suitable ventilation should be considered. A detailed paper on general room ventilation is available on the Health & Safety Covid-19 resources centre under the drop down menu risk assessment database. This is available [here](#)
- 10.6 When selecting how you carry out work use the hierarchy of control in figure 1 below.

Figure 1

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You should ensure that the room you have chosen is suitable for the number of persons that will occupy it. Reusable face coverings are acceptable, as are face coverings that the participants bring themselves. To be effective a face covering must cover both the nose and mouth.

10.7 A list of rooms that have undergone ventilation checks is available below. The room you intend to use must be specified on your Risk Assessment documentation for your research project. If the room you intend to use is not on the list below you must confirm its suitability with the School technical services team.

- Pevensey 2 3B16 (Human Psychophysiology Lab)
- Pevensey 2 4B16 (Human Psychopharmacology Unit)
- Pevensey 2 5B12 (Developmental Labs)
- Pevensey 2 3B14
- Pevensey 2 3B15A
- Pevensey 2 3B17
- Old Ancillary Building (Cubicles 5,6, 7 and 8)

11. Setup and Orientation of people

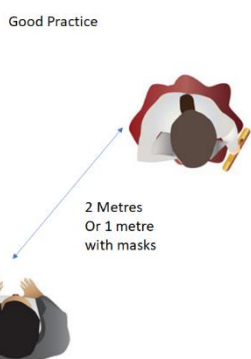
11.1 When considering how to conduct an interview or other research work it is important to minimise people facing each other directly. Figure 2 & 3 below shows examples of good and bad practice.

Figure 2



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Figure 3



12 Screens and Protective Equipment

12.1 Where possible, protective screens can be used to limit potential transmission.

13 Room Cleaning & Hand sanitiser

13.1 Cleaning or sanitisation supplies to support on campus research can be requested from estates.covid@sef.fm . It is suggested that requests are put in 2 weeks before the planned start date of any work to ensure that materials are available.

13.2 When considering areas that need to be sanitised consider areas which are high contact as a priority for instance door handles, light switches and fixed furniture or equipment used. Should be wiped down with a suitable sanitiser or alcohol based wipe before and after use by each participant.

13.3 Wipes and other cleaning materials can be disposed of via a standard waste bin.

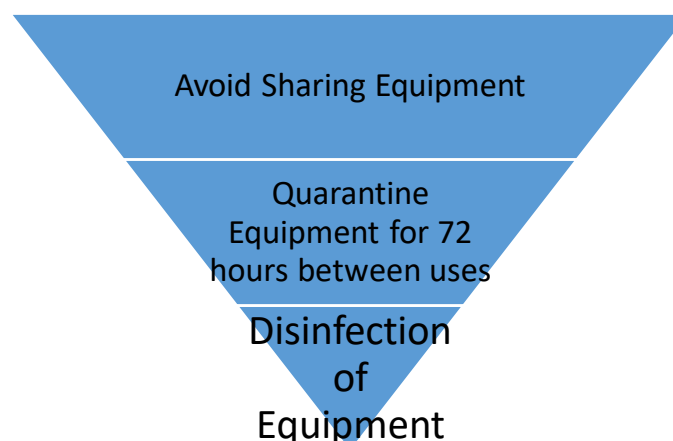
13.4 Hand sanitiser or hand washing facilities must be available to all participants to use before and after taking part in any study.

14 Equipment

14.1 When using equipment as part of a study use the following hierarchy of control shown in figure 4 below

Figure 4

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- 14.2 When quarantining equipment it should either be locked away so that others cannot use the equipment or labelled with the name of the last member of staff to use the equipment, the date it was last used and the date when it can next be used.
- 14.3 Special attention must be paid to any equipment that is placed or worn on an individual’s face as this raises the risk of transmission. In this context the face would be considered any area from forehead to chin or from ear to ear including the ears themselves. It would exclude the scalp and neck.
- 14.4 Equipment that is blown into or otherwise interacts with someone’s mouth cannot be shared unless it is autoclaved or another means of more thorough disinfection is used between uses.
- 14.5 Covid-19 is a respiratory virus and an individual having covid-19 on their hand will not cause an infection unless they transfer it to their face. Where you are touching another person as part of your work washing or sanitising your hands before and after skin to skin contact is usually a better control than the use of gloves.
- 14.6 When equipment is frequently passed between individuals and it is not practical to wash or sanitise your hands each time gloves are likely to be a suitable control.

