UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Guidance for Returning to work in Office and Low Hazard Spaces

Social Distancing

SARS-CoV-2

(Covid-19)

Document Control					
Document No	CV-19 03	**Version**	Version 2	**Date Issued**	28/8/2020
Author	Steven Carter	**Reviewed by**	Bridget Edminson	**Department**	GCGC

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1.   Introduction

1.1   In the face of the Covid-19 pandemic, this guidance outlines the University's high-level policy for enabling staff to return to work within office space and similar working environments. This guidance does not extend to laboratory facilities or residential settings and separate guidance is available for these areas. This document complements existing Government guidelines on maintaining social distancing measures, to minimise the spread of the novel coronavirus on campus.

1.2   This policy pertains to the immediate measures being put in place to ensure employees can safely return to work within office space or similar working environments, as designated in the relevant School or Division risk assessments. It will also cover how these processes can be implemented in the long term to ensure compliance for the foreseeable future.

1.3   This guidance exists in addition to all legal obligations, current policies and guidance for safe working within such settings. In these challenging and unprecedented times, the temptation from a person's health and safety perspective may be to solely focus on the risks aligned to the spread of Covid-19. It must not be forgotten that all current health and safety policies and guidelines for safe working within the workplace must still be followed.

1.4   Stakeholders, including Heads of Schools, Directors, Trade Union representatives, members of Estates and Facilities (EFM), University Health & Safety (H&S) team, Heads of Professional Services (HOPS) and members of the University H&S Committee will have the opportunity to review and comment on this document. It is important to acknowledge and recognise that essential staff have now been asked to return to work in line with the relevant School or Division risk assessment following   discussions with their line managers who will explain the safety measure that have been put in place. The University recognises there are a number of external factors which may influence any decision made by a member of staff, e.g. caring responsibilities or the need to shield vulnerable members of their household from increased risk of infection etc. Further Equality, Diversity & Inclusion considerations are covered in the COVID 19 - Business Resumption and Recovery Plan.

1.5   Where workers are not identified as being in an essential role and can work from home this should continue – and line managers should be flexible about helping workers to fulfil their caring responsibilities if they would normally be required to work on site.

1.6   Many staff work in open plan offices which will make social distancing guidelines difficult to implement under normal practice. The use of office space should be kept to a minimum, and the default position should be that where people are not in an essential role they possible, people should continue to work at home.

1.7   To reiterate, if non-essential workers can work from home this should continue, to promote social distancing on campus.

1.8   This specific guidance for return to work within office spaces and similar working environments has been aligned with the core principles outlined in the COVID 19 - Business Resumption and Recovery Plan and follows current Government guidance on working safely in offices during Covid-19.   https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres.

1.9   Guidance for Returning to work in Research Laboratories Social Distancing SARS-CoV-2 (Covid-19) mirrors the advice and guidance within this document but tailored for research laboratories.

1.10   General advice to minimise risk associated with Covid-19 is as follows:

1.10.1   If you or a member of your household are displaying symptoms, you must self-isolate and inform your line manager and email Health and Safety (healthsafety@sussex.ac.uk) . The period of self-isolation should follow the government guidelines. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection

1.10.2   Social distancing of 2m should be the minimum standard and School and Division plans should be developed to achieve this. Wherever this is not achievable a risk assessment and proposed mitigating actions should be proposed.

1.10.3   Clinically vulnerable individuals who cannot work from home, should be offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to maintain social distancing guidelines. Those living with vulnerable members of their household should be supported in working from home.

1.10.4   Where workers can work from home this should still be strongly encouraged – and line managers should be flexible about helping workers to fulfil their caring responsibilities if they would normally be required to work on site.

1.10.5   Wash hands regularly with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds.

1.10.6   Coughs and sneezes should be covered with a tissue and disposed of immediately (into your elbow if no tissue) followed by the washing of hands.

1.10.7   Workers must maintain social distancing when greeting others, this includes avoiding shaking hands.

1.10.8   Anyone who has travelled from overseas must abide by Government self-isolation requirements before coming into campus buildings https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control .

2.   Reoccupation of Buildings

2.1   A phased return to work is being designed to facilitate research, teaching and key University activities which requires presence on site or at external field sites. This will be followed by the gradual resumption of other activities in office and associated spaces, in a managed and approved process, whilst the lockdown from Covid-19 begins to ease.

2.2   Buildings can only be reoccupied on completion of work by Sussex Estates & Facilities (SEF) to ensure that services and infrastructure are safe to occupy following a protracted period of closure. The University uses a combination of natural and mechanical ventilation systems. The mechanical ventilation systems on site are maintained as part of the planned preventative maintenance schedule.

2.3   Prior to reoccupation, a full risk assessment by relevant School(s) and Divisions will take place based on proposed numbers of staff on site within buildings, and the activity/ duration of required works on site.

2.4   Schools and Divisions will look to devise plans to ensure staff who are invited to, or those who wish to return to work, are able to do so in a safe manner and in line with evolving Government guidance.

