

Return to Working on Campus: Guidance for Managers and PGR Supervisors

Introduction

This guidance should be read alongside the [Return to Working on Campus Policy](#), and details considerations for managers and postgraduate research (PGR) supervisors in planning for how their teams may return to campus and addressing concerns and individual circumstances that may make returning to campus more difficult for some individuals.

We recognise that, while some staff and PGR students may welcome a return to working on campus, others will have anxieties and concerns about doing so. Some may have individual circumstances which make their return to campus inappropriate or more difficult at this time. Managers and PGR supervisors have a key role to play in discussing and resolving any individual circumstances and concerns, taking in to account the wider impacts on their team, as well as in ensuring that individuals understand and comply with the measures which the university is putting in place to mitigate and control the risk of transmission of the virus.

While this guidance has been written principally to support managers in planning how their existing teams return to campus, it also applies to new appointments including colleagues who are engaged by King's Talent Bank and other employment agencies. All individuals coming to work for the university on campus should receive a risk assessment in line with this guidance.

This guidance will cover the following 7 steps:

Prepare

1. Prioritising activities to return to campus
2. Identifying the resource required

Engage

3. Talking to staff and PGR students about returning to campus and completing risk assessments
4. Considering individual circumstances

Notify

5. Selecting and notifying staff and PGR students of a return to campus

Support

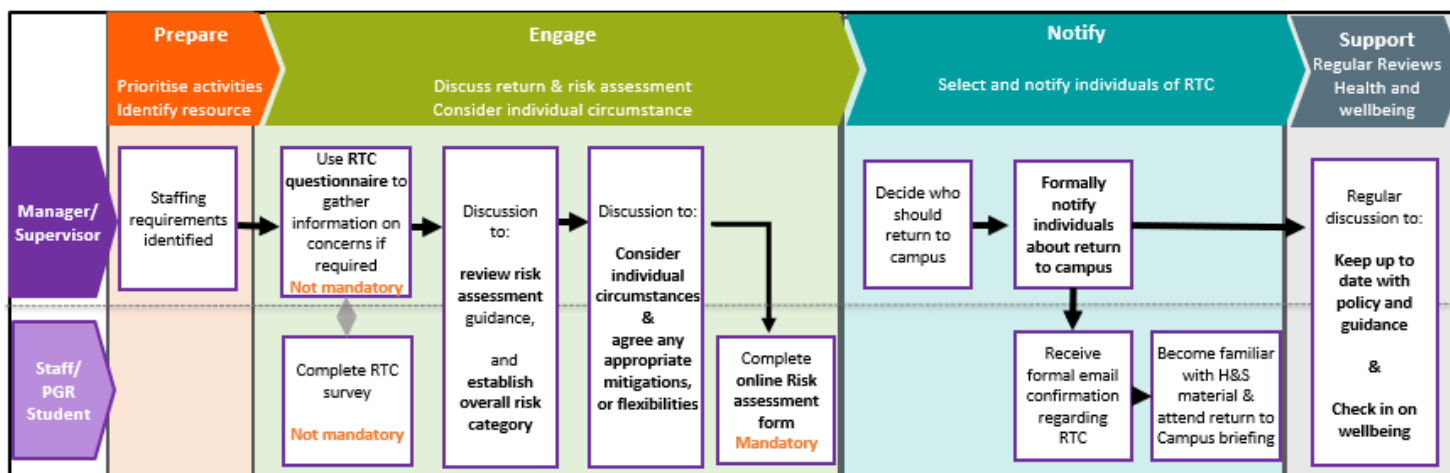
6. Regular reviews
7. Supporting health and wellbeing



In advance of using this guidance you **must** ensure that:

- Your head of directorate or faculty has confirmed that on campus activities can restart for at least some of your team;
- You are aware of any restrictions placed on this return to campus, such as the number of staff/PGR students able to be on campus at any one time; and
- You have familiarised yourself with the health and safety guidance on returning to campus.