15. Medical Sensors

- 15.1 Where work involves the use of medical sensors (including but not limited to the use of Electrocardiogram sensors, blood sensor monitors and Oxygen saturation monitors), consider if it is possible to demonstrate with another sensor the correct fitting of the device and allowing the subject to fit the device themselves. If this can be done while maintaining 2 metres distancing or 1 metre with face coverings close contact working may not be required.
- 15.2 It is recommended that if taking an individual’s pulse, an electronic method is used rather than manually taking someone’s pulse rate as this requires increased contact.
- 15.3 Where a thermometer is required consider a none contact thermal scanning thermometer.

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16 Food, beverages and other items given orally to participants

16.1 When preparing anything that is taken orally by participants you must follow the guidance available [here](#). This must be documented in any risk assessment or operating procedure.

Appendix 1 Suggested Covid-19 Health Questionnaire

This is an example of a possible health screening questionnaire and may need to be adapted depending upon your study. Any study operating at CISC must use their standard questionnaire.

Name	Contact Number
Do you have any of the following primary symptoms of covid-19?	
A high temperature (consider if you may have a fever or chills)	Yes/No
A new, continuous cough	Yes/No
A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste	Yes/No

Have you live with someone who is or should currently be self isolating due to Covid-19?	Yes/No
Have you been contacted by NHS track and trace in the last 2 weeks and told to self isolate?	Yes/No

If you have answered yes to any of the above follow the NHS advice available here <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/> and **do not** come to the Falmer Campus

Have you travelled abroad in the last 2 weeks? If so where?	Yes/No
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Individuals entering the country from overseas must comply with UK gov entry requirements as described here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/red-amber-and-green-list-rules-for-entering-england>

Additional questions you may wish to consider including that are not directly linked to Covid-19

Do you have any of the following symptoms?	
Tiredness	Yes/No
Aches and pains (muscle fatigue/body aches)	Yes/No
Nasal discharge	Yes/No
Congestion	Yes/No
Headache	Yes/No
Nausea or vomiting	Yes/No
Conjunctivitis	Yes/No
Shortness of Breath	Yes/No

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Sore throat	Yes/No
Skin rash/discolouration of finger or toe	Yes/No
Diarrhoea	Yes/No

Appendix 2 Reference Materials and further reading

Internal Guidance

- [Health & Safety Covid-19 Resources Page](#)
- [Human Resources Covid-19 information](#)
- [Research Governance](#)
- [Box Link for Track and Trace information](#)

External

- [Gov.UK Covid-19 information](#)
- [NHS guidance](#)
- [SAGE paper on Higher Education](#)
- [Foreign and Commonwealth Office Travel](#)

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Appendix 3 Risk Assessment

Below is an example detailing what you should consider in a risk assessment with regards to Covid-19. If there are other hazards that are part of the study these can be considered on the same risk assessment. Editable versions of this document can be found on the health & safety website <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/> under “forms, policies and guidance” “General”

The severity of the Covid-19 is likely to be 5 on a 1-5 rating as it can be fatal in rare cases, the aim of the controls should be to reduce the likelihood of infections occurring due to a specific study to 1 on 1-5 rating.

Section 1					
General Information					
A	School / Department:				
B	Brief description of the activity: <i>Start to finish, step by step</i>				
C	Location(s) covered by this risk assessment: <i>Include building and room number if applicable</i>	<i>This would be the room or rooms where the research is to be carried out</i>			
D	Risk assessment purpose. (Specify equipment and materials used where relevant).				
E	Name(s) / Group(s) involved in the activity: <i>Consider Staff, Students, Visitors, Contractors and members of the public</i>				
F	Name of person completing this risk assessment:	<i>This would be the research of student that completes the risk assessment</i>	Signature	Date:	

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	<i>Students and PhD students should only complete risk assessments for their projects. Sign off for all student projects should be by the student's supervisor.</i>				
G	<p>Risk assessment approved by:</p> <p><i>The individual approving the risk assessment should be familiar with the work being undertaken. This should in most cases be the assessor's supervisor, line manager or the principle investigator.</i></p>	<i>This would be the head of the study</i>	Signature		Date:

Section 2 Record of Risk Assessment reviews

Risk assessments should be reviewed annually, if there is a significant change in the process or after an incident/near miss

Date of review:		Reviewed by:		Comments / date of next review:	
Date of review:		Reviewed by:		Comments / date of next review:	•

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Section 3 Hazards & Controls

See the accompanying guidance document on the safety section website for further information on how to complete this form.

