

File name:	UoE COVID Risk Assessment		
Risk assessment	COVID Strategic RA001	Version number:	24 reviewed and updated 09/05/2022

Risk assessment

Description of activity / area being assessed	University of Essex Strategic Risk Assessment against the additional risks that the COVID-19 Pandemic has presented. (This is intended for the Steady State operational level).		Location	University of Essex Colchester, Southend and Loughton Campuses.
Manager responsible	Lara Carmel	Signature & date	Lara Carmel 09/05/2022	
Assessed by (name & role)	Richard Green Professional Lead for Health and Safety (Professional Services) Lara Carmel Director of Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Signature & assessment date	Richard Green 09/05/2022 Lara Carmel 09/05/2022	

Created: 02 July 2020

Amended: 09 May 2022

Version: 24

Review Date: In line with government guidelines, or as the University considers moving to a new protection level, whichever is sooner.

Consequence	Catastrophic	Medium	High	Very High	Very high	Very High
	Major	Low	Medium	High	High	Very High
	Moderate	Very low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
	Minor	Very low	Low	Low	Medium	Medium
	Insignificant	Very low	Very low	Low	Low	Low
R = LxC	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Fairly likely	Likely	Very likely	
Likelihood of hazardous event						

Move to Steady State

With national COVID infection levels reducing, and with the NHS offering antibody and antiviral treatments to people with coronavirus (COVID-19) who are at highest risk of becoming seriously ill, Government COVID restrictions have come to an end and, as a society, we are learning to manage our lives as we move into the next phase of managing COVID-19. The University is therefore now in a position to move from the Targeted Protection level we have been in since September 2021, and into Steady State. We recognise that those members of staff based outside the UK may continue to be subject to different national restrictions.

[Steady State](#) is defined as the operational model where the risk to the University and its community is considered low enough to allow emergency COVID-related restrictions on campus to be lifted. Under Steady State the University would operate without reference to time-limited measures in place, save where these are part of the ongoing management of COVID. This means that the University will be operating under standard arrangements, developed through its usual processes and approval routes. Some of these arrangements will differ from those that were in place prior to the pandemic, to accommodate the continued existence of COVID-19 and potential future variants.

Ending COVID restrictions

We are already operating at full capacity for the majority of spaces and events, **with appropriate ventilation** in place, and with all staff back at work on campus either for all their working time or in a hybrid way. From 3 May 2022 it will be a matter of personal choice whether to wear a face covering and signs around campus will be updated or removed over the next few weeks.

As face coverings will be a matter of personal choice, this might include keeping a mask in your pocket and wearing it when others would prefer you to, for example, if they are wearing a mask and social distancing is not possible. Masks continue to be available for any staff who need or request them

Regular testing will no longer be recommended, and tests will only be provided by the University in exceptional cases or where a risk assessment by Occupational Health suggests that these are needed.

Questions and Support

The COVID inbox will remain open for the remainder of the Summer Term, and Heads of Department and Heads of Section should notify the inbox if they have absences in their area that they believe may constitute a COVID outbreak or new variant.

Individuals can also be referred to Occupational Health for a COVID referral, based on their personal circumstances, and individuals who have previously been referred can be referred back to OH by their manager if needed.

If you have a concern about a student, you can seek advice from the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service, email wellbeing@essex.ac.uk

Individuals who are concerned about the impact of these changes on them personally can discuss this with their line manager in the first instance, who can seek further advice from People & Culture as needed (ohquery@essex.ac.uk or staffing@essex.ac.uk)

Mental ill health and anxiety due to the COVID Pandemic:

- A mental health strategic COVID risk assessment has been raised that considers stress caused or aggravated by the COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Staff and students can be supported through Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing ([WHSW](#)) and student support ([SWIS](#)).

Display Screen Equipment (DSE) whilst working from home:

- An evaluation of DSE risk has been carried out.
- Staff are supported through Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing ([WHSW](#)).
- Guidance available from the Staff Directory.

