



University of Essex

COVID-19: BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

WORKPLACE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING

RETURN TO OUR CAMPUSES

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COVID-19: BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLAN

WE ARE CURRENTLY IN ADVANCED PROTECTION.

SECTION 1: STAGES OF PROTECTION

The University's business continuity plan for COVID-19 initially identified two escalating levels of response from the University: Enhanced and Advanced. Each of these recognised that the University's campuses would need to remain open at all times to support students residing in University accommodation.

Since moving into the Advanced Protection stage, additional work has been undertaken to identify the steps that would need to be taken to bring the University community back onto campus. Plans have been made for a phased approach to be taken, with two further stages of protection plotted, prior to a return to business as usual (with a note that this is not expected to be the same as our previous business as usual state).

This provides the University with the following five states:

- 1. Advanced Protection:** where essential services only are delivered on campuses.
- 2. Enhanced Protection:** with many functions delivered remotely, and other, limited services available safely on campuses.
- 3. Sustained Protection:** a new stage, providing measures that enable more elements of on-campus activity to resume than within Enhanced Protection; these are envisaged to be required over an extended time period.
- 4. Targeted Protection:** the stage that is expected to be a 'new normal' for us for some time, with protective measures continuing but limited to particular groups of individuals that may be especially vulnerable, or to particular activities that pose heightened levels of risk.
- 5. Steady State:** a new form of business as usual, as yet undefined.

This document plots the actions that we would need to take to move the University through its expected journey from Advanced Protection, through a new instance of Enhanced Protection, and into a state of Sustained and/or Targeted Protection. The Steady State will be defined as this process progresses; we will capture learning from our experiences of all these stages and retain as many as possible of those elements of our changed ways of working that have proved to be beneficial.



SECTION 2: MOVING BETWEEN STAGES OF PROTECTION

Decisions to move the University back to Enhanced Protection, into Sustained or Targeted Protection, or to business as usual, will be taken by the Vice-Chancellor following consultation with the Chair of Council and the Chair of Council's Audit and Risk Management Committee, and communicated to all members of the University. We will consult safety representatives in good time with regard to these proposals, as well as consulting with the Students' Union and with the Trades Unions to enable meaningful input both to the content of the plan and the implementing movement between levels of protection. Union safety representatives serve the entire University community in matters of health and safety. Government regulatory requirements will be followed at all times.

While the decision to change the operational state under which the University is functioning will be taken by the Vice-Chancellor, the re-commencement of all and any departmental and sectional activities will only be undertaken following a risk assessment, with the results approved at the appropriate level.

Information about the process for our return to our campuses and the risk assessments to be undertaken is included in the associated guidance that has been developed to support this Plan. This guidance has been developed to ensure that it complies with government requirements and is supported and informed by scientific advice¹. It will be updated as more evidence is available, and to protect quality of experience and educational delivery. The detailed guidance is listed below (see Guidance for returning safely to campus).

The guidance about our return to campus has been, and will continue to be, developed with due and sensitive regard to the needs of all our community. Those who identify with a disability may have different requirements to those who do not.

Any sort of return to campus will be undertaken in a phased way. A return to campus plan has been developed, with departments and sections prioritised by need, through consultation held with all Heads of Department and Section. The dates for the resumption of specific on-campus activities and the re-opening of buildings are included in this document.

The Business Continuity Plan has been reviewed and revised to include consideration of actions that would need to be taken to move the University to each of these stages. The safety of our community (including our staff, students, and any visitors to our campuses, including contractors) is our top priority consideration in moving between the levels of protection.

The Business Continuity Plan identifies transition measures that would need to be undertaken as part of a transition from one level to the next in the Plan. This allows for the careful and planned implementation of the arrangements concerned and to ensure that additional groups of staff and students may re-commence activities on our campuses in a safe and co-ordinated manner. Some activities will be undertaken across our campuses in line with any changes of protection level. These include:

- Enhanced cleaning regimes for areas of high traffic, including door handles and push plates, being re-implemented.
- Hand sanitisers being checked and re-stocked.
- Health and Safety checks and the flushing of water systems continuing to be undertaken in all areas during all levels of protection.

