

# COVID-19: POLICY STATEMENT FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS)

This Policy Statement has been prepared in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic; the University of Essex (The University) is required to undertake a risk assessment of the workplace and to implement control measures to reduce COVID-19 related risks of transmission.

The Policy sets out the measures the University has put in place to minimise the risks to students, staff, contractors, visitors, and members of the public.

The general health, safety and wellbeing responsibilities detailed in the University's Health & Safety Policy remain in force. At all times during the pandemic, the University is fully committed to:

## **1. Continuing to comply with all legislative and statutory health & safety and fire safety requirements:**

Legislative and statutory health & safety requirements will be reviewed to ensure that we continue to comply with all current legislation including the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act, the Management of Health at Work Regulations, and all subordinate legislation, as well as the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order, and that such compliance takes into account the transmission risks from COVID-19.

Display Screen Equipment Regulations: the University has a duty to ensure each member of staff working at home using a computer has the DSE equipment needed to complete the tasks being asked of them. Staff members will complete a home working risk assessment to establish their DSE requirements.

## **2. Complying with all advice from governmental bodies:**

Advice and guidance from governmental, professional and advisory bodies will be reviewed, to ensure we take account of such advice and guidance when putting measures in place to minimise risks from COVID-19. Such bodies would include, but are not limited to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), Public Health England (PHE), NHS England, Higher Education Occupational Practitioners (HEOPS), Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) and the Faculty of Occupational Medicine.

## **3. Ensuring that plant, equipment and substances on site remain safe to use:**

Heads of Department, Heads of Section and Managers will ensure that we continue to comply with all health and safety regulations such as the Workplace Regulations, the Provision and Use

of Work Equipment Regulations and COSHH Regulations as well as guidance such as Portable Appliance Testing, ensuring that COVID-19 risks of transmission have been adequately assessed.

#### **4. Working with contractors:**

The University Manager who authorises any contractor works will ensure that the contractors' risk assessments, method of work statements and other procedural documents have included adequate arrangements regarding the risks from COVID-19 before allowing the works to proceed, and will ensure that the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team are informed if any contractors working on University campuses display any COVID-19 symptoms.

#### **5. Ensuring that all emergency arrangements are maintained:**

Fire safety systems will all be maintained in accordance with Regulations.

Fire evacuation procedures will remain in place, with Patrol Officers remaining responsible for ensuring that any affected building (or part thereof) is safely evacuated. First Aid provision and arrangements for summoning the emergency services will remain in place.

#### **6. Enhancing cleaning and disinfection regimes:**

Facilities Management Services (Soft FM) will continue to provide essential cleaning in both academic areas and student accommodation. Enhanced cleaning will be undertaken in some communal areas to include more regular cleaning and disinfection of high touch points.

Where a member of staff or student has been identified as being COVID-19 positive, and the work / study area cannot be left fallow for 72 hours, deep cleaning protocols will be implemented.

#### **7. Information and guidance for staff and students:**

All staff and students will receive frequent information and guidance on the Staff and Student COVID-19 Directory webpages, as well as by updates from the Communications Team. In addition, signage describing current prevention measures will be in place on buildings and services across the campuses. The information and guidance will include advice on personal measures that each member of staff and student should be taking, such as social distancing, self-isolating (when symptomatic or living with others symptomatic) and hand washing.

#### **8. Ensuring that all activities are reviewed in light of the risk of COVID-19:**

Heads of Department, Heads of Section, Managers, Supervisors and Principal Investigators will be

responsible to their respective line managers for ensuring that risk assessments relating to activities where COVID-19 may bring additional risks are reviewed and amended where necessary, unless a COVID-19 specific risk assessment is in place. Any amendments will be communicated to the staff, contractors and other persons to whom the assessments apply.

An individual health questionnaire will be completed for each member of staff and referrals made to Occupational Health if appropriate.

### **9. Providing training to staff and students on the prevention of contracting COVID-19:**

Training on H&S responsibilities for reducing the transmission risk of COVID-19 on campus (whilst COVID-19 continues to present a risk in the community) will be provided on Moodle for all staff and students.

Specific training on reducing the risks of COVID-19 transmission infection control will be provided to relevant members of staff where there is an increased risk of COVID-19 transmission, for example entry procedures to accommodation where students are self-isolating with COVID-19 symptoms, the Day Nursery and other areas where it is difficult to social distance.

Where a risk assessment has identified the need for additional PPE, training on the donning and doffing, and correct disposal of such PPE, as well as Face Fit Testing of Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) will be provided.

**10. Promoting the wellbeing of staff and students:** The University Occupational Health Service will continue to offer support through management referrals. Health assessments and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) appointments will be carried out by telephone and Zoom.

Immunisations will be offered to Health & Social Care students that will be going on placements in the NHS and in the community - safe systems of work will be strictly followed.

Other telephone support services for staff will continue to be offered through the Validium (Employee Assistance Programme) service. Students will be able to contact the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service for other guidance and support. During periods of home working and furlough, staff and students will be able to access support through a range of wellbeing resources and webinars including mindfulness, yoga, healthy back classes and building resilience workshops.

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### **11. Ensuring that staff and students self-isolate when symptomatic:**

Clear guidance will be provided on both the Staff Directory and Student Directory as to the symptoms and situations which indicate that a member of staff or student should self-isolate. All self-isolations involving staff should be reported to line managers, the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing Team, as well as the NHS (by contacting 111) to report their symptoms and arrange for a COVID-19 test. Staff should only return to work when they have been symptom free for ten days.

The University's Guidance on Contact Tracing and Self-Isolation will help to ensure that, where this is known, persons who have been in contact with an infected person are contacted and given appropriate advice.

Support will be given to any student having to self-isolate. Special procedures will be put in place for any employee or contractor needing to enter any flat or room where students are self-isolating.

### **12. Monitoring sickness levels and reporting:**

The Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing (WHSW) team will continue to monitor sickness levels among staff and will include such data in 6-monthly reports to the Health & Safety Group. If a member of staff or student tests positive for COVID-19, the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team should be advised immediately, so that appropriate action can be taken. WHSW will investigate, and, if appropriate, the incident will be reported to the Health & Safety

Executive (HSE) in compliance with the Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR).

Any contractors who contract COVID-19 and suspect they may have contracted it as part of any University works must advise the UoE Manager who authorised the work (who will advise WHSW); individual contractors will be responsible for reporting to the HSE themselves if the incident is RIDDOR reportable.

### **13. Providing the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to prevent ill-health:**

Heads of Department, Heads of Section, Managers, Supervisors and Principal Investigators will review risk assessments of all activities which require the provision of additional or enhanced Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) or Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE). Advice regarding the level of PPE or RPE required can be obtained from the Workplace Health Safety and Wellbeing team.

### **14. Returning to Campus:**

All departments and sections will review working practices to ensure that relevant governmental,

PHE and NHS advice will be applied and reviewed as necessary, to ensure that we remain flexible with regard to updated advice regarding social distancing, hand washing and the wearing of face coverings. The University will keep under review the Government Guidance 'Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19)' and make arrangements to comply with relevant recommendations.

**15. Reviewing this Policy:**

The University of Essex is constantly monitoring the situation, and this policy, along with our COVID-19 Business Continuity Plan, will be reviewed as necessary.

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