

PRINCIPLES AND CONSIDERATIONS: EMERGING FROM LOCKDOWN



Universities UK

June 2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UK's world-leading universities transform lives, enrich local communities, drive regional and national economic growth, and improve society and social justice. As the UK begins to recover from the disruption of the global coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, it is imperative that its universities can emerge from lockdown safely and in line with guidance from governments, public health advice and health and safety legislation.

The following principles and areas to consider provide a framework for individual universities to adapt to their own institutional settings and contexts. It is not an exhaustive list but covers a range of priority issues.

This publication does not set prescriptive rules for universities but instead identifies key considerations, resources and advice to support them in meeting each individual principle. The principles can be used in conjunction with official government and public health advice and alongside case studies and other resources produced by expert groups including the principles jointly agreed between the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) and the sector trade unions, which can be found in Appendix A. Links to useful resources that have already been published can be found in the final section.

Restrictions relating to Covid-19 may continue for some time or be lifted and then be imposed again in response to further national or localised outbreaks. The principles within this document will still apply, subject to the lifting of subsequent Covid-19 restrictions.

PRINCIPLES FOR EMERGING FROM LOCKDOWN

1. The health, safety and wellbeing of students, staff, visitors, and the wider community will be the priority in decisions relating to the easing of Covid-19 restrictions in universities.
2. Universities will make appropriate changes to university layout and infrastructure in accordance – at minimum – with public health advice, including guidelines on social distancing.

3. Universities will review their teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that there is the required flexibility in place to deliver a high-quality experience and support students to achieve their learning outcomes in a safe manner.
4. Universities will regularly review the welfare and mental health needs of students and staff, and take steps to ensure preventative measures and appropriate support are in place and well communicated as restrictions are eased.
5. Universities will develop effective processes to welcome and support international students and staff, including throughout any self-isolation period.
6. Universities will regularly review their hygiene and cleaning protocols in all university spaces, and adapt them in response to changing public health advice and risk levels, to ensure students, staff and visitors have confidence in their safety.
7. Following appropriate risk assessment, universities will introduce measures to enable research to be conducted in a safe and responsible manner, following government guidance specifically designed to protect researchers in laboratories and other research facilities and spaces.
8. Universities will engage with students and staff, including consultation with recognised trade unions, to ensure the transition from lockdown both protects the wellbeing of staff and students and enables the safe resumption of university activities.
9. Universities will work with civic or local partners wherever appropriate including councils, local resilience forums (in England) and community groups.

PRINCIPLE ONE

The health, safety and wellbeing of students, staff, visitors, and the wider community will be the priority in decisions relating to the easing of Covid-19 restrictions in universities.

Consider (these are examples of areas to consider, the list is not prescriptive or exhaustive):

- Developing a university-wide action plan that will:
 - i. be responsive to changing public health requirements
 - ii. be adaptable to a reduction or increase in the threat posed by Covid-19 e.g. a second spike in infections nationally, or a localised outbreak
 - iii. adhere to existing health and safety legislation and
 - iv. be informed by the jointly agreed UCEA and trade unions principles for working safely on campus during the Covid-19 pandemic (Appendix A).
- How to place risk assessments and consultation with trade union health and safety representatives at the heart of decision-making.
- How to engage with existing health and safety arrangements including health and safety representatives and safety committees.
- Ensuring the impact of activities is monitored and reviewed including when official advice changes.
- Developing processes to identify activities that can only be carried out on site.
- Using a variety of communication channels to remind students and staff of the importance of public health guidance (e.g. washing hands, social distancing, self-isolation in the event of symptoms) and to ensure they are aware of the measures in place to protect them.
- Developing measures to provide information and raise awareness of NHS services or other health facilities within the university or nearby, as well as up to date health guidance and information, e.g. the NHS 111 service.
- Providing an early warning system identifying possible Covid-19 incidents among staff, students, or visitors.

- Putting measures in place to respond to any incidence of Covid-19 among staff and students, including responsible use of any initiatives provided by the government, e.g. Covid-19 testing.
- Developing safety protocols for visitors and how to communicate these effectively.
- How existing modes of transport provided by the university need to be adapted in line with social distancing and public health requirements, e.g. capacity of buses to university sites.
- How car parking spaces (both for staff, commuter students and visitors) can be reallocated to less populated areas (considering the needs of those with disabilities in relation to any reallocation of spaces on campus, consulting the unions where necessary).
- Ways to reduce the pressure on public transport and encourage walking and cycling to work or study (e.g. increasing bike racks, advice to staff and students, home-working policies, reviewing the working day, e.g. staggered start and finish times) and working with local transport operators to raise concerns.
- Working with students' unions (SUs) around measures required to protect the safety of staff, students and the wider community in SU facilities.
- Working with university partners (e.g. accommodation providers, pathway providers) around measures required to protect the safety of staff, students and the wider community.
- How to ensure risk assessments consider those who may be at increased risk, including individuals who require shielding and those with underlying health conditions.
- Any special considerations that may need to apply to relatives of those who require shielding or who are in a vulnerable group, e.g. working from home, leave arrangements.