The University community will be supported through all these changes with sustained communication of all mitigations, as well as focused information about expected behaviours and responsibilities.

¹ Further research resources on COVID-19 have been collated here: <https://library.essex.ac.uk/c.php?g=675869&p=4838936>



Our campuses and the autumn term

This Plan refers equally to all three of our campuses at Colchester, Southend and Loughton; however, each will have their own needs. These have been noted, where appropriate, in the detailed actions and activities table. Those who are required to work on multiple campuses should include consideration of their specific needs when completing a return to campus risk assessment.

The expectation for Autumn 2020 is for education to be available to be delivered on campus. Every department should be able to deliver some face-to-face teaching. Students are being encouraged to join us on campus when they are ready, and it is safe for them to do so. Our dual delivery programmes have been developed to allow them to be taught in person or online, as the need requires.

NB while the term 'social distancing' has been used in this document, this should refer to physical distancing. Social interaction is encouraged where it is safe to do so.

Advanced Protection

Advanced Protection is our highest level.

The Advanced Protection level includes measures to continue to deliver essential services. This will mean that people working on our campuses will be focused on supporting residential and essential operational services only. Essential services for students will continue.

Enhanced Protection

Re-implementation of Enhanced Protection measures would enable certain additional activities to be undertaken on our campuses, in comparison with Advanced Protection.

The Enhanced Protection level includes measures to protect the University's community, while allowing as many services and functions as possible to continue to be delivered. For many staff, this will mean that, where appropriate and possible, colleagues will be undertaking their work from home, although some functions may be undertaken on campus. For students, as many services as possible will be maintained, although some of these may be delivered in different ways.

Under Enhanced Protection, many University activities would still be undertaken remotely, where possible. These include internal meetings, which would continue using Zoom, and the provision of helpdesks, which would continue online as the default (via live chat, email, telephone, for example). Staff who can still work from home are encouraged to continue to do so.

Where on campus activity is necessary, in order to facilitate substantial social distancing, no more than one third of the staff in any department or section should be working on campus at any one time, where this is possible for the completion of the activity. It is expected that departments/sections requiring staff on site will operate a minimum of a "three team" structure, with colleagues allocated to one of three teams with attendance on campus by rotation. The definition of what constitutes a 'team' should be made by the Head of Department or Head of Section as this will vary by activity. For clarity, teams are not required to send a third of their staff

back to working on site, however; rather, those who are working on campus should have no more than a third of their staff members working in University buildings. The [premises guidance](#) including, for example, requirements for social distancing, should be followed.

In addition to facilitating social distancing, this approach will ensure operational resilience in relation to any further waves of infection. Exceptions to the "three team" rule should be approved by Divisional Heads, following a risk assessment. Individuals who are vulnerable or have underlying health conditions would not be expected to come onto campus.

Individuals who are medically vulnerable (see the guidance on [health risk assessments](#)) would be expected not to come onto campus. As schools may still be closed, at least for some year groups, parents of school-aged children may also still need to work from home.

All staff and all students residing on campus will be provided with two cotton, washable face-coverings to be worn if coming into enclosed spaces on campus, where social distancing isn't possible. Individuals will be responsible for laundering their own face-coverings.

Social distancing will be implemented across our campuses in line with government requirements and following scientific advice.

Sustained Protection

When it is deemed safe for on-campus activities to be increased, using the process described above, and with significant levels of social distancing being required to protect against the spread of infection and expected to be in place for an extended period of time, the University envisages operating under arrangements defined as Sustained Protection.

During the period of Sustained Protection, it is envisaged that the University's operations would be structured on a "two team" basis, typically with attendance on campus limited to a maximum of 50% of staff at any time. Again, it would not be a requirement for all teams to field 50% of their staff on-site; however, no teams should have more than half their staff working on the University premises at any one time. Individuals who are medically vulnerable (see the guidance on [health risk assessments](#)) would not be expected to come onto campus. Staff who can still work from home would be able to continue to do so.