2.5   If decisions are made to prioritise certain buildings and/or areas within buildings for opening and resumption of work, these decisions will be based on ability to meet logistical requirements

at any given time, and any aligned H&S reasons, as well as School or Directorates' research or overarching University strategic priorities.

2.6   Areas where ongoing research into Covid-19 continues may be designated as a priority by the relevant Head of School or Director.

3.   Safe Access to and Egress from Buildings

3.1   Where safe to do so, the creation of a one-way system within buildings using just one door for entry, and one door for egress to help control the flow of persons in and out of building should be adopted. However, individual building design and circumstances should be taken into account. For example, in some areas it may be appropriate to use one door for access and one (or multiple if deemed more appropriate) for egress at a single point whereas other buildings may use a doorway to the side of, or back of a building. This planning will be carried out on a building by building basis by EFM.

3.2   Final exit doors on fire escape routes should all remain operational as per normal (pre Covid-19) circumstances. Where required they can be used as part of one way routes in some buildings.

3.3   EFM will install signs to remind persons of the social distancing that is expected to be adhered to (see Figure 1) at all entrance points to buildings.

3.4   EFM will install hand sanitiser dispensers at all approved entrance and exit doors to provide staff with the opportunity to sanitise their hands on entering and leaving a building, in order to reduce potential contamination risks.

3.5   For buildings occupied by more than one School or Division, it is expected that a joint building risk assessment and plan will be produced to ensure the maximum proposed occupancy levels can be safely managed.

3.6   Staff are encouraged to use hand sanitisers which have been made available at access points within buildings.
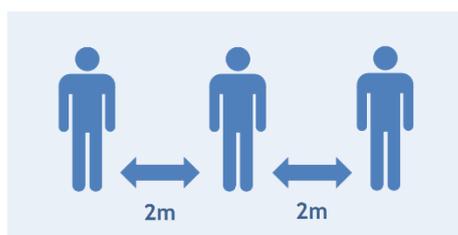
2 METRES
Please maintain social
distancing at all times

Figure 1 – Typical suggested signage to be used at entrances to buildings

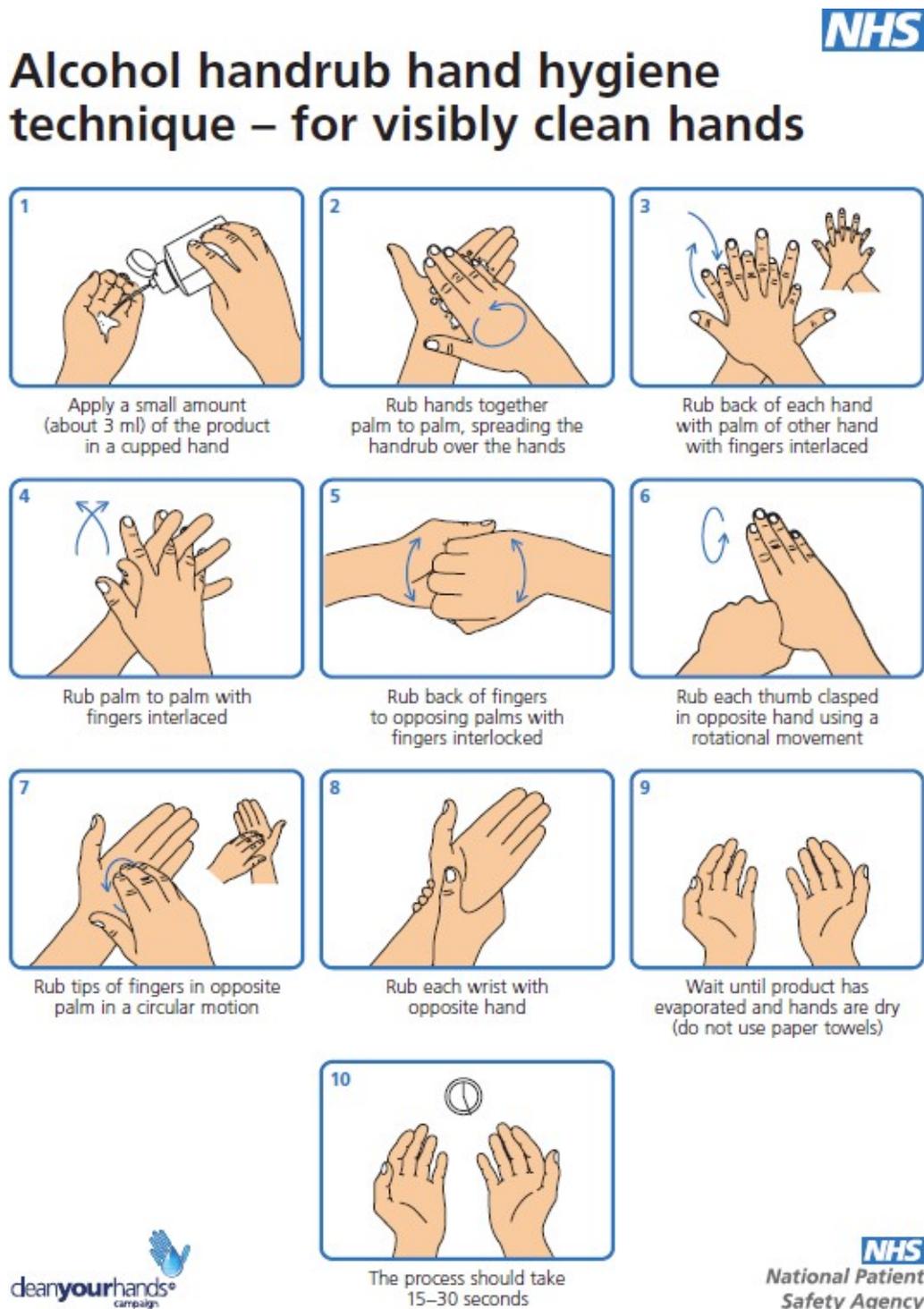The official NHS technique illustration is provided below (see Figure 2):

