

File name:	UoE COVID Risk Assessment		
Risk assessment	COVID Strategic RA001	Version number:	15 reviewed and updated 28/07/2021

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 Sustained Protection level).		Location	University of Essex Colchester, Southend and Loughton Campuses.
Manager responsible	Lara Carmel	Signature & date	Lara Carmel 22/07/2021	
Assessed by (name & role)	Richard Green Professional Lead for Health and Safety (Professional Services) Caroline Smith Professional Lead for Health and Safety (Academic Faculties) Lara Carmel Director of Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Signature & assessment date	Richard Green 28/07/2021 Caroline Smith 22/07/2021 Lara Carmel 22/07/2021	

This Risk Assessment has been updated due to the new variant being more transmissible and further emerging evidence that it may have a higher mortality rate across all age ranges.

Note on the Assessment of the “Consequence” of becoming ill with COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a life-threatening illness. COVID-19 impacts individuals in very different ways, with some people remaining asymptomatic and, according to Public Health England, “for most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a [mild illness](#)” especially for those who have been fully

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						

vaccinated. Given the spectrum of consequences that can result from contracting the disease, this risk assessment has determined that the most appropriate rating of the risk consequence of COVID-19 is a “Major” Consequence on the University of Essex risk assessment. The latest dominant variant of the COVID-19 virus is the Delta variant and this has a higher transmission rate than the earlier Alpha variant. It has been estimated to be approximately 100% more transmissible than the original virus. The way to control the virus is the same, it will not spread if we avoid close contact with others. Wash your hands, keep your distance from others, reduce your social contacts and we strongly encourage continued wearing of face coverings

Listed below are Public Health England controls that support “Major” as the most appropriate risk rating at this stage of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

- i) COVID-19 infection rates are currently very high due to the Delta variant being highly transmissible. Hospitalisations and deaths remain low in comparison to previous waves of infection.
- ii) NHS Test & trace is in place for anyone symptomatic, including children under 5, meaning medical assistance can be secured more quickly than at the outset of the pandemic. In addition, enhancements to track and trace have meant that people who may have come into close contact with a COVID-19 infected person will be informed and will be able to take the appropriate action of self-isolation and testing, thus protecting others including any extremely vulnerable people from becoming ill with this disease.
- iii) The widespread take-up of the vaccine and hospital treatments developed in the last 15 months have significantly reduced the likelihood of a fatal outcome from that during the March / April 2020 peak of infections. It should also be noted that concerns have been raised about long-term health effects of some patients following COVID-19 infection (labelled as Long COVID). The University recognise Long COVID as a condition, with a doctors fit note. The University recognise that some people may take longer than others to recover and we will adopt a flexible approach to work while they recover.
- iv) The Department for Education guidance asks students returning to University to be COVID-19 tested on return to campuses. The tests being offered by the University are NHS test and trace approved Lateral Flow Tests (LFTs). (Returning students will be instructed to have a Lateral Flow Test on the day of return to campus and then a further test 3 days and twice a week thereafter. Any students and staff with access to campuses will be required to undergo [COVID-19 Lateral Flow Testing](#) on a twice weekly basis).

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 have now received both COVID-19 vaccinations. The University is supporting and encouraging staff to take the COVID-19 vaccination when available and is also supporting and encouraging students to take the COVID-19 vaccination. 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
General COVID-19 transmission risks for the University of Essex	Anyone at the University of Essex	<p>COVID Policy.</p> <p>Departmental COVID-19 Risk Assessments are to be completed before staff return to campus.</p> <p>All returning Staff will have to complete UoE training on controls to limit the spread of COVID-19 before returning to campus. Under Sustained protection, a maximum of 50% of staff should be on campus at any one time.</p> <p>Staff will sign the “Staff agreement for a return to our campuses during the COVID-19 pandemic” before the end of the first day back on campus.</p> <p>Work from home to continue for all who do not need to attend campus to carry out their work.</p> <p>Visitor COVID-19 Agreement</p> <p>Contractor COVID-19 Agreement</p> <p>COVID-19 Lateral flow testing facility, for students and staff (on campus) who are not exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, is in place and available to all students at the start of the term and end of term. This will continue twice weekly.</p>	U x Maj = Med			