Targeted protection

Even when it is deemed safe for on-campus activities to resume to a more significant extent, the University envisages that there will be a requirement for longer-term, sustaining measures, targeted at protecting individuals at particular risk (for example as a result of their level of medical vulnerability) as well as on activities that pose particular risks because of their nature or the scale of the social gatherings that are entailed.

Targeted Protection will focus measures on specific activities where mitigations are required for the longer term, even while the majority of activities have returned to modes of operation that are more equivalent to business as usual.

Within the targeted protection phase, we would expect to see most staff and students on site.

Targeted Protection would see increased numbers of people being expected to be able to be on campus. Prior to this, staff would be expected to return to campus in pre-defined waves. This would be dictated by the availability of estate, with confirmation of safety processes having been completed prior to re-occupation.

Tailored support

Support specific to the individual's needs covering but not limited to those with medical vulnerabilities, who identify with a disability, will be offered to staff and students across all stages of protection through our existing Occupational Health and Student Wellbeing policies and practices.

Timetable for returning activities safely to campus

The following table includes the timeline for our return to working on campus. NB all dates are dependent on the successful completion of risk assessments, and on the easing of the lockdown in line with the Government's roadmap, published on 11 May 2020: [Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy](#)². Appendix one includes a summary of the Government's current expectations for the implementation of the steps required to lift restrictions.

OPERATIONAL STATE	EARLIEST DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION
Enhanced Protection	6 July 2020
Sustained Protection	7 September 2020

Dates associated with Targeted Protection and any move into Steady State will be considered as this Plan is updated.

A detailed document, describing the activities expected under each level of protection has been developed, along with the actions needing to be taken in advance of each activity being recommenced. These activities refer to those available directly from the University. We are also working with colleagues in our local communities to direct our staff and students to activities available from arts, cultural and sports organisations that may be of benefit to our community. These will be highlighted in communications and on our website.

At a thematic level, the following activities would be expected to return to campus in this way for each level of protection:

ACTIVITY	ADVANCED PROTECTION	ENHANCED PROTECTION	SUSTAINED PROTECTION	TARGETED PROTECTION
Timescale	Currently	6 July 2020 at the earliest	7 September at the earliest	TBC
Teaching	All delivered remotely and engaged with remotely	Dual delivery	Dual delivery	On campus delivery expected, with dual delivery available if necessary
Student Support	All delivered remotely and engaged with remotely	All delivered remotely and engaged with remotely	Basic frontline services provided with reduced hours Services continue to be available online	Services provided on site, with appropriate safeguards in place
Research	All delivered remotely and engaged with remotely	Delivered and engaged with remotely where possible Lab work restarts following approved risk assessments	Delivered and engaged with remotely where appropriate Lab work restarts following approved risk assessments	Research expected to be undertaken on site, with appropriate safeguards in place
Technical IT services and systems	On site systems supported Majority of staff working off site	On site systems supported Majority of staff working off site	On site systems supported Majority of staff working off site	Services provided on site, with appropriate safeguards in place
Libraries	All library buildings closed to visitors	Library buildings remain closed Services such as click-and-collect established	Basic frontline services provided at all three campuses (dependent on partners) with reduced hours Services continue to be available online	Services provided on site, with appropriate safeguards in place
Grounds and buildings	Digital content provided All buildings continue to be maintained with skeleton staff	All buildings continue to be maintained with staff on rotation	All buildings continue to be maintained with staff on rotation	All services provided on site, with appropriate safeguards in place

ACTIVITY	ADVANCED PROTECTION	ENHANCED PROTECTION	SUSTAINED PROTECTION	TARGETED PROTECTION
Day Nursery	Nursery closed to all but key workers	Nursery re-opens in line with Government guidance	Nursery provides services in line with Government guidance	Nursery expected to be open with appropriate safeguards in place
Food, Shops, Wivenhoe House and Sport	Take-away services only from catering outlets Hotel closed Shops limiting numbers of customers at any one time Sport centres and facilities closed	Take-away services only from catering outlets and the hotel Shops limiting numbers of customers at any one time Limited sporting activities re-introduced	Catering outlets re-opened with appropriate safeguards in place Shops continue in line with safety requirements Hotel activities increased, in line with safety recommendations Limited sporting activities continue	All services provided on site, with appropriate safeguards in place Return to on campus working expected where appropriate
Office-based working	All working remotely	All working remotely where possible	All working remotely where necessary	Return to on campus working expected where appropriate