Alcohol handrub hand hygiene technique – for visibly clean hands

1 Apply a small amount (about 3 ml) of the product in a cupped hand

2 Rub hands together palm to palm, spreading the handrub over the hands

3 Rub back of each hand with palm of other hand with fingers interlaced

4 Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced

5 Rub back of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked

6 Rub each thumb clasped in opposite hand using a rotational movement

7 Rub tips of fingers in opposite palm in a circular motion

8 Rub each wrist with opposite hand

9 Wait until product has evaporated and hands are dry (do not use paper towels)

10 The process should take 15–30 seconds

cleanyourhands campaign

NHS National Patient Safety Agency

Figure 2 – NHS alcohol handrub hand hygiene technique – for visibly clean hands

4.   Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

4.1   The use of PPE is specified within the relevant risk assessments linked to the methodologies required to carry out particular types of work.

4.2   Staff should continue to wear the relevant PPE as determined by the relevant risk assessment as a minimum. These should not be shared with another person and procedures for the continued safe use of these items should be included in the local School plans, and risk assessment.

4.3   Gloves should be worn if specified as per the relevant risk assessment, but should not be worn in communal areas such as corridors or desk space etc.

4.4   When managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what usually would be worn is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks normally faced in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE.
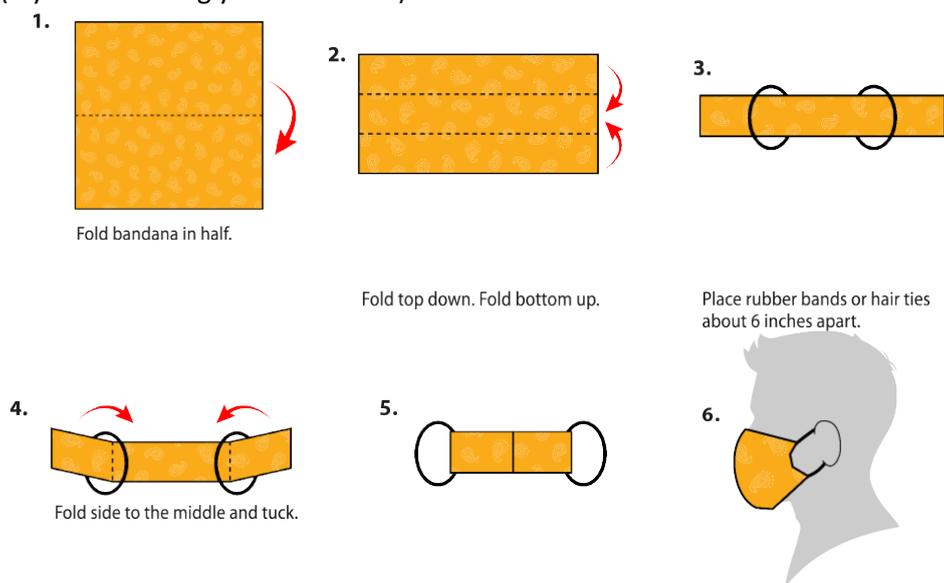
5.   Face Coverings

5.1   Government guidance has been updated to mandate the use of face coverings on public transport; and this will be introduced in shops on 24 July 2020 (there are a limited number of exemptions).

5.2   The University, where required by Government changes to law will remind people of the mandated use of face coverings. Where there is no legal requirement to wear face coverings, based upon risk assessments the University might still recommend their use, particularly where it is not viable to maintain 2m social distancing. This will be indicated by the use of either clear signage or a specific risk assessment that face coverings are required.

5.3   An example of the type of signage that may be used is shown below.

5.4   A cloth face covering should cover your mouth and nose while allowing you to breathe comfortably. It can be as simple as a scarf or bandana that ties behind the head.

5.5   The UK Government has published guidance on how to make your own face coverings (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering/how-to-wear-and-make-a-cloth-face-covering).

5.6   It is recommended that face coverings are made from multiple layers of fabric. An alternative face covering with multiple layers can be made simply using a no-sew method. Diagrammatic instructions for making this covering are shown below and the CDC has published an instructional video (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPx1yqvJgf4).