Process view through the 7 steps of returning to campus



Planning for return to campus working

Decisions about when, and on what basis, staff and PGR students will be asked to resume work on campus will be determined by operational requirements, staff wellbeing and, crucially, the need to protect the health of our community. The phased re-opening of campus and restrictions caused by social distancing measures will mean that space and facilities will need to be used in different ways than before, and it may only be appropriate or possible for staff to be present on site for limited periods.

Step 1: Prioritise activities that need to resume on campus

The starting point for planning a return to campus should focus on prioritising the key activities that need to be undertaken, specifically:

- Is this work essential and addressing one of the university's current priorities?
- What key activities are required and can any of this work be done from home?
- What is the nature of the work and the ease of establishing safety and physical distancing requirements?
- What impact will there be on the university if the work is not carried out (or not carried out on campus)? What impact will there be on the student if the work is not carried out (or not carried out on campus)?
- What is the amount/volume of work required and can it be phased?
- When does the work need to take place and how long will it take? Is the work on-going/continuous or a one-off requirement?
- Where does this work need to take place and what facilities/equipment is needed to carry out the work?
- What capacity has been allocated for your return to campus? Have any restrictions been placed on the number of staff you are able to return?

Step 2: Identifying resource required on campus

Once you have clarity about the essential work that must be carried out on campus, you will need to look at the work requirements for this activity and the staff available with the necessary skillset. Depending on the work to be conducted it may require that:

- A full team is returned to campus for a fixed period or continual basis
- Only a proportion of a team is needed on campus at any one time
- Staff are required to return to campus for a proportion of their time

Where it is identified that not all staff in a team may be needed on campus at the same time or on a continuous basis it may be appropriate to:

- identify a group of staff/PGR students who will return to work on campus before others;
- implement a phased return of the team with successive cohorts of staff within the team resuming on campus working at different times; or
- ask members of the team to work on a rotational basis (the balance of their time being worked from home, where that is possible).

In the first instance you should look to select staff by seeking volunteers. You should carefully manage expectations when doing so, being clear about the number of staff that may be able to return, and that you reserve the right to require staff to work on campus if there are insufficient volunteers and/or as the numbers of staff required to work on campus increases over time.

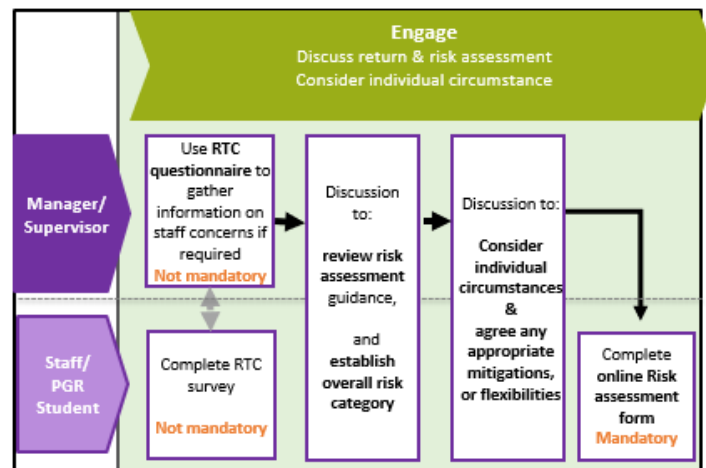
Where there are more volunteers than you are able to accommodate, you should consider rotas or other arrangements where possible that may allow all staff to participate in the return. Alternatively, you may need to select a subset of the volunteers. This should be done in an equitable way in line with guidance below.

Where there are insufficient volunteers you will need to decide which staff should return to working on campus and when. In these cases, the starting point should be that all staff are eligible to be asked to return to work and managers should consider the following:

- equity across the group – as far as possible, the requirement to work on campus should be applied as equally as possible across the group of staff concerned
- relevant individual circumstances - these may make a return to work currently inappropriate or more difficult (see Step 4 of this guidance)

- staff who are required to return to on campus working should wherever possible be asked to work on campus for equitable amounts of time, ideally on a rota basis. For the remainder of their time, they would continue to work remotely where that is possible. Where possible rotas should consist of ‘fixed teams’ to help minimise interactions with colleagues.
- where there is an operational need for staff to carry out only part of their duties on campus this will need to be managed in a way which recognises the time that individuals will spend travelling to and from campus and the need to ensure that they have a productive working day.