Guidance for returning safely to campus

The specific measures put in place at the University are compliant with regulatory and government requirements^{3,4}, and informed by scientific evidence, advice from relevant medical organisations and the University's needs. These sources will continue to be used to review and further develop guidance as necessary. The guidance includes, for example, the requirement to undertake risk assessments prior to re-starting on-campus activities and, following this, the implementation of appropriate health and safety measures to protect the community.

The following guidance documents have been developed to support the University community's return to on-campus activities:

- [COVID-19: Policy statement](#)
- [COVID-19: Health, Safety and Wellbeing Responsibilities](#)
- [COVID-19: Premises policy](#)
- [COVID-19: Adapting our individual behaviours on our campuses](#)
- [COVID-19: Managers' guide to completing a work activity risk assessment](#)
- [COVID-19: Managers' Guide to completing an individual health risk assessment](#)
- [COVID-19: Digital Screen Equipment \(DSE\) Collection and Delivery from our Campuses](#)

The University community is asked to demonstrate responsible behaviours and to adhere to all these measures when on campus for the benefit of all.

It is possible that staff who return to campus may work in alternative locations to their original offices, in order to maintain social distancing and to maximise the use of our office space.

Those on campus may also be able to stagger start and end times and could be encouraged to work outside usual office hours and take time off during office hours in order to spread the number of people on campus at any given time. Staffing of on-campus functions will be approached with flexibility, sensitivity and creativity.

Staff working entirely back on campus will be asked to return the University equipment they have been using for home working. More information will be made available about the movement of equipment that staff may have taken home, prior to returning it to campus.