PRINCIPLE TWO

Universities will make appropriate changes to university layout and infrastructure in accordance – at minimum – with public health advice including guidelines on social distancing.

Consider (these are examples of areas to consider, the list is not prescriptive or exhaustive):

- How to encourage social distancing regulations across all university spaces including lecture theatres, classrooms, laboratories, shops, libraries, canteens, common rooms, SUs and other social or recreational spaces, bathrooms, kitchens, etc. and where this is not possible, what mitigating actions are required, e.g. limiting numbers able to access specific areas at any given time.
- How to ensure clear signage and floor markings and any changes required to traffic routes on university sites or within buildings (including SUs).
- How to manage the flow of foot traffic and whether entrances and exits are mandated for buildings.
- A process for ensuring ventilation systems adhere to the latest advice.
- University policy on the use of face coverings and communicating this to staff and students, including if they will be mandated, encouraged or supported.
- Whether risk assessments have identified circumstances where protective equipment may be necessary and what action is required in response
- How class sizes and timetables might be adapted to minimise numbers of students in university buildings at any one time.
- How to enable students who have left possessions in university managed accommodation to collect their belongings in a controlled way, in line with public health guidance.
- How to manage student accommodation in line with social distancing requirements and other government health and safety guidelines.
- How to facilitate social and sporting activities in line with public health advice and social distancing requirements.

- What actions are required around office occupancy in line with public health guidance (including in relation to hot-desking arrangements that were in place prior to lockdown) .

PRINCIPLE THREE

Universities will review their teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that there is the required flexibility in place to deliver a high-quality experience and support students to achieve their learning outcomes in a safe manner.

Consider (these are examples of areas to consider, the list is not prescriptive or exhaustive):

- How to ensure regular, timely and clear communications to current and prospective students on what to expect in terms of course structure and delivery, assessment, quality, and fees.
- Where the delivery of high-quality and accessible online provision might be appropriate and what steps are required to address digital poverty, and to support those who lack access to suitable study space at home.
- Exploring new ways of delivering in-person teaching that adheres to guidelines on social distancing.
- What steps can be taken to minimise disruption to students.
- What engagement is required with students to understand if planned changes are likely to create barriers for specific students and what steps are required to address these.
- How to deliver different types of learning safely and effectively, such as performance arts, practical classes, work placements, apprenticeships, international years, and placements in clinical settings
- How to meet the needs of students who are unable to travel, or are abroad, but want to access provision online.
- What implications course structure and delivery will have on UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requirements and what reassurance students on visas will need.

- Where the delivery of high-quality blended learning or hybrid teaching models, with a mix of online and face-to-face methods, without large numbers of students in lecture halls might be appropriate.
- How to ensure any changes meet Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Office for Students (OfS) or devolved equivalent requirements.
- How to ensure the university can adapt its approach in response to changes in public health advice.
- How, and under what circumstances, it may be appropriate for assessments to take place from home.
- What systems are necessary to manage the use of shared specialist equipment and software.
- Ways to work with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) to ensure arrangements meet accreditation standards.
- Ways to adapt reasonable adjustments.
- How information and resources developed by UCEA (or UCEA in partnership with sector trade unions) can inform decisions around teaching, learning and assessment.
- How to support staff in adapting to new modes of teaching and assessment, providing training, and ensuring HR processes are fit for purpose in the new circumstances.
- How and under what circumstances it may be appropriate for staff to work from home.

PRINCIPLE FOUR

Universities will regularly review the welfare and mental health needs of students and staff and take steps to ensure preventative measures and appropriate support are in place and well communicated as restrictions are eased.