Vaccinations:

- A significant proportion of staff are now fully vaccinated against the COVID-19 virus. The University of Essex supports and strongly encourages, staff and students, who are eligible, to take the COVID-19 vaccination when available. The University of Essex is also facilitating vaccinations for students on campus on an ongoing basis.

Hazard hazardous event consequence	Who might be harmed	Current controls	Current risk LxC=R	Additional controls needed to reduce risk	Residual risk LxC=R	Target Date
Risk of high touch and other surfaces harbouring COVID-19 leading to possible exposure to COVID-19	Anyone at the University of Essex	Hand sanitisers are available in key locations. Kitchenettes have hand soap and hand towels or sanitiser dispenser or wipes dispenser. There is also signage to wash or sanitise hands before and after handling taps, kettles, microwaves, fridges etc. Staff are requested to continue to wash hands and sanitise as needed. Contactless payment is used where practical.	U x Mod = Low			

Hazard hazardous event consequence	Who might be harmed	Current controls	Current risk LxC=R	Additional controls needed to reduce risk	Residual risk LxC=R	Target Date
Risk of COVID-19 spread from person to person from breathing, speaking, coughing or sneezing.	Anyone at the University of Essex	<p>University of Essex – COVID-19 Premises Policy</p> <p>Windows should be open enough to allow air flow where practical.</p> <p>Ventilation systems remain adjusted to maximise “fresh air” input and minimise/remove air circulation. Supplementary stand-alone air filtration units are deployed in “windowless” teaching spaces and where air changes considered to require additional support.</p> <p>Screens can remain in place, in relevant areas.</p> <p>As face coverings are now a matter of personal choice, this might include keeping a mask in your pocket and wearing it when others would prefer you to, for example, if they are wearing a mask and social distancing is not possible. Masks continue to be available.</p> <p>Surgical, FFP2 and FFP3 masks also available for any staff who choose to wear them for personal reasons.</p> <p>Any staff wishing to wear FFP2/3 mask will need to have a face fitting if they have not already done so. Occupational Health continue to provide face fitting service for those wishing to wear FFP masks.</p> <p>Occupational Health Clinicians will continue to recommend FFP masks are worn by staff who are at an increase clinical risk these masks will need to be face fitted.</p> <p>Should a significant COVID-19 outbreak occur on campus, we will take advice from the local Director of Public Health on what further mitigations need to be taken.</p> <p>Most lifts have been fitted with air filtration units.</p>	U x Mod = Low			
Risk of vulnerable worker catching	Anyone at the	Staff members who have high vulnerability or a high level of anxiety to COVID-19 infection should be referred to the	U x Maj = Med			

Hazard hazardous event consequence	Who might be harmed	Current controls	Current risk LxC=R	Additional controls needed to reduce risk	Residual risk LxC=R	Target Date
COVID-19 resulting in serious illness or fatality.	University who is at increased vulnerability of severe complications if contracting the virus	<p>University of Essex Occupational Health team for assessment.</p> <p>If, following clinical review (taking into account vaccination status and local infection rates), additional control measures or work restrictions are required, then OH will advise the manager of this with the Staff Member's consent.</p>				
Person developing / exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, whilst on campus, leading to possible spread of Covid-19 and illness.	Anyone at the University of Essex	<p>If staff receive a positive COVID result, there is no legal requirement asking them to isolate but it is likely that they will be infectious to others. We are asking therefore that they avoid contact with others for five days after the day they took the positive test.</p> <p>Staff and students who have a respiratory infection, a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or to study should stay at home and avoid contact with other people until they no longer have a temperature or feel unwell. This will help to reduce infection transmission on our campuses. When deciding whether you are fit for work or study, please be mindful of the potential impact of symptoms that create a significant transmission risk for other people. For staff, you may also be asked to go home if your manager's view is that you are too unwell to be on campus.</p>	U x Mod = Low			