5.7   Materials Needed:

⬜ Bandana (or square cotton cloth approximately 50cm x 50cm)
⬜ Rubber bands (or hair ties)
⬜ Scissors (if you are cutting your own cloth)

1. Fold bandana in half.

2. Fold top down. Fold bottom up.

3. Place rubber bands or hair ties about 6 inches apart.

4. Fold side to the middle and tuck.

5.

6.

Instructions for several other face coverings can also be found on the BBC News Website (https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-52609777).

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6. Primary Office or Working Space

6.1   The principal control method in relation to Covid-19, for ensuring a safe working environment is the recommended 2m social distancing space. This should be the primary factor when assessing the number of staff that can safely work within an office space or similar working environment. Introducing this level of control is likely to mean that office spaces will only be able to function at a reduced capacity. These assessments will be supported by Health and Safety, and Estates and Facilites.

6.2   This guidance is in addition to existing non COVID Health and Safety guidance as we are all responsible for safeguarding our own health and safety by taking sensible precautions when we are at work.

6.3   Schools and Divisions should work with SEF Building Managers to ensure floors are marked at 2m intervals to ensure persons are maintaining adequate distance from one another. Where multiple points of access and egress to the office space are present, a one-way system should be implemented, with certain doors being designated for entry only and others for exit only (Figure 3). Where this is not possible, a communication approach should be maintained between all persons in a workspace, so movement of one individual can occur in either direction whilst other persons remain within the bays and maintain the 2m minimum distancing. All workers in bay-system office space should work at least 2m from any primary footways, and work facing away from the central reservation of a bay where possible to minimise any face-to-face contact between persons.

6.4   Every reasonable effort will be made to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (2m, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable). Where the need to consider risk mitigation where 2m is not viable, it will require a specific risk assessment and may include measures such as desk moves to avoid face to face positioning, use of protective screens, activity planning to minimise contact time, face coverings.

7. Shift Working

7.1   Line managers should work with their teams to coordinate a shift pattern where required, to allow the maximum number of workers to access a space, whilst maintaining a minimum number of persons working at any given time. Working space should be vacated upon completion of work.

Table 1. An example spreadsheet to determine a shift schedule either for two shifts in a day, or when designating a day for each team.

Group Number/ID	Days of Attendance	Shift Hours (if used)		Estimated number of workers per team
		Shift A Time	Shift B Time	
Team A/B	Monday			
Team A/B	Tuesday			
Team A/B	Wednesday			
Team A/B	Thursday			
Team A/B	Friday			

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Est. number of staff in shift		

8.   Office space cleaning

8.1   EFM along with SEF will determine which areas need enhanced cleaning regimes in line with Government guidance.

9.   Secondary and Tertiary Work Areas

9.1   Schools and Divisions are required to produce a plan to safely manage the access to, and use of, spaces where multiple users may require access or where certain types of equipment is based. For example, maintaining the 2m social distance requirements in store rooms, or print rooms. This may well require limiting access to such facilities to single person use at any one time. In order to avoid unexpected encounters with staff using such spaces, Schools and Divisions will be required to implement a process as detailed in the signage below;

10. Corridors, Foyers, Stairwells and Lifts

10.1   EFM will plan how to utilise buildings safely on a building by building basis. Maintaining social distancing in the corridors of buildings will involve several factors. Where possible, corridors which are sufficiently wide (i.e. exceeding 2m in width) should have a marking made down the centre to provide two 'lanes' where staff can always keep left, as illustrated in Figure 5. If a corridor is less than 2m wide a one-way system should be designed in the building for high traffic areas to create a series of loops that persons should follow when moving around buildings (Figure 6). For areas of low traffic, or for reasons specified in building risk assessment, an alternative system of allowing people to pass by each other and maintain a 2m distance is acceptable.

10.2   Signage should be placed at regular intervals along corridors, reminding persons to maintain a distance of at least 2m from others. In sections of corridors where queues are likely to form (e.g. outside kitchen areas, toilets etc.), corridors should be marked at 2m intervals to ensure social distancing is maintained whilst queueing. Consideration should be given as to whether these areas should not be used for through traffic in order to avoid congregation and maintenance of 2m distance. Schools and Divisons should work with SEF Building Managers to collate signage and floor markings.

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10.3   The use of lifts in buildings should be avoided at all times where possible and used only by disabled persons, or for the transport of large/heavy/hazardous materials where transport on stairways would not be possible or safe. It is likely that in most research buildings there is more than one stairway connecting floors. If lifts must be used, then they should be single occupancy to avoid aerosol transmission in a confined space and to maintain 2m separation.

10.4   If at all feasible, stairways will be designated by EFM as an 'up route' or a 'down route' to prevent face-to-face interaction of persons, and to ensure 2m distancing is maintained. These should be adequately signed to assist with the smooth movement of staff between floors as/when required.

