

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. Much of the guidance previously circulated regarding social distancing and sanitation which is specified under the University's COVID-19 guidance, here <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/specialist/hscovidpage> has not been repeated in this document.
- 1.2 The audience of this guidance is research scientists conducting studies with healthy human participants.
- 1.3 The relaxation of some social distancing restrictions at a national level has enabled the gradual resumption of some types of research activity on campus.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 Research involving in-person participant contact on campus raises significant additional risks in the current environment as it provides a transmission route between the University population and the local populace. It remains the University's position that such research should always be conducted remotely, wherever possible.
- 1.6 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

- 2.1 The decision to restart research activities will require a pragmatic approach. The University must strike a balance between the need and desire to restart research, and the need to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of staff, students and participants. The priorities for restarting must also be evaluated with the priorities for space utilisation for teaching and other essential activities.
- 2.2 The following criteria will be applied for prioritising which research participant activities will recommence,:
 - a) Projects or funding that are near to completion will be prioritised.
 - b) The nature of the work (e.g. related to COVID-19). Research that will have potential for immediate impact on COVID-19 treatment, mitigation etc. will be prioritised;
 - c) Studies for which there is another exceptional reason, other than COVID-19 related, which means that the risks of allowing access to research participants are outweighed by the timely execution of the work;
 - d) Feasibility of resuming i.e. all of the required equipment, expertise and licences are in place to enable the work to happen safely;
 - e) The ease of establishing safety and physical distancing requirements can be evidenced;
 - f) The degree of disruption to the research activity if not allowed to proceed;

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

- g) The human participants involved in any research study and any increase in transmission risk.

2.3 Approval to restart a project or start a new project is subject to:

- a) Submission of a Risk Assessment completed for the work and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) specifying the physical distancing and 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 http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/policies/subject_areas/general. 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.
- d) Researchers are required to audit the University's "Covid-19: Safe Return to Campus for Staff" induction video before returning to work on campus via the University's online learning portal: [LearnUpon](#), in addition to bespoke safety inductions. Students including PhD students can view this induction here <https://vimeo.com/460128019>
Research participants should be invited to watch the video [here](#).

3. Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Staff Lead Projects

- 3.1 Undergraduate projects should be conducted remotely. In exceptional circumstance (to be confirmed by the Head of School) Undergraduate student research may include face to face research with student or staff volunteers but no members of the general public.
- 3.2 Research Masters Students, PhD students and staff should where possible carry out studies remotely but can carry out face to face research if they meet the requirements laid out in this guidance. Where this is done best practice is to restrict participants to members of the University community where possible.
- 3.3 Students working on their own project should review the guidance below and submit a risk assessment to their supervisor.

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 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/local-covid-alert-levels-what-you-need->

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)

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
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[to-know](#). 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 as a Hazard in Research

- 5.2 The hazards from Covid-19 which have been considered in this guidance are;

- Transmission via hand contact
- Transmission via droplet or airborne means

- 5.5 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.

- 5.5 Controls for transmission via droplets or airborne transmission are

- 2 Metre social distancing without masks, or 1 metre social distancing plus an additional control (most likely a facemask). 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. From the perspective of an academic or member of technical services considering the use of the area you should ensure that the room is not being overcrowded with too many people and that you have considered any activities for instance loud vocalisation or physical exercise which may increase the distance that particles within exhaled air travel.

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 Please see the guidance document “Guidance for Performing Arts, Recordings or Loud Vocalisations in Teaching” for specific guidance on the following activities if they are relevant.
- Vocal projection
 - The use of microphones
 - The use of camera equipment

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

This Guidance document is available from the Health & Safety Covid-19 Resources page.

6.4 For guidance on of campus work please see “Travel on University Business and off-site working” available fro the Health & Safety Covid-19 resources page.

7. Close Contact work

7.1 Should your work require close contact with participants you should review the guidance available in the “Covid-19 Guidance for Close Contact Work”. This Guidance document is available from the Health & Safety Covid-19 Resources page.

<http://wwwstage.sussex.ac.uk/hso/documents/cv-19-05-close-contact-16.pdf>

7.2 In this context close contact is defined as

- Skin to skin physical contact
- Being closer than 1 metre for one minute or more without face to face contact
- Talking to someone face to face at a distance less than 1 metre
- Taking bloods, saliver or other human tissue or waste.