Step 3: Talking to staff and PGR students about returning to campus and completing an individual risk assessment¹



Having identified your staffing requirements, you should contact relevant staff to discuss their potential return to work. These conversations should:

- Be supportive and sensitive. You should seek to understand if staff/PGR students have any concerns or individual circumstances that may make returning to work more difficult (see Step 4 of this guidance) as well as any preferences (such as shift patterns or start/finish times where appropriate)
- Be open. You should listen to any concerns raised and not make assumptions about how staff may feel or what risk factors may impact them. Remember that while some individuals may be anxious about returning others may be enthusiastic about the prospect
- Be held at the earliest possible opportunity. Staff and PGR students should be given as much time as possible, and a minimum of one weeks’ notice, to understand proposed arrangements and plan for their potential return to campus
- Be clear on relevant timescales over which staff and PGR students may be required to return to campus and proposed working patterns

¹ This process is also applicable to discussions with new colleagues coming to campus for the first time (including those employed from third party providers, such as King’s Talent Bank)

A return to campus questionnaire has been designed to help line managers and PGR supervisor gather information on any concerns staff may have that could create barriers to their return to campus. The questionnaire and guidance on using is [available](#).

It is important to remember that individuals may feel anxious or uncomfortable discussing their health conditions, disabilities or concerns with you. These discussions should be handled sensitively, and they should be reassured that you and the university are looking to support them wherever possible. The [manager guide on holding return to campus conversations](#) provides further support in managing these conversations.

Individual risk assessment

All staff and PGR students returning to campus are required to complete an individual risk assessment. The return to campus questionnaire and/or conversations with your staff and PGR students will provide information that can be used to help complete the risk assessment and determine an individual's overall risk.

[Guidance](#) is available on the completion of individual risk assessments.

You should discuss the risk assessment with the staff member or PGR student working with them to determine the overall risk rating and any mitigations or flexibilities that may be appropriate, in line with the risk assessment guidance. Remember that many of the measures and controls that the university have put in place may already mitigate some of the risks identified by individuals.

Following this discussion, the risk assessment should be recorded by the employee or PGR student completing the online form.

You should consider any individual risk factors or other barriers individuals may face to returning to work in line with step 4 below.

Step 4: Considering individual circumstances

There may be staff or PGR students whose individual circumstances currently make their return to working on campus more difficult or limit their availability to work on campus at this time. These may be raised with you through conversations with the member of staff and the risk assessment process.

Such circumstances are set out below alongside considerations in managing these concerns with staff. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to seek Occupational Health advice which you should discuss with your [HR People Partner](#) or appropriate department or faculty contact for matters concerning PGR students.

i. Clinically extremely vulnerable staff

[NHS guidance](#) is available on conditions that may make staff clinically extremely vulnerable. At various times during the pandemic individuals in this category have been advised to shield and during those periods staff unable to work from home were placed on temporary furlough leave.

From 1 April, the government shielding restrictions for these individuals will end and staff in this category will be able to return to work where it is essential for them to do so.

Staff in this category may be required to return to working on campus where it is operationally necessary for them to do so and their role cannot be performed from home. These staff should continue to work from home where possible.

If a return to working on campus is essential, you should give specific regard to the member of staff's health condition in the risk assessment and ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in relation to their working arrangements and working environment. Existing measures and controls will reduce risk and should be discussed with the individual. Additional and appropriate safety measures should be considered to provide further mitigation.

You should, wherever possible, give consideration to personal preference and flexibilities that may address their individual concerns. Where staff have concerns about returning it may be appropriate to seek Occupational Health advice.

ii. Other health conditions and pregnancy

The NHS has provided [guidance](#) for individuals with other health conditions that may place them at higher risk of COVID-19. [Guidance](#) is also available for staff who are pregnant.

These staff should continue to work from home where possible. If a return to working on campus is essential, you should give specific regard to the member of staff's health condition in the risk assessment and ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place in relation to their working arrangements and working environment. Existing measures and controls will reduce risk and should be discussed with the individual. Additional and appropriate safety measures should be considered to provide further mitigation.

