University of Sussex Winter COVID-19 Guidance

This guidance is intended for the use of Line Managers and Teaching staff

Document Control					
Document No	Version 1.6	**Date Issued**	13.09.2022		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	**Reviewed by**	Katie Bennett	**Department**	GCGC

1. Introduction

1.1 This document outlines what steps have been taken to balance temperature against current COVID-19 best practice over the winter of 2021. It is supplementary to the following University documents

- Guidance for Teaching Spaces
- Guidance for offices and other low hazard spaces
- Guidance for laboratory areas
- Guidance for researchers on face to face work with human participants

Guidance contained within these documents has not been repeated here. For details of best practice for these places, isolations, COVID-19 testing and travel guidance please continue to refer to the Health and Safety COVID-19 resources page.

1.2 Where members of staff have concerns about ventilation in specific rooms they should be asked to complete the ventilation review request form. This will trigger a review of the space by the UoS Health and Safety team within 4 working days of receiving a request.

2. Mechanical Ventilation Systems

2.1 Details of this proccess can be found on the Estates Ventilation system document.

2.2 As in previous years the heating systems will be activated based upon the tempratues set on the control unit in each building and or room. The tempratue set in a room is independent to the amount of air supplied to the room for the purposes of ventilation. The lack of reciculation of air will mean that it will take more energy to achieve warm air than in previous years, the temperature achieved should not be affected by not recirculating air.

3. Natural Ventilation

3.1 In rooms where ventilation is provided by windows and the temperature is not sufficient for staff comfort the following steps can be taken:

3.2 Decreasing the extent to which windows are open. An open window will provide suitable ventilation even when open by 5-10 cm. The lower temperature outside will in most cases increase the number of air changes per hour from a populated room. This is due to the presence of people in the room heating the air inside creating a thermal difference to the colder outside air.

3.3 Opening only high level windows or vents. Most rooms with high level windows will have a pole with which they can be opened. In the event that this is missing please contact School/Divisional management to raise a request for replacement with the Service Centre. In General Teaching Space these requests can be forwarded to Estates and Facilities Management for approval and funding . Do not climb on chairs or tables to open high level windows.

3.4 Where practical rooms can be used with windows and doors shut if a regime of purging the room is put in place. This would involve opening the windows/doors fully for 10 minutes

out of every hour, during this time staff should be encouraged to take a break[1].
For teaching spaces this can be achieved by ensuring that windows/doors are opened at the start and end of teaching sessions and or while students are arriving and leaving.

If you are unsure if the window/door has a sufficiently wide apature to suitably ventilate a space please complete a ventilation review request form and a member of the health and safety team can provide you with additional information.

Large lecture theatres typically have a mechanical ventilation system which means this is unceccessary.
In rooms with mechanical ventilation systems doors should not be propped open as this can overstress the fan systems. If in doubt as to if a room has mechanical ventiatlion please complete a ventilation review request form and you will be provided with details of the rooms ventilation measures.

4. Provision of Space heaters

4.1 The Estates, Facilities and Contract management division have procured suitable electrical heaters that can be requested via the SEF Service Centre. Allocation of heaters will be prioritised as detailed under 4.2 below.

4.2 Portable electrical heaters will be prioritised for the following groups:

- Individuals working in a seated position in student facing areas near open doors, this would include but is not limited to:
  - The IT service desk
  - Councelling services
  - Student Records
  - School Receptions
  - Library Receptions
- Individuals with specific health conditions (for instance Reinhardt's) that are required as part of their work to be on campus, will also be prioritised. In cases where this is not practical or does not provide sufficient support an occupational health appointment may need to be arranged.

4.4 The following types of electronic heaters must not be used in UoS buildings as they increase the fire risk in buildings.

Fan heaters

[1] HSE Covid ventilation Guidance

Convection Heater

Halgoen Heater

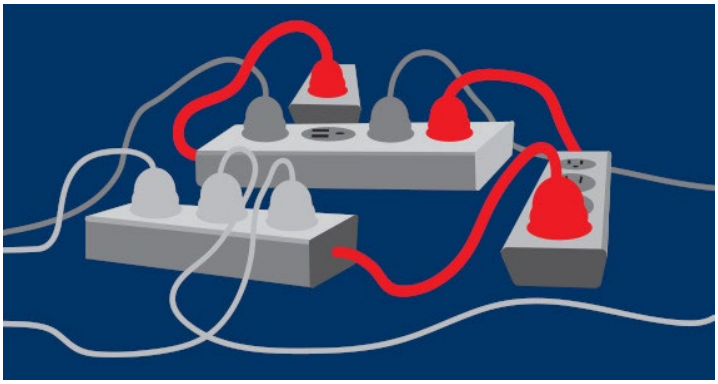
4.5 The following types of heaters are examples of portable oil filled heaters that can be used in UoS buildings and when used correctly do not raise the fire risk.