8. Participant Exclusion Criteria and Vulnerable Groups

8.1 Recruitment for research projects should ensure processes to screen for ‘at risk’ groups. Research should never involve any participant groups who are designated as either high risk (clinically extremely vulnerable) or moderate risk (clinically vulnerable). See:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/whos-at-higher-risk-from-coronavirus/>

8.2 An example Covid-19 Health Screening questionnaire is shown below in appendix 1.

8.3 Staff should only partake in close contact work after a discussion with their line manager, if there are concerns with regards to an individuals or someone within their households increased risk from covid-19 consult the Human Resources self assessment tool available here <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/autumn-2020/hr-policies-and-procedures/self-assessment-tool>

9. Track and Trace information

9.1 It is a requirement of work that contact information is taken and recorded in a fashion that can be accessed centrally by the University if required. This applies to on campus work, if you are working in another institution’s facility of campus ensure that you are following their local process for track and trace.

9.2 Table 1.1 below is an example of the information that is required.

First Name	Surname	Date of activity	Phone	Email (Mandatory for Members of the University)	Status

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

					Student/Staff/Member of the Public*
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* Delete as appropriate

Where a participant is accompanied by a member of the household (for instance a parent, guardian or housemate) only 1 set of contact details are required.

9.3 The university is required to store information for the purpose of track and trace, this information must be available in an electronic searchable format. This must include details of the researchers present as well as participants.

9.4 Below is a suggested text that should be added to a participant information sheet on what information is being collected for track and trace and how it will be used.

“The information collected with regards to track and trace will be passed onto Public Health England (PHE) if any participant or researchers tested positive for Covid-19 within 21 days of taking part in the study. The information may also be used by the University to ensure that staff are self isolating if and when required so as to lower the risk of further infections and protect other members of the University and visitors.”

9.5 Any participant testing positive for covid-19 will be contacted by NHS T&T or the Local Health Protection Team with regard to contact tracing. In cases where the participant is required to provide information on people with whom they have been in contact, they should provide details of the researcher and recommend that the agency requesting the information approach the University via agreed contact. It is for this reason that the information must be available centrally.

9.6 Participants testing positive are also encouraged to notify anyone that they may have come into close contact with over the past 72 hours.

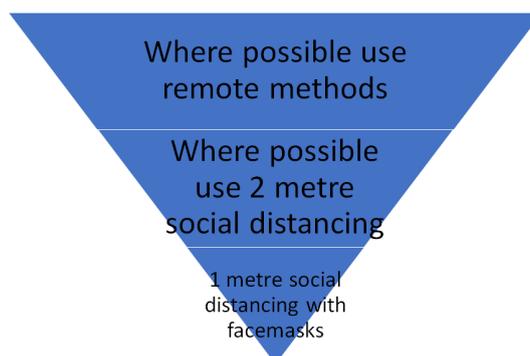
9.7 When you make a submission to the relevant ethics committee you need to include the names and email addresses of all the members of your group that will be uploading track and trace information to a Box drive. You will receive a link to a Box folder where you must upload the track and trace information you have collected. This will be accessible to your group and members of REIG (Research Ethics, Integrity & Governance)/Health & Safety team if it is required. Please ensure that data is uploaded on the same day as any relevant activity is undertaken. It is suggested that you upload information in a single excel sheet with the format shown above under 9.2. You will be required to delete data that is over 21 days old.

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

10. Room Selection

- 10.1 When carrying out close contact work it should be carried out in a room where there is suitable ventilation. 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 <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/specialist/hscovidpage>
- 10.2 When selecting how you carry out work use the hierarchy of control in figure 1 below.

Figure 1



You should ensure that the room you have chosen is suitable for the number of persons that will occupy it. Resuable 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.