10.5   Where only one stairwell to a floor is present, and the width of the stairwell is in excess of 2m it is acceptable to create an up and down side to the stairwell (clearly demarcated and with appropriate signage) to ensure staff may pass each other safely. If, as in a number of our buildings, the staircases are narrow and passing would result in close proximity (or if using a one-way stair system increases risk, such as when transporting hazardous materials), a verbal alert procedure (i.e. shouting "Is anyone using this stairwell?") should be put in place before using a stairwell to ensure there is not another person already using it.
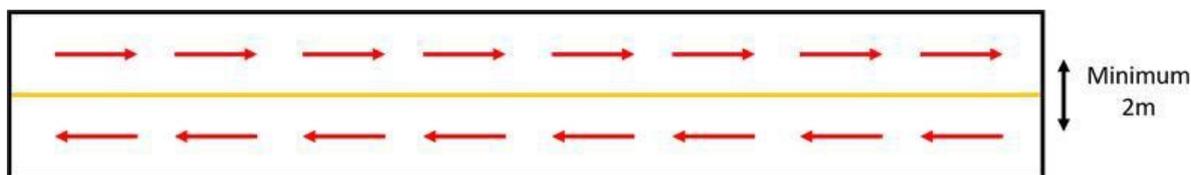

Figure 5 – Suggested two-way system to be implemented for wider corridors of more than 2m width
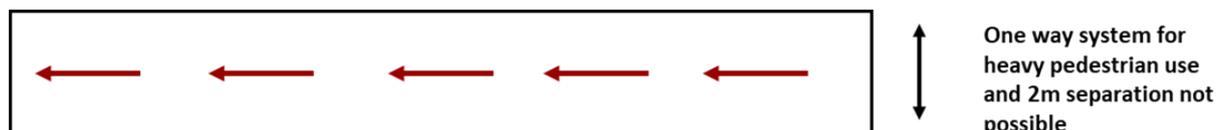

Figure 6 – Suggested one-way system to be implemented for corridors of less than 2m width

11.   Open Plan Office Spaces

11.1   Many staff work in open plan offices which will make social distancing guidelines difficult to implement under normal practice. The use of office space should be kept to a minimum, and the default position should be that where possible, people should continue to work at home.

11.2   To reiterate, if workers can work from home this should still be strongly encouraged, to promote social distancing on campus.

11.3   Figure 8 shows a typical four worker station. It would be most appropriate to limit areas such as these to one person to ensure compliance with social distancing. In these cases, the above suggestions should help your team arrange how this can be facilitated.

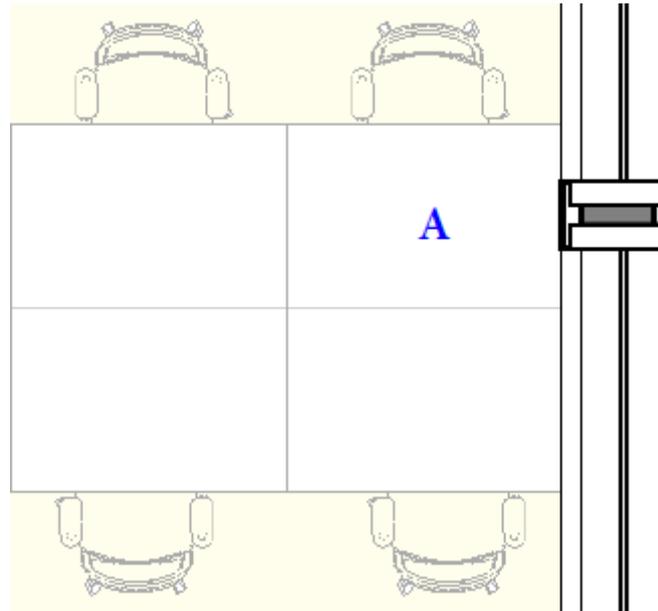| Document Control					
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Figure 8 – Typical four worker station layout at reduced capacity

Government guidelines specifically state

- **Only absolutely necessary participants should attend meetings and should maintain 2m separation throughout.**
- **Managing occupancy levels to enable social distancing.**
- **The guidance on social distancing is 2m social distancing, or 1m with risk mitigation where 2m is not viable**