Consider (these are examples of areas to consider, the list is not prescriptive or exhaustive):

- The accessibility of support services, especially mental health and wellbeing support, and their ability to cope with a likely increase in demand (including from students and staff not physically attending the university).
- Working with local NHS providers to understand support available.
- The preventative measures required following the completion of risk assessments.
- Using a variety of communication channels to publicise support available.
- How support can be delivered in line with public health and social distancing advice, including online resources and counselling appointments via phone, or online video conferencing platforms.
- How information and resources developed by UCEA (or UCEA in partnership with sector trade unions) can inform what support is in place to ensure staff return to work safely post-lockdown.
- Providing new online courses as required to support students through the current difficult circumstances.
- Actions to combat loneliness and isolation amongst vulnerable students or staff, including those shielding or self-isolating.
- Assessing how the transition from lockdown will affect different cohorts of students (undergraduates, postgraduates, postgraduate researchers, international), courses and staff and what actions are required to mitigate the impact on specific groups.
- Reviewing the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications of the institution's approach to emerging from lockdown and the actions required

to mitigate the impact on specific groups of staff and students (e.g. vulnerable groups such as those who are shielding, those whose family members are shielding, care leavers, students with mental health problems, etc.)

- What steps are required to support disabled people or those with health conditions, those with caring responsibilities, or those with a lack of access to appropriate technology or equipment.
- Working with student and staff groups which support minority cohorts (e.g. BAME, LGBTQ+) to understand the needs of different student and staff groups.

PRINCIPLE FIVE

Universities will develop effective processes to welcome and support international students and staff including throughout any self-isolation period.

Consider (these are examples of areas to consider, the list is not prescriptive or exhaustive):

- How to source or provide accommodation, support and facilities for international students to complete their self-isolation period.
- How the welfare of international students can be supported through any self-isolation requirements that may be in place at the time.
- What steps are needed to ensure international students understand the legal implications of breaking any self-isolation requirements in place.
- What implications self-isolation will have for international student inductions, welcome initiatives and orientation programmes, and what steps are needed to ensure students can still access these and are smoothly inducted into the university community.
- What assurances international students may require around the public health steps the university is taking.
- What implications quarantine will have on UKVI compliance requirements, and how processes can be adapted to ensure students and staff remain compliant.

- What actions are needed to ensure international students understand the UK health system and what to do if they fall ill (including if they display symptoms of Covid-19).
- How international students who are delayed in their arrival can be supported.
- What support is needed for international students experiencing online teaching and learning, including technological support and welfare support (and how to account for different time zones).
- What steps are required to ensure international students understand how to report any incidents of harassment, irrespective of whether they appear linked to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- What support will need to be provided to international students needing to, or unable to return to, their home country, in the event of further Covid-19 outbreaks.
- What steps are required to support home students returning from overseas who are required to self-isolate.
- What steps are required to provide support for international staff who are required to self-isolate.

PRINCIPLE SIX

Universities will regularly review their hygiene and cleaning protocols in all university spaces and adapt them in response to changing public health advice and risk levels to ensure students, staff and visitors have confidence in their safety.

Consider (these are examples of areas to consider, the list is not prescriptive or exhaustive):

- Introducing hygiene stations in university buildings for handwashing and/or hand sanitising as required.
- Enhancing cleaning and disinfecting protocols of high-touch areas (e.g. library facilities, study spaces, door handles, light switches, accommodation, SUs etc.).
- Installing suitable barriers in cafes, libraries, and other spaces to protect students, staff and visitors as appropriate.

- What training is necessary for staff in relation to any new protocols, chemicals, equipment etc., whether the services of external specialist deep clean companies are required, and under what circumstances.

PRINCIPLE SEVEN

Following appropriate risk assessment, universities will introduce measures to enable research to be conducted in a safe and responsible manner, following government guidance specifically designed to protect researchers in laboratories and other research facilities and spaces.

Consider (these are examples of areas to consider, the list is not prescriptive or exhaustive):

- Government guidance on working safely in laboratories and research facilities.
- Measures to support researchers to undertake field research.
- Measures to ensure research can take place in line with whatever social distancing requirements are in place at the time.
- How to ensure risk assessments consider all staff who work in research laboratories, including technicians and cleaners as well as researchers
- What reassurance staff will need to feel that they are safe following any risk assessment.
- Any implications for the teaching of research methods.
- Further training required to ensure new measures are understood.
- The information set out under principle two around changes to university layout and infrastructure.
- Any steps needed to protect those using shared equipment in research spaces.

PRINCIPLE EIGHT

Universities will engage with students and staff, including consultation with recognised trade unions, to ensure the transition from lockdown both protects the wellbeing of staff and students and enables the safe resumption of university activities.