You should, wherever possible, give consideration to personal preference and flexibilities that may address their individual concerns.

iii. Other factors which might affect an individual's risk

We recognise that research has shown that a range of other factors may also affect an individual's risk, such as age, gender, or being from a BME background. These are outlined by the [NHS](#) and detailed in [Public Health England's report](#) on the disparity of risks and outcomes with COVID-19.

Age, gender and ethnicity are considered through the individual risk assessment process. Any other factors raised by staff that may affect their risk can also be considered as part of your discussion regarding their return. Existing measures and controls will reduce risk and should be discussed with the member of staff. Additional and appropriate safety measures should be considered to provide further mitigation.

You should, wherever possible, give consideration to personal preference and flexibilities that may address their individual concerns.

iv. Staff or PGR students living with someone who is clinically extremely vulnerable or clinically vulnerable

These individuals should continue to work from home where possible. If a return to working on campus is essential this should be planned and managed subject to an individual risk assessment. You should, wherever possible, give consideration to personal preference and flexibilities that may address individual concerns.

v. Staff or PGR students with childcare or other caring responsibilities

Where staff have young children at home or other caring responsibilities you should discuss flexibilities that may be appropriate to accommodate these issues. Staff should continue to work from home where it is possible to do so. If a return to working on campus is essential, you should discuss any flexibilities that may be possible to help facilitate their return.

If these arrangements are not appropriate or cannot be agreed, alternatives may be considered such as dependant's leave (where applicable), an agreed period of annual leave, or an agreed

period of unpaid leave. For PGR students, an extension to the submission deadline may be appropriate.

vi. Staff or PGR students with disabilities

Staff and PGR students may have disabilities that relate to underlying health conditions which make them clinically vulnerable (see above). They may also face specific challenges from temporary changes to the working environment, working arrangements or working patterns which are in place as part of the re-opening of campus.

If these are identified, the manager or supervisor should arrange for an individual risk assessment to be undertaken and consideration should be given to any reasonable adjustments that may be required to facilitate their attendance at work on campus. [Guidance](#) on reasonable adjustments is available. Where such adjustments are not possible, or additional risks cannot be mitigated, it may be agreed that the member of staff will continue to work from home (where possible and subject to regular review).

General concerns

Individuals may also discuss more general concerns, such as general safety fears or the use of public transport, or a preference to continue working remotely. You should reassure them about the measures the university is taking to protect the health of our community and that these measures fully comply with all government and public health guidance.

Travel

UK Government guidance currently states that public transport is not a barrier to individuals returning to work or study, although social distancing should be observed, and people should wear face coverings or masks while travelling. As such, the university's position is that a need to travel on public transport is not a barrier to attending work on campus but that travel guidelines should be met.

We do recognise and understand, however, that commuting to campus may be a key concern for some staff and PGR students. As such, where it is essential that the staff member or PGR student returns to work this should be discussed, planned and managed in line with the return to campus conversation and risk assessment process.

Where operationally appropriate you can also discuss flexibilities (see below) or any preferences they have raised that may help to address their concerns. There is no obligation to agree these if it is not suitable to operational requirements. In addition, you should where practicable:

- Ensure employees know well in advance when they are needed on campus so they can plan their journey
- Empower employees to 'break up' their journey if necessary
- Signposting to the advice around travelling safely on public transport via the Return to Campus webpages
- Ensure alternatives such as Active Travel modes are easier to utilise

While travel should not form part of the general risk assessment process for most staff, a travel risk assessment may be required where:

- an employee's contract states that they are employed to work from home, and they are asked to come to campus
- employees are required to travel as part of their work activity (e.g., extensive travelling between campuses, such as with maintenance staff)

Flexibilities to consider

Where operational requirements allow, you can consider a range of flexibilities to help address and manage staff concerns regarding returning to work on campus. Any of these arrangements would be subject to regular review and are at a manager's discretion.