11.4   Where larger desk areas are in place, workers should be staggered as illustrated in Figure 9. Where maintaining the recommended 2m separation during passing is not possible, the addition of a screen between desks and the removal of seats (red crosses in Figure 9) will allow for social distancing to be observed. However, consideration should also be given to the corridor or access walkways to the left of "B". If it is not possible to maintain 2m separation between an individual walking down the corridor and the individual sitting at desk "B", then it should not be used.
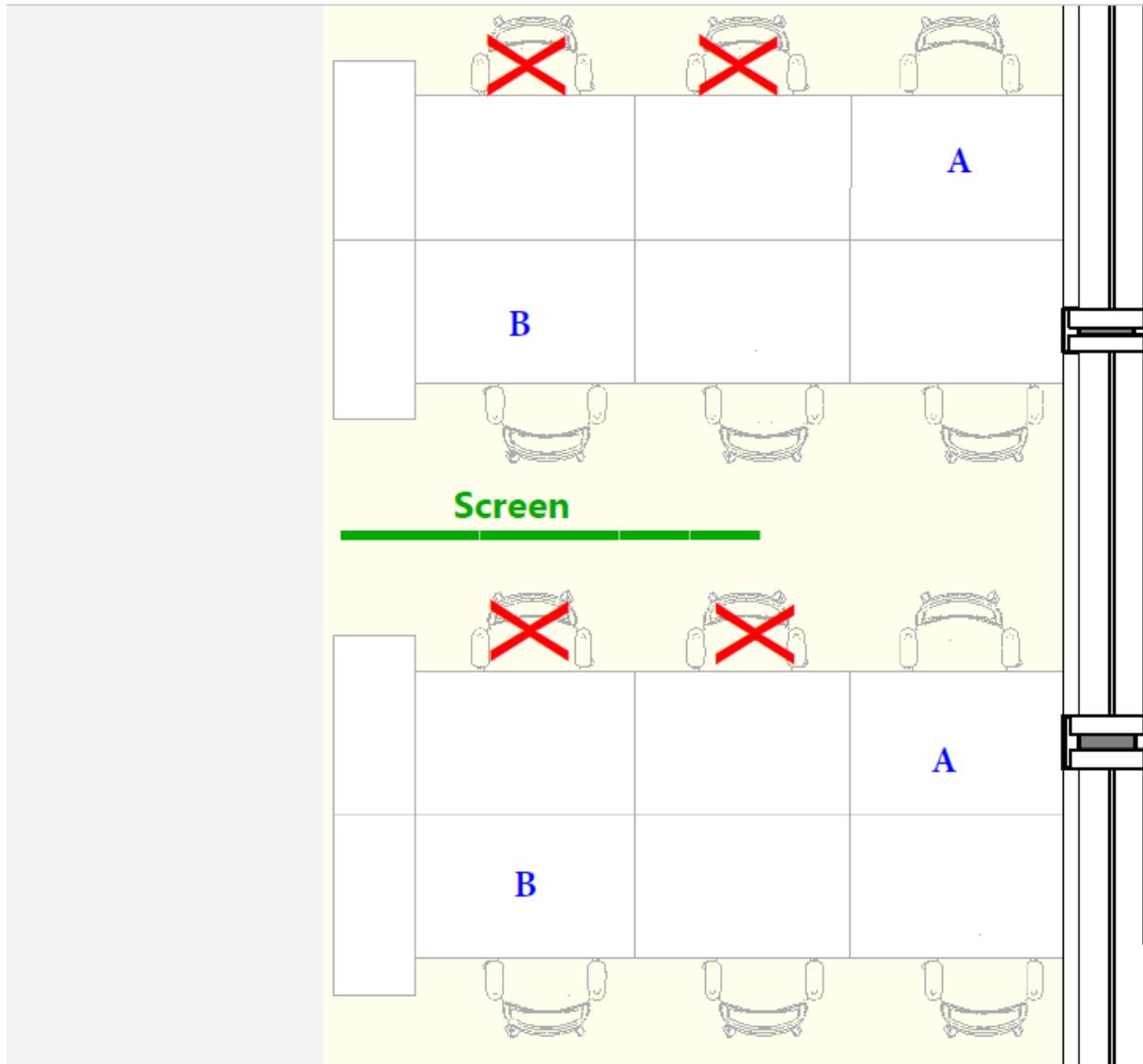
Figure 9 – Suggested staggered working position arrangement where chairs are removed to allow person A to access desk behind screen