- 10.3 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)
- 10.4 It is inappropriate to use private, communal offices cafes, common rooms, teaching spaces or other areas that have not been formally assessed for use as areas for face to face interviews. Observing existing classroom activities is allowed in these spaces and should follow the guidance on general teaching space <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=cv-19-03-returning-to-work-in-teaching-spaces-v5.pdf&site=332> . Outside spaces can be used however you should consider if your study will cause any privacy concerns for participants if carried out in a public place. For off campus work please see the guidance on Health & Safety Covid-19 resources page “Travel on University Business and off site working”

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

11. Information for Participants

- 11.1 In addition to asking subjects to view the induction video available [here](#), collecting track and trace information and a health screening questionnaire, participants must be provided with detailed instructions on how to reach the area where the study is being carried out and or where they will be met.
- 11.2 This is to ensure that corridor areas do not become crowded and to minimise the likelihood of participants becoming lost on campus thereby increasing the number of personal interactions they have on site.
- 11.3 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 <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/nhs-covid-19/>. Some phones may not be compatible with the application.
- 11.4 Participants should be instructed to complete the University of Sussex Symptoms reporting form available here <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/specialist/covid19symptoms> in the event that they develop symptoms within 48 hours of being on site

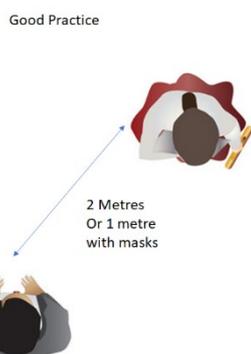
12. Setup and Orientation of people

- 12.1 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



Figure 3



Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

13 Screens and Protective Equipment

- 13.1 Where possible, protective screens can be used to limit potential transmission. Screens can be requested from the University Estates team via this email address estates.covid@sef.fm. When requesting a screen or screens it is best to do so early and you will need to have a clear understanding of the area and the purpose of the screen that will be installed.

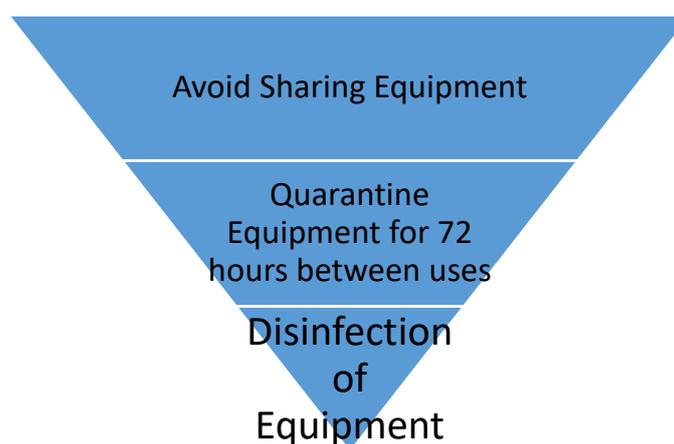
14 Room Cleaning & Handsantiser

- 14.1 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.
- 14.2 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 furnitures or equipment used. should be wiped down with a suitable sanitiser or alcohol based wipe before and after use by each participant.
- 14.3 Wipes and other cleaning materials can be disposed of via a standard waste bin.
- 14.4 Hand sanitiser or hand washing facilities must be available to all participants to use before and after taking part in any study.

15 Equipment

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

Figure 4



- 15.2 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.
- 15.3 Special attention must be payed to any equipment that is placed or worn on an individuals face as this raises the risk of transmission. In this context the face would be considered any

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

area from forehead to chin or from ear to ear including the ears themselves. It would exclude the scalp and neck.

- 15.4 Equipment that is blown into or otherwise interacts with someones mouth cannot be shared unless it is autoclaved or another means of more thorough disinfection is used between uses.
- 15.5 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 santising your hands before and after skin to skin contact is usually a better control than the use of gloves.
- 15.6 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.