Consider (these are examples of areas to consider, the list is not prescriptive or exhaustive):

- How regular consultation on health and safety can be facilitated with recognised trade unions (including with the students' union).
- Regular and timely communication with staff and students on the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, including opportunities for staff and students to inform and provide feedback.
- Publication of key information, including the university Covid-19 risk assessment, on intranets and the external website.
- Training and re-induction of staff and students before they return, including resources to ensure new university protocols and systems are understood.
- Identifying what reassurance staff and students will need to feel that they are safe.
- Further training e.g. on use of new technology and any safe systems of work.

PRINCIPLE NINE

Universities will work with civic and local partners wherever appropriate including councils, local resilience forums (in England) and community groups.

Consider (these are examples of areas to consider, the list is not prescriptive or exhaustive):

- Engaging with community groups and residents to understand local concerns about universities emerging from lockdown (including the return of students).
- What steps can be taken to provide reassurance to residents and public bodies that the safety of the wider community is being treated as a priority.
- Engaging with the local police and local authority.
- Engaging with local resilience forums (in England), and local stakeholders in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to understand priorities for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Maintaining awareness of approaches to test, track and trace and isolation in the event of a local resurgence.
- Liaising with local transport providers.
- Engaging with other universities in the town or city to share intelligence on community concerns and to agree a consistent response to addressing them.
- Providing visible and easily accessible information on how members of the local community can contact the university to raise concerns or seek reassurance.
- Developing a system for communicating any outbreak of covid-19 at the university with relevant local stakeholders.
- How to support local businesses and organisations to emerge from the lockdown restrictions safely and smoothly.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Last updated: 2 June 2020

Government advice on public health and social distancing (including research and office settings)

Public health advice

- [England](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)

Public health advice on social distancing

- [England](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)

Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

- [Guidance for people who work in or run indoor labs and research facilities and similar environments](#)
- [Guidance for people who work in or run offices](#)

UK Government:

- [Home Secretary announces new public health measures for all UK arrivals \(22 May 2020\)](#)

Government recovery plans

- UK government: [Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#) (England)
- Scottish government: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) framework for decision making: publications](#) (Scotland) [NB. Further principles are expected to be published shortly by Scottish Government to support the higher education sector's implementation of the Scottish Government's plans.]

- Northern Ireland Executive: [Coronavirus recovery plan](#) (Northern Ireland)
- Welsh Government: [Unlocking our society and economy: continuing the conversation](#) (Wales)

Welfare

- [Find a GP](#) (England)
- [Find a GP](#) (Northern Ireland)
- Find a GP: [Registering with a GP practice](#) (Scotland)
- Find a GP: [Health in Wales](#)
- [Sustrans: We can help you introduce active travel in your workplace](#)
- [Universities UK: Stepchange: mentally healthy universities](#)

UK university examples

- Nottingham Trent University, [Looking ahead to academic year 2020/21 at Nottingham Trent University](#)
- Queen Mary, University of London, [Coronavirus advice and updates](#)
- Universities UK: Case studies for UUK members can also be found in the members' area of the UUK website (log-in required) – these include case studies on managing local concerns about students returning to campus and social distancing guidance produced by an institution.
- University of Exeter, [Covid-19 advice - Staff and student wellbeing](#)

Sector bodies where further information and resources are available

- [AMOSSHE: The student services organisation](#)
- [Association of Heads of University Administration](#) (AHUA)
- Association of University Directors of Estates (AUDE): [Coronavirus resources](#)
- [British Association of Cleaning in Higher Education](#)
- College and University Business Officers (CUBO): [Guidance on collection of student belongings from university managed accommodation](#)
- [Committee of University Chairs](#) (CUC)
- [Higher Education Business Continuity Network](#) (HEBCoN)
- Jisc: [Help and information for members around responding to Coronavirus](#)
- [National Union of Students](#) (NUS)
- QAA: [Preserving Quality and Standards through a time of rapid change: UK Higher Education in 2020/21](#)
- [Universities Safety and Health Association](#) (USHA)

- [Universities and Colleges Employers Association \(UCEA\)](#)
- [Universities Human Resources \(UHR\)](#)
- Ucisa: [Covid-19 Useful information for members](#)
- [UK Council for International Student Affairs \(UKCISA\)](#)