12. Communal Kitchens

12.1   Many buildings on campus have small, communal kitchen areas for use by members of staff and research students. To ensure social distancing measures are adhered to, communal kitchens should employ a 'one out, one in' procedure (Figure 10), with no more than one person being in the area at any time.
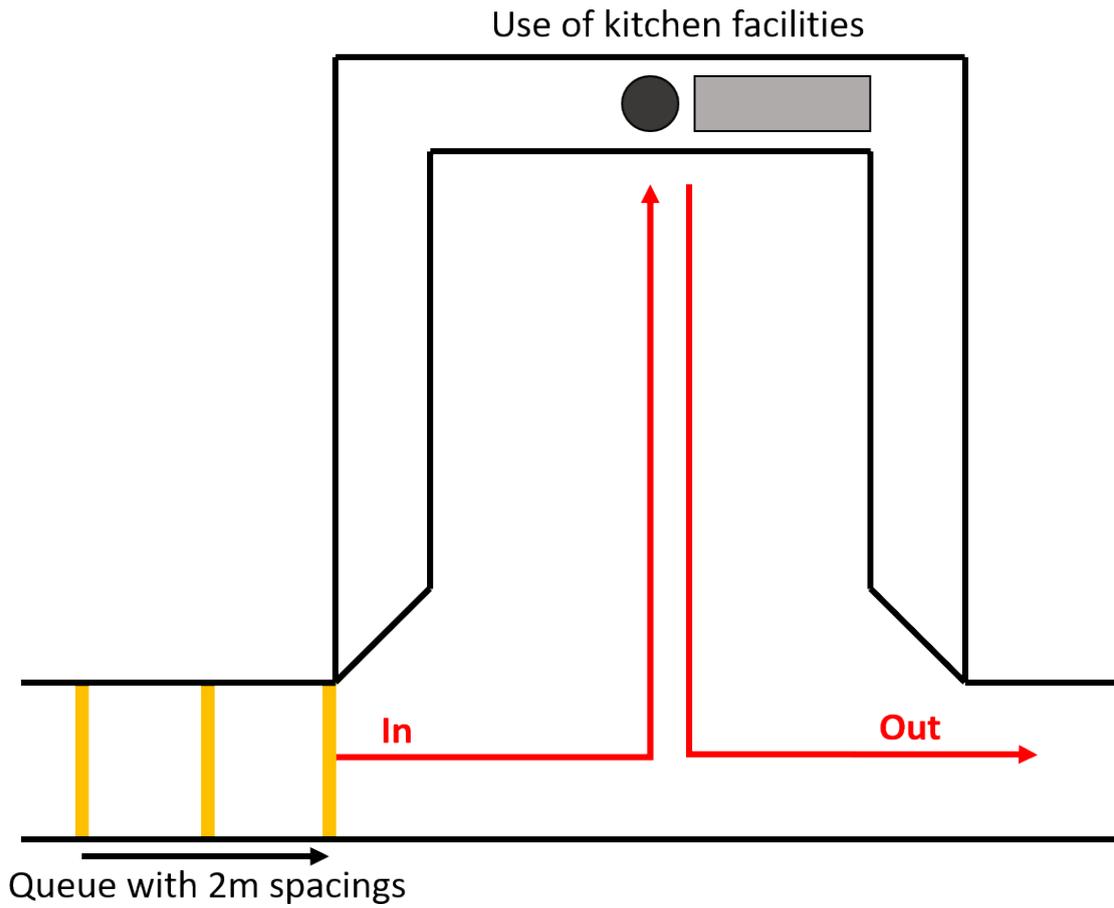
Figure 10 – Suggested 'one out, one in' procedure for smaller kitchens

12.2   In the case of much larger kitchens (plentiful, accessible, uninterrupted floor space) floor markings at 2m intervals may be employed to allow for a well-spaced queue within the kitchen area (Figure 11). Schools & Divisions should work with SEF Building Managers to employ these markings. Any persons who would fall outside the maximum occupancy of a kitchen area should form a queue in the adjoining corridor (see Figure 10), with the start of the queue being set 2m away from the entrance to the kitchen area to allow persons to exit the area whilst maintaining a 2m distance from persons queueing.

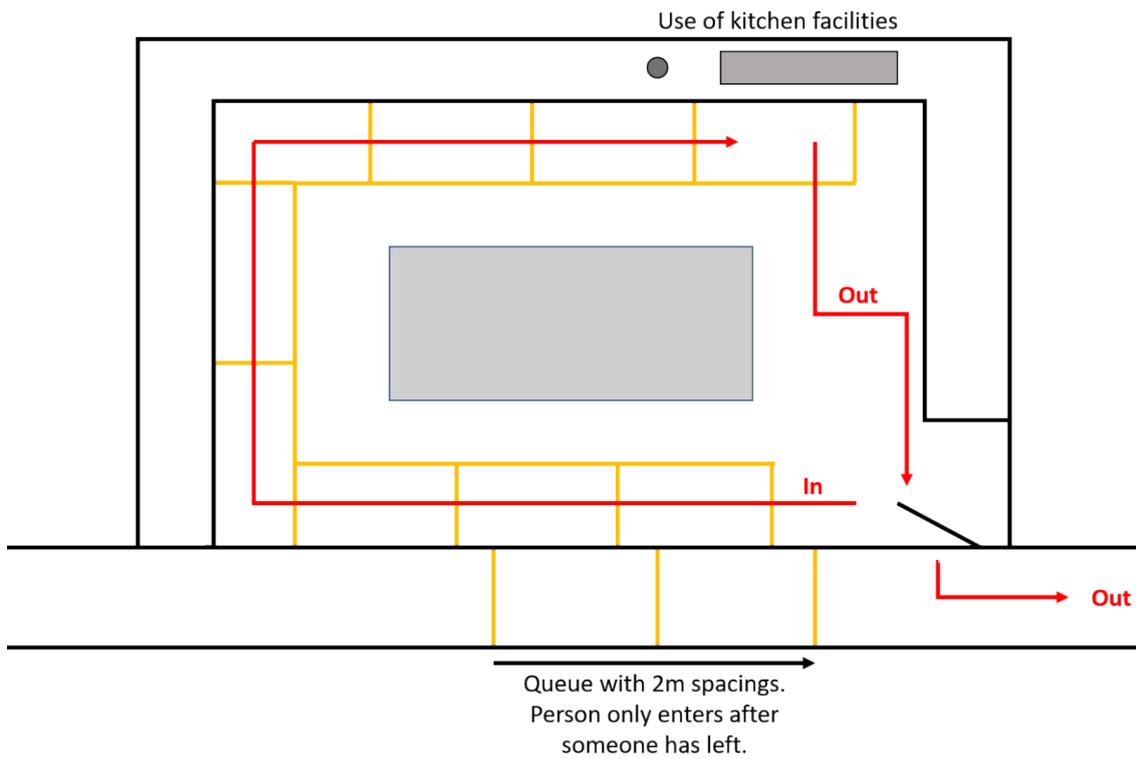| Document Control					
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Figure11 – Suggested one-way systems for larger kitchens