16. Medical Sensors

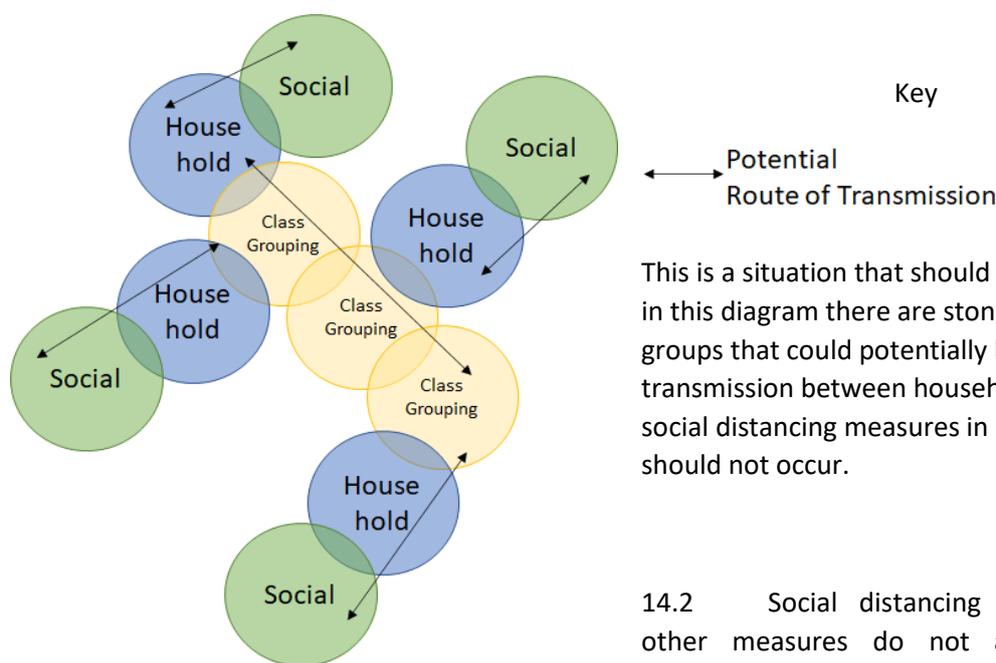
- 16.1 Where work involves the use of medical sensors (including but not limited to the use of Electrocardiogram sensors, blood sensor monitors and Oxygen saturation monitors),consider if it is possible to demonstrate with another sensor the correct fitting of the device and allowing the subject to fit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

17. Segmentation

- 17.1 Where groups of staff are required to work in close contact with each other they should be grouped or work with a buddy that changes as little as possible. This is to limit the possibility of the transmission of Covid-19 between otherwise separate groups. This is shown diagrammatically in figure 5 below.

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

Figure 5



This is a situation that should be avoided as in this diagram there are strong links between groups that could potentially be a route for transmission between households. With social distancing measures in place this should not occur.

14.2 Social distancing guidelines and other measures do not apply between members of the same household.

18 Aerobic Exercise

- 18.1 Strenuous exercise is likely to result in sweat and increased respiration. For this reason masks may not be compatible with certain activities. In these circumstances 2 metre distancing will be required. It is suggested that this could be done by marking out zones for each participant or ensuring that they are confined to an item of exercise equipment.
- 18.2 If it is necessary for social distancing reasons to leave the immediate area due to a participant exercising you must ensure that there are suitable methods to check up on them and ensure their safety while exerting themselves.

19 Food, beverages and other items given orally to participants

- 19.1 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. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-food-businesses/guidance-for-food-businesses-on-coronavirus-covid-19>

20 Self isolation and potential exposures

- 20.1 Staff conducting face to face research should download and use the NHS track and Trace app <https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/nhs-covid-19/>. This application will provide immediate information but cannot be used as a reason for not collecting participant details.

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

- 20.2 Should staff be required to self isolate they must complete the Universty's Covid-19 symptoms or self isolating reporting form available here
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/specialist/covid19symptoms>
- 20.3 Guidance on how and when to self isolate is available here
<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/>

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

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 returning from overseas must self isolate for 14 days other than if they are returning from these regions <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors>

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

Appendix 2 Reference Materials and further reading

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

Internal Guidance

- Health & Safety Covid-19 Resources Page <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/hso/specialist/hscovidpage>
- Human Resources Covid-19 information <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/autumn-2020/>
- Research Governance <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/governance>
- Box Link for Track and Trace information <https://sussex.app.box.com/folder/124670139914?s=h4ih7sacr1o3cf0ka4o2r9kqmx2m7w34>

External

- Gov.UK Covid-19 information <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>
- NHS guidance <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/>
- SAGE paper on Higher Education https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/914978/S0728_Principles_for_Managing_SARS-CoV-2_Transmission_Associated_with_Higher_Education_.pdf
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office Travel <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travel-advice-novel-coronavirus>

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
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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:	

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
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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:	•

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
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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:

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
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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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Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

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"> • 						

Document Control					
Document No	1.8	Date Issued	22/10/2020		
Author	Alistair Hardwick	Reviewed by	Angelina Janus	Department	GCGC

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

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.

Document Control					
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