- Altering the proposed times or days on which the member of staff would be required to attend on campus
- Allowing a later start and/or earlier finish time, so that the on campus working pattern can be adjusted to avoid rush hour commuting or be compatible with school hours or available childcare
- Extending working days to allow contractual working hours to be done over fewer days, to limit the need to commute on public transport (known as 'compressed hours'). The total number of hours worked would not exceed contractual working hours.
- Adjusting, adapting or providing alternative work duties.

Staff who do not wish to return to campus or wish to limit their return can also consider annual leave, a voluntary reduction in hours or a voluntary period of unpaid leave. This would need to be discussed and agreed with their line manager and would be subject to operational needs.

You should look to address staff concerns and provide flexibility where it is operationally possible to do so. Where it is not possible staff can be asked to return to work on campus, provided that the necessary risk assessment has been conducted and health and safety measures are in place.

If the regulations and funding permits PGR students who do not wish to return to campus may apply for a temporary interruption of studies,

Step 5: Selecting and notifying staff and PGR students of return to campus

After following the above steps, you will have all the information to support you in deciding which staff/PGR students should return to work on campus and when. We recognise that in some situations this may be complicated, and you should seek support from your local HR People Partner where there are any concerns. Supervisors should seek support from their [Associate Dean for Doctoral Studies](#) or other appropriate faculty member such as a PGR Coordinator.

You should remember that any final decisions you make, whether deciding to bring a member of staff back to campus or not, should be made in line with the Equality Act 2010 and issues of equality must be considered at all stages of decision making.

You should remember:

- Unintentional biases are more prevalent during times of stress and emergency. We all need to be aware of our unconscious biases to avoid compounding inequalities. Further information on [unconscious bias](#) is available and managers should consider completing KCL's [Diversity Matters](#) training for managers.
- Consider the impact of returning to campus on each individual member of your team and do not assume personal circumstances or use stereotypes in making decisions. You will need to balance considerations on operational needs with what may be possible for your staff at this time. Remember to consider all options available including possible rotations, part-time returns and other flexibilities outlined in this guidance, to get the best result for King's and for the team.

Notifying staff

You should discuss any final arrangements with staff and PGR students, if you have not already done so, and follow up in writing by email. You should ensure to provide staff and PGR students with a link to the relevant health and safety guidance for returning to campus and detail any specific instructions that may be appropriate for their return (e.g., any new protocols or working arrangements). Staff and PGR students should be given at least one week's notice of a need to return to campus.

Where staff are being returned to work from temporary furlough leave, either full-time or part-time (under the flexible furlough provisions), you should discuss this with your directorate or faculty Furlough Lead and ensure the appropriate furlough process is followed.

Step 6: Regular review

As stated previously, the [return to working on campus policy](#) and this associated guidance will be subject to regular review and will evolve in line with any changes to government and public health guidance. You will also need to be continually mindful of the risks present in your areas of work and risk assessments should be revisited as and when individual or operational circumstances change.

You should engage with staff and PGR students regularly and check-in with them to understand how they are adapting to new ways of working and any challenges they may be facing. Where not everyone in your team has returned to campus you should be mindful of the different ways of working, and ensure you continue to engage with and support all equally.

Step 7: Supporting health and wellbeing

At all times throughout this process it is important that you recognise the impact the current uncertain times may have on your staff and PGR students. Many of our colleagues may feel anxious or worried, particularly if being asked to return to campus, or may struggle with new ways of working necessitated by safety protocols.

You should always seek to reassure staff and PGR students that the university is committed to supporting their health and wellbeing, and that their safety is our main priority. You can also remind staff that there is a wealth of resources available to support them at this time:

- King's wellbeing - www.kcl.ac.uk/wellbeing
- Employee assistance programme – phone 0800 243 458 or online at www.workplaceoptions.co.uk. To login, the username is KCL and the password is Strand
- Employee network groups - [NEST](#), the staff network group for parents and carers, and [Access](#), the university's Staff Disability Inclusion Network.
- Staff who are members of a union may contact their union rep for support.
- [Student support services](#)
- [Coronavirus FAQ's for PGR students](#)
- External resources including:
 - [King's Health Partners update](#)
 - [Together All](#)