12.3   All persons should wash their hands for at least 20 seconds, in accordance with government guidance, prior to the handling of communal items in the kitchen, such as kettles and cutlery. It is recommended that communal cutlery/mugs etc. should not be used, and personal ones be taken home to be washed. Where this is not possible, communal cutlery/mugs etc. should be washed thoroughly using soap and warm water, dried using a paper towel or towel designated for this purpose (not a hand towel), and put away immediately to reduce the risk of transfer of contamination to other persons. It is recommended that you should wash your hands again after leaving kitchen facilities.

12.4   In additional, any area identified as a place for staff to each lunch etc. must be carefully managed to ensure required social distancing is maintained. Use of outdoor areas for lunch / rest breaks are recommended, however adherence with the 2m social distancing requirements must be adhered to.

12.5   If possible, a rota system with times of use for each team should be drawn up to avoid overcrowding and a smooth flow of users.

13. Toilets

13.1   Toilet facilities within buildings differ greatly, ranging from single, lockable WCs to larger communal facilities.

13.2   In all cases, please respect good hygiene, ensuring you wash your hands effectively. Flushing lavatories with the lids closed helps to reduce the spread of viruses and germs; users should close lids before flushing. Please see the advice in the University video.

13.3   The official NHS technique illustration is provided below (see Figure 12):

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Hand-washing technique with soap and water

NHS

1 Wet hands with water	**2** Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces	**3** Rub hands palm to palm	**4** Rub back of each hand with palm of other hand with fingers interlaced
5 Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced	**6** Rub with back of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked	**7** Rub each thumb clasped in opposite hand using a rotational movement	**8** Rub tips of fingers in opposite palm in a circular motion
9 Rub each wrist with opposite hand	**10** Rinse hands with water	**11** Use elbow to turn off tap	**12** Dry thoroughly with a single-use towel

13 Hand washing should take 15–30 seconds

clean**your**hands® campaign

NHS National Patient Safety Agency

Figure 12 – NHS hand-washing technique with soap and water

14. Single/accessible facilities

14.1   In the case of single, lockable facilities, please leave the facility in a respectable condition. If waiting to use such a facility, ensure you stand at least 2m from the door to allow the previous occupant the appropriate space to leave without breaking social distance guidelines.

15. Communal/multi-occupancy facilities

15.1   For the majority of communal toilets, it is envisaged that maintaining social distancing will be extremely difficult. Consequently, all communal toilets will need to change to a 'one out, one in' system with no more than one person being in the room at any time, and where users are asked to use a 'knock and call' system.

15.2   In addition, a sign on the inside of the door should be coordinated with SEF Building Managers, reminding persons of good hand washing practice given this will be a higher risk area with contact on the doors by all users.

15.3   Where it is believed social distancing can be maintained, and there is a justifiable need for multiple occupancy, the University Health and Safety Service must be contacted to authorise this.

16. Signage

16.1   SEF building manager of the area, in liason with line managers in case of any specific requirement, should collate the signage requirements. A list of signage that the School would want to employ is below;

- Single use rooms – maximum number of occupants for multiple user rooms
- Along corridors
- Entrances and exits – both social distancing and hand washing
- Lifts
- Staircases
- Outside Kitchens
- Outside Toilets

16.2   Note: The majority of figures, and some sections of text within this document are courtesy of the excellent guidance document produced by H&S colleagues from the University of Loughborough.

17. Process for Applying to Reopen Buildings

17.1   Below is a checklist and final declaration form each School(s) and/or Division should complete in order to apply for a building to be reopened. Where buildings contain multiple schools and divisions, Heads of School and Divisions will need to work together to produce an integrated plan:

1.	**Create a Risk Assessment for each building or work area for mitigating the risks of CV-19 to members of staff**	☐
2.	Develop a rough floor plan for that building which includes the following information: • Rooms/areas where work will begin again • Number of people who will work in each area/room and the duration for work in there. • Routes in and around the building to ensure social distancing. • Areas which will need specific works/actions for social distancing to take place (e.g. kitchens).	☐
3.	A list of workers and a schedule if staggered working between teams	☐
4.	Complete the following declaration of being Covid-Secure: We confirm we have complied with the Government's guidance on managing the risk of COVID-19: • We have carried out a COVID-19 risk assessment and shared the results with the people who work here • We have cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures in line with guidance • We have taken all reasonable steps to help people work from home • We have taken all reasonable steps to maintain a 2m distance in the workplace • Where people cannot be 2m apart, we have done everything practical to manage transmission risk Head of School / Division………………………………… Date…………………………………….	☐

Please send this completed form alongside all other documents to healthsafety@sussex.ac.uk

Please note: Once an application to reopen has been made, there will be a lag time between approval and the SEF and Technical teams facilitating the opening of buildings of 5 days