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		<p>You can also collect lateral flow test kits for home use from the campus clinic. Additionally tests can also be ordered online or collected from various locations local to you.</p> <p>Where a clinical need has identified (i.e. symptomatic COVID-19 person or a person with a positive LFT result) a PCR test will be recommended the person will be advised to book the test through the NHS 119 phone line or online and will be asked to self-isolate until the result of the PCR is known. The clinical OH team will contact them for follow up.</p> <p>Colchester campus has an NHS appointment only walk-in centre for COVID-19 PCR testing, giving easy access to symptomatic students and staff.</p> <p>The Workplace Health, Safety and Wellbeing department are running a contact tracing system within the University of Essex. The contact tracing team rapidly track down “contacts” of students or staff who have COVID-19 symptoms or COVID-19 + test results to ensure they are informed that they isolate for the 10 days required as per government rules.</p>				
Risk of high touch and other surfaces harbouring COVID-19 leading to possible exposure to COVID-19	Anyone at the University of Essex	<p>Cleaning material is suitable for destroying the COVID-19 virus.</p> <p>Enhanced cleaning of high touch surfaces, in occupied areas. (Detailed in the University of Essex – Premises Policy Guidance document).</p> <p>Local managers will provide hand sanitiser pumps and or wipes in offices.</p> <p>The UoE are following Public Health England guidance on hand washing social distancing and wearing of face</p>	U x Maj = Med			

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		<p>coverings in all buildings. Backed up with signage and comms.</p> <p>The use of shared computers for employees will be limited as much as possible. If shared use is necessary, then managers will provide cleaning products that will kill the COVID virus.</p> <p>Drinks fountains have signage to give guidance on Sanitising hands before and after use.</p> <p>Additional hand sanitizer points have been fitted, including near photocopiers shared printers, drinks fountains and lifts with signage to instruct people to clean hands before and after use.</p> <p>There is additional signage on hand hygiene including wash hands regularly.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Staff will avoid sharing pens, other office equipment, or anything else that may be handled by more than one person, as detailed in the Staff Agreement.</p> <p>Contactless payment is used where practical.</p>				
Risk of COVID-19 spread from person to person from breathing, speaking,	Anyone at the University of Essex	<p>The UoE are following Public Health England guidance on social distancing and hand washing. This is backed up with signage and comms.</p> <p>University of Essex – Premises Policy Guidance Note PGN-Covid-19 Premises has been formalised.</p>	U x Maj = Med			

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coughing or sneezing.		<p>The opportunity to work from home remains if this is agreed by the Head of Section/Department based on operational need.</p> <p>Managers will ensure that desk occupation follows the requirements of the COVID-19 Premises Policy.</p> <p>Windows should be open whenever possible, as detailed in the COVID-19 Premises Policy.</p> <p>Ventilation systems adjusted to maximise “fresh air” input and minimise/remove air circulation. Supplementary stand-alone air filtration units are deployed in “windowless” teaching spaces where air changes considered to require additional support</p> <p>Managers should put “authorised access only” signage on relevant doors as appropriate.</p> <p>Screens will be in place, in relevant areas, before affected staff return.</p> <p>Face coverings are recommended for enclosed and crowded spaces where people may come into contact with people they don’t normally meet (DoE Higher Education Covid-19 guidance). Should a significant outbreak occur on campus, we will take advice from the Director of Public Health as to whether face coverings will be required in indoor premises.</p> <p>Where space is not enclosed and crowded, face coverings are strongly encouraged to be worn in all areas where social distancing is not possible, including corridors when travelling around campus, on entry to cafes and restaurants, when in shops and when visiting kitchenettes and toilets. (This is a requirement in the Staff Agreement) (Social Distancing must take precedence to face coverings).</p>				

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		<p>It will be strongly encouraged that face coverings will be worn by students in lectures. Face coverings will be available for lecturer's use.</p> <p>There is an exemption to wearing face coverings where a person has a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability. Those exempt from wearing a face covering due to medical reason will be strongly encouraged to wear a lanyard issued by Occupational Health stating exemption. For students, lanyards can be issued through Include team in SWIS and the Health Centre.</p> <p>Some teaching may be necessary with zero social distancing and detailed specific risk assessments, detailing additional mitigations will be needed, with senior management sign off.</p> <p>We strongly encourage Zoom meetings to continue to replace in-person meetings where practical, even if participants are in the workplace.</p> <p>Face cover signage has been placed on floors and walls in relevant areas.</p> <p>Face coverings must be worn in lifts even if there is only one person travelling in the lift.</p> <p>Priority must be given to those with mobility impairment or staff transporting items of equipment that cannot be safely transported via stairways.</p> <p>All lifts have been fitted with air filtration units.</p> <p>Kitchenettes limited to one person at a time and signage fitted.</p>				