Portable Electric Radiators
(Oil filled heaters)

4.6 Staff, School or Divisions that require additional heating units must order them via SEF Service Centre and not procure them independently. It is important for the UoS to guage where electrical heaters are in use to prevent electrical systems from becoming overloaded as this may cause powercuts and an increased likelihood of electrical fires.

4.7 Portable heaters should be plugged directly into a mains socket or a single extention cable (i.e. with only one plug point.) When installing a portable heater do not

- Overload extension cords
- Plug extension cords into extension cords
- Run multiple heaters off a single extension cord



5. Thermal Assessment

5.1 A thermal comfort assessment template is available for line managers to assess if they need to take additional steps to ensure the thermal comfort of their staff.

6. Background reference for managers

6.1 The Workplace health safety and welfare regulations (1992)[2] state the following with regards to temperature under Regulation 7

Regulation 7 Temperature in indoor workplaces

Regulation 7

(1) During working hours, the temperature in all workplaces inside buildings shall be reasonable.

(1A) Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1) –

(a) a workplace shall be adequately thermally insulated where it is necessary, having regard to the type of work carried out and the physical activity of the persons carrying out the work; and

(b) excessive effects of sunlight on temperature shall be avoided.[a]

(2) A method of heating or cooling shall not be used which results in the escape into a workplace of fumes, gas or vapour of such character and to such extent that they are likely to be injurious or offensive to any person.

(3) A sufficient number of thermometers shall be provided to enable persons at work to determine the temperature in any workplace inside a building.

(a) Added by the Health and Safety (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2002 (SI 2002/2174) regulation 6(f)

This is the legally required actions which include ensuring adequate provision of thermometers. These can be provided by Estates, requests should be sent to the SEF Service Centre.

[2] The Workplace health safety and welfare regulations (1992) Regulation 7 and ACOP 7

6.2 Many people will be aware of a figure of 16 degrees as a form of temperature 'limit'. This figure does not have full legal standing as it is not with the regulation itself but is in the approved code of practice (ACOP) see below.

ACOP 7

60 The temperature inside the workplace should provide reasonable comfort without the need for special clothing. If reasonable comfort cannot be achieved because of hot or cold processes, all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a temperature which is as close as possible to comfortable.

61 The temperature in a workplace should normally be at least 16 degrees Celsius. If work involves rigorous physical effort, the temperature should be at least 13 degrees Celsius. However, these temperatures may not necessarily provide reasonable comfort, depending on other factors such as air movement, relative humidity and worker clothing. Temperature readings should be taken close to workstations, at working height and away from windows.

62 These temperature guidelines do not apply where it would be impractical to maintain those temperatures, for example in rooms which have to be open to the outside, or where food or other products have to be kept cold. In such cases, the temperature should be as close to those mentioned in paragraph 61 as is practical.

As stated in paragraph 61 of the ACOP 7 copied above, the workplace 'should normally be at least 16 degrees' – it is not a required or absolute minimum standard. Ventilation standards under Health and Safety Executive (HSE) COVID-19 guidance make it impractical to meet the minimum of 16 degress under ACOP 7 and would not in itself be a legal reason for staff to choose to work from home. It is therefore for managers to determine what is an acceptable level of temperature for people to work in their workplace/ office.

When working in a workplace/ office that has been identified as cold following a thermal comfort assessment the following may help manage the situation

- Partially opening windows to decrease drafts
- Advising staff to bring additional layers and dress appropriately for the expected tempratures
- Increase the frequency of breaks
- Purging the space (see 3.4 above)
- Where possible move staff to a warmer part of the workplace/ office away from drafts
- Setting heating to a higher setting
- Requesting additional heaters from the Estates, Faciltiies and Contract Management division as described in section 4 above.