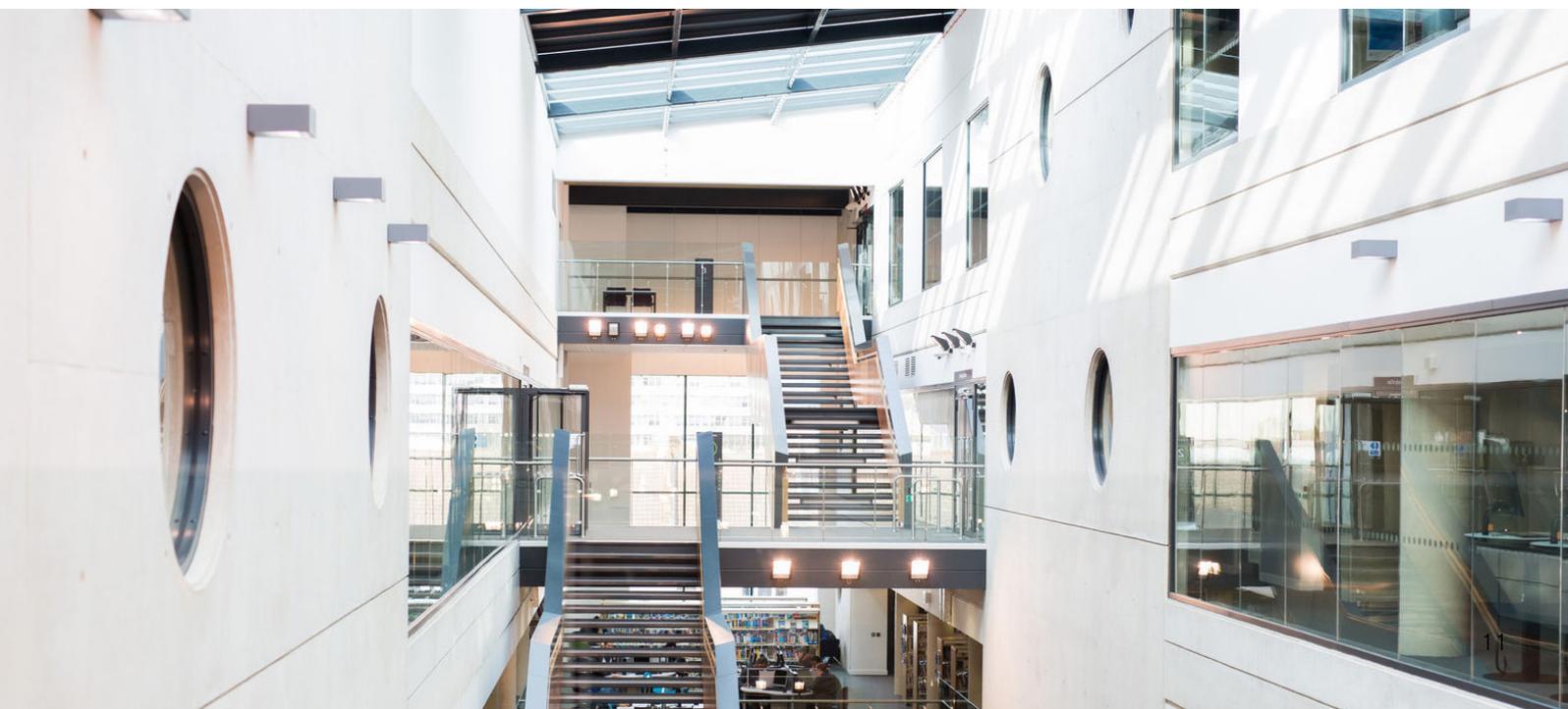
Updating the Business Continuity Plan

The detail of the Business Continuity Plan will be updated as necessary in line with the UK Government's recovery strategy, scientific advice and the University's needs.

All updates to the Plan and to the guidance will be supported by continued communications.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses>



APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPECTATIONS OF THE STEPS NEEDING TO BE TAKEN TO EASE LOCKDOWN (DATED 11 MAY 2020)⁵

Step One (from 13 May 2020):

- For the foreseeable future, workers should continue to work from home rather than their normal physical workplace, wherever possible.
- All workers who cannot work from home should travel to work if their workplace is open.
- It remains the case that anyone who has symptoms, however mild, or is in a household where someone has symptoms, should not leave their house to go to work.
- Schools remain closed, but local authorities and schools are being encouraged to urge more children who would benefit from attending in person to do so.
- Everybody (including critical workers) should continue to avoid public transport wherever possible.
- Social distancing guidance on public transport must be followed rigorously.
- People should aim to wear a face-covering in enclosed spaces where social distancing is not always possible and they come into contact with others that they do not normally meet, for example on public transport or in some shops.
- As well as exercise, people can now also spend time outdoors subject to: not meeting up with any more than one person from outside the household; continued compliance with social distancing guidelines to remain two metres (6ft) away from people outside the household; good hand hygiene, particularly with respect to shared surfaces; and those responsible for public places being able to put appropriate measures in place to follow the new COVID-19 Secure guidance.
- People may exercise outside as many times each day as they wish.
- People may drive to outdoor open spaces irrespective of distance, so long as they respect social distancing guidance while they are there; however, the rules in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland must be respected and people must not travel to different parts of the UK.
- These clinically vulnerable people should continue to take particular care to minimise contact with others outside their households, but do not need to be shielded.
- Those in the clinically extremely vulnerable group (those who are shielding) are strongly advised to stay at home at all times and avoid any face-to-face contact.
- The Government is continuing to provide essential food to those unable to leave their home and is facilitating volunteer support.
- Higher fines will be administered to those who do not comply.
- There will be increased information about the UK's social distancing regime at border points.
- All international arrivals will be required to supply contact and accommodation information.
- All international arrivals not on a short list of exemptions will be required to self-isolate in their accommodation for fourteen days on arrival into the UK.

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/884171/FINAL_6.6637_CO_HMG_C19_Recovery_FINAL_110520_v2_WEB_1_.pdf

POLICY CREATOR: PEOPLE & CULTURE

Created: 02 July 2020

Amended:

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