		Risk with current control measures			Risk after additional control measures							
Potential hazards	Who might be harmed and how?	What current controls are in place to avoid harm?	Likelihood 1-5	Severity 1-5	Risk (L x R)	What further control measures are required to reduce risk?	Likelihood 1-5	Severity 1-5	Risk (L x R)	Who will do this?	When must this be done?	Completed on:

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Contract transmission of Covid-19	Researchers and Research participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suggest regular hand washing or sanitising 		5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where applicable detail what controls are in place with regards to equipment as detailed in section 15 above Include any medical sensors being used as detailed in section 16 above 		5				
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Transmission of Covid-19 by droplets and or airborne routes	Researchers and Research participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detail of 2 metre distancing is to be used and how it will be implemented in the chosen space • Detail of 1 meter distancing is to be used with the use of face covering or other controls and how these will be implemented in the chosen space • Ventilation 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If close contact is required detail the arrangements and how you have applied the hierarchy of control outlined in this guidance http://www.stage.sussex.ac.uk/hso/documents/cv-19-05-close-contact-16.pdf 						
Failure to isolate after contact	Researchers and Research participant General population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm what you have in place for taking track and trace information as detailed above in 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 						

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Other non Covid-19 hazards	Where there are other identifiable or reasonably foreseeable hazards this should also be considered	These may include but are not limited to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression or violence • Infection from other diseases • Chemical hazards • Toxic effects from substances given to participant in sufficient doses • Food hygiene standards • Hazards associated with participant exercising 				•						
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Add additional lines as required

Section 4 Communication of Risk Assessment to Users

All individuals carrying out activities covered under this risk assessment should sign below after reading it.

By signing this document you confirm that; you have read and understood this risk assessment and that it is an accurate representation of work practice

Name	Signature	Date	Name	Signature	Date

Add addition lines as required

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Appendix 4 NHS confirmation

Below is the current NHS text message as of the 19/03/2021. The text below is subject to change based on NHS updated to guidance and should be used as a guideline...

NHS COVID-19 Notification: Dear _____

Birth date _____

Test date: _____

Your coronavirus lateral flow test result is negative. It's likely you were not infectious when the test was done.

Keep following coronavirus advice including:

- Regular handwashing
- Social distancing
- wearing a face covering where recommended

You only need to self-isolate if:

- You get symptoms of coronavirus - you'll need to book a different test at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test>
- Someone you live with tests positive, or has symptoms and has not been tested yet
- You've been traced as a contact of someone who tested positive

If you're doing daily contact testing at work and are well, you can work today. If you've completed your daily tests, and they've all been negative, you can stop testing.

For medical help, contact 111. In an emergency dial 999.

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Appendix 5 template letter to participants

Dear Research Participant

You have been invited to participate in a research study being undertaken by researchers at the University of Sussex.

University of Sussex staff are encouraged to test weekly for covid-19 as part of our work to limit the spread of covid-19. It is best practice for research participants to be tested prior to participating in the study.

As part of the University's measures to decrease the rate of COVID-19 infections on campus we are asking if you would take a COVID-19 Lateral Flow Device (LFD) test prior to attending the campus and participating in the research study.

A test can be taken via one of the following methods:

- By using a home testing kit provided to students and guardians of students enrolled in primary and secondary education.
- By using an asymptomatic test centre based in the local community.
- By taking a home test kit delivered by [UK gov](#)
- By collecting an LFD kit from the on campus pharmacy or other distribution points

If you have any questions please contact _____

The study you are enrolled in is: "Name of the study"

IRAS, CREC or RGEC N: _____ ;

Principal Investigator: "Name of the PI"

The date you should have the test depends on the scheduled dates for attending the research facility on the University of Sussex campus.

The day(s) you are scheduled to attend are:

"Date" (1)

"Date" (2)

"Date" (3)

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If the test is negative, you will be able to attend the research facility at the scheduled time.

If the test is positive for COVID-19, you should not attend the research facility and should [self-isolate](#) instead. Please contact the study investigators immediately to inform them of a positive test for COVID-19. Their contact details are: Name of investigator; Tel or Mob N or email address

You can find links to relevant COVID-19 related information [here](#). See also [further information on mass testing and lateral flow devices](#).

If you have had covid in the 90 days prior to being tested it is not recommended to be tested, please contact the study organiser.

^{i i} Please see <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/governance> and <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/> and <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/specialist/hscovidpage>

ⁱⁱ University Cross-School Research Ethics Committee comprise the SCITEC C-REC; SSARTS C-REC; BSMS Research Governance and Ethics Committee (RGEC) and School based School Research Ethics Officers (SREOs) for 'low' risk taught student research.

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