Resources from other countries

- Australia: Australian National University: [Return to campus plan](#)
- Australia: RMIT University: [RMIT Statement](#) (22 May)
- Australia: [Sydney Morning Herald article](#) 21 May 2020: Universities propose 'secure corridor' rules for international students
- Australia: The University of Adelaide: [Student information](#)
- Canada: McGill University: [Directives: Principles and Procedures for Research on campus](#) and [Directives: Preventing the Spread of Covid-19 on campus](#)
- Canada: University of Toronto: [UTogether2020: A roadmap for the University of Toronto](#) and [Academic Continuity Strategy](#)
- Canada: University of Victoria: [Returning to on campus work](#)
- New Zealand: [Department of Education: Advice for tertiary providers](#)
- New Zealand: University of Waikato: [Safety Protocols for Visitors](#)
- USA: American Council on Education (ACE) American Council on Higher Education: [Recovery 2020 Key Questions and Principles for Campus Leaders](#)
- USA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [Considerations for Institutes of Higher Education](#)
- USA: Rockefeller University: [Social Distancing Guidelines for the Workplace During the COVID-19 Outbreak](#)

Resources produced by the recognised higher education trade unions

- [EIS](#)
- [GMB](#)
- [UCU](#)
- [UNISON](#)
- [UNITE](#)

APPENDIX A

PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING SAFELY ON CAMPUS DURING THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PANDEMIC



Principles for working safely on campus during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic

This joint statement has been agreed between UCEA and the HE trade unions: EIS, GMB, UCU, UNISON and Unite

As lockdown restrictions begin to ease, UCEA and the joint trade unions have developed these joint principles to support HEIs in planning to keep their campuses as safe as possible and ensure the health and wellbeing of HE staff, students and visitors.

1. Use of government guidance for safe workplaces

HEIs will use government guidance and public health guidance (e.g. Public Health England and devolved nation equivalent) as the basis for their response to the Covid-19 pandemic. At an institutional level this response will factor in relevant local conditions and circumstances that employers and unions may need to consider. Unions will work with HEIs in the implementation of the relevant guidance for their institution.

2. Health and safety legislation

The government guidance does not supersede existing health and safety legislation. HEIs must continue to abide by statutory health and safety obligations relevant to their nation, such as the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Safety Representatives and Safety Committees Regulations 1977, which provide rights to recognised trade union safety representatives, and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, which contains the legal duty on employers to conduct risk assessments.

Health and safety legislation, coupled with the government guidance specific to Covid-19, should be seen as the minimum standards for HEIs to achieve.

3. Consultation with campus trade unions

HEIs recognise the positive contributions that unions can make. UCEA HEI member institutions commit to consulting with recognised trade unions on staff health and safety, and about how the institution will manage risks from Covid-19 including regarding the re-opening of departments and services. HEIs should work jointly with trade union representatives, staff and students to resolve issues.

4. Risk assessments

Plans for managing staff returns to campus will only be implemented when risk assessments have been completed. HEIs will undertake appropriate risk assessments and review them in consultation with trade union health and safety representatives. Unions will support a risk

based approach to controls and will help to inform their members regarding the appropriateness of controls.

As part of carrying out risk assessments, HEIs will ensure that relevant advice and expertise is available and given appropriate weight and consideration.

The Public Health bodies have provided extensive guidance on what to consider in any risk assessments, and HEIs will consider the full range of preventive measures aimed at minimising the risk, and spread, of infection. Decisions on any measures, including the provision and use of PPE, will be based on the outcomes of risk assessments, based on what is reasonably practical for that workplace.

A generic risk assessment for Covid-19 should also be conducted to draw out potential issues, considering both mental and physical health during the pandemic. This should be cover all staff and, depending on the size and complexity of the institution, may either be one single HEI-wide risk assessment or a series of different generic risk assessments covering different sites/departments.

5. Communication

HEIs will communicate regularly with all trade union representatives, staff and students on health and safety issues related to Covid-19. HEIs will be clear about what can and cannot be done to adapt practices relating to work and study and consider the provision of any training, as needed, for staff. Staff and students should have clear channels through which to raise with their HEI any concerns that they have or any suggestions which the HEI might not have considered previously.

6. Impact on staff

Universities will assess how the transition back to campus will affect different cohorts of staff and take into account any equality considerations. HEIs will seek to identify reasonable actions to mitigate possible adverse impacts on specific group/s including those, or those living with, people who are shielding or vulnerable.

1 June 2020



Universities UK is the collective voice of 137 universities in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Our mission is to create the conditions for UK universities to be the best in the world; maximising their positive impact locally, nationally and globally.

Universities UK acts on behalf of universities, represented by their heads of institution.



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June 2020

ISBN: 978-1-84036-449-1