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Risk from COVID-19 due to crowding internally on campus or in outdoor spaces, leading to possible spread of COVID-19.	Anyone at the University of Essex	<p>University of Essex – Premises Policy Guidance Note PGN-COVID-19 Premises has been formalised.</p> <p>The UoE is following Public Health England guidance on social distancing and hand washing. Backed up with signage and comms.</p> <p>Staff numbers limited to allow distancing in open plan offices. Work from home to continue if possible, for all who do not need to attend campus to carry out their work. Under Sustained protection, a maximum of 50% of staff should be on campus at any one time.</p> <p>Managers should put “authorised access only” signage on relevant doors as appropriate.</p> <p>All teaching spaces have been risk assessed, please refer to the Covid Premises guidance for maximum occupancies. Face coverings are also strongly encouraged when travelling within buildings and when in teaching spaces</p> <p>Floor markings to support social distancing and direction.</p> <p>Maximum occupancy signs on teaching room doors.</p> <p>Running of lectures will be to strict time schedule to prevent crowding in corridors.</p> <p>Some staff members are required to wear FFP2 masks in occupied student study areas.</p>	U x Maj = Med			
Risk of vulnerable worker catching COVID-19 resulting in	Anyone at the University who is at increased vulnerability of severe	<p>Managers’ Guidance COVID-19:</p> <p>Staff will be asked to complete an individual online Covid-19 self-health risk assessment which will identify if they fall in the Red, Amber, Yellow or Green Categories.</p>	U x Maj = Med			

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serious illness or fatality.	complications if contracting the virus	<p>The staff member informs their manager which colour category they are in and managers refer only RED categories to Occupational Health (OH), completing an individual work activity risk assessment to be sent alongside this. The staff member will be sent a supplementary questionnaire from OH and an individual risk assessment will be undertaken by a clinician. Staff who are not in the red category who wish to be referred can request this from their manager.</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>				
<p>Person developing / exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, whilst on campus, leading to possible spread of Covid-19 and illness.</p> <p>Exposure to COVID-19 virus from living with someone who</p>	Anyone at the University of Essex	<p>Person exhibiting symptoms will follow Public Health Guidance on going home to isolate call NHS 119 to request a COVID-19 test. They must also report this to the COVID in-box.</p> <p>The "Staff agreement for a return to our campuses during the covid-19 pandemic" details the specific actions to be taken if they or someone they live with develops COVID-19 symptoms. This agreement must be signed off by the staff member before the end of the first day back on campus. This is also covered in Staff training and the University of Essex COVID-19 Contact Tracing and Testing procedure</p> <p>COVID-19 Alert Procedure gives details of actions to be taken and the relevant personnel to alert that an area may be contaminated with COVID-19. (This will prevent people entering the area for routine cleaning or maintenance before a COVID clean has been instigated).</p>	U x Maj = Med			

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is demonstrating COVID-19 symptoms and bringing COVID-19 risk to the University of Essex, leading to spread of the virus.						
Risk of person passing on COVID-19 due to having many duties around the university buildings.	Anyone at the University of Essex	<p>The UoE are following Public Health England guidance on social distancing and hand washing. Backed up with signage and comms.</p> <p>Wearing of face covering strongly recommended (DoE HE guidance) when working in highly populated areas.</p> <p>Controls also outlined in the “Adapting our Individual behaviours on our campuses” paper.</p> <p><i>University of Essex COVID-19 Contact Tracing and Testing procedure</i></p>	U x Maj = Med			
Risk of person passing on COVID-19 due to seeing numerous people during their work, such as	Anyone at the University of Essex	<p>The UoE are following Public Health England guidance on social distancing and hand washing. Backed up with signage and comms.</p> <p>Fitting of screens to reception areas and customer facing areas where appropriate.</p> <p><i>University of Essex COVID-19 Contact Tracing procedure</i></p>	U x Maj = Med			

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working in catering.		Procedure for access to Accommodation Buildings during the COVID-19 Pandemic. (This details the wearing of FFP3 masks in all occupied accommodation areas).				
Travel to and from work where there is possible exposure to COVID-19.	Anyone at the University of Essex	The UoE are following Public Health England guidance on social distancing and hand washing. Backed up with signage and comms. The opportunity to work from home remains, if this is agreed by the Head of Section/Department based on operational needs. This can reduce the need for use of public transport.	U x Maj = Med			