

Return to Work on Campus

HR Guide for Managers and Leaders

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1. Introduction

Human Resources has developed this guide to assist managers in planning and overseeing the campus reintegration activities of their units. As such, this document aims to:

- Inform managers of the HR practices that must be followed before and during the full return to campus.
- Foster a work environment that complies with provincial and City of Ottawa public health guidelines.
- Apply the lessons learned from faculties and services whose employees have been working on campus throughout the pandemic.

If you are faced with complex questions involving the workplace or relations with your direct reports, your HR business partner or HR manager can help and, if necessary, can call on other human resources experts or other University departments to support you.

2. Returning to Work on Campus

2.1 Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination

The University has established a mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Policy (Policy 129), in accordance with the instructions of the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and the recommendations of the Ontario Council of Medical Officers of Health. The University is legally bound to ensure compliance with this policy. The University of Ottawa requires COVID-19 vaccination for all faculty, staff and visitors.

The health of our community is important and is our shared responsibility. Employees are required to certify their vaccination status through the [COVID-19 Vaccination Declaration online tool](#). New employees are required to certify their vaccination status prior to their anticipated start date.

If you have any questions regarding the above or a particular situation that presents itself, contact your HR business partner or HR manager.

Please visit regularly the University of Ottawa Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination web page.

2.2 Orientation session before resuming work on campus

Health and safety are at the forefront of uOttawa's campus reintegration plans. The University has adopted various proactive measures to ensure a healthy, safe, work and study environment for all members of our community returning to the campus, including the development of the [COVID-19 — Returning to Work on Campus: Protecting Yourself and Others](#) online orientation program. We recommend that employees complete this orientation, which aims to ensure that employees are familiar with the changes implemented on campus and what they must do every day to ensure their health and safety and that of others.

2.3. Wellbeing and mental health

The transition back to campus may be difficult for some employees: they may need to continue to adapt to the extensive impact of the pandemic, deal with family obligations (such as childcare or eldercare), or have concerns about their health or that of their family. Listen carefully to employees and speak to them

as issues arise. Remind them of the importance of self-care and of accessing the resources in place to help them cope. Since the start of the pandemic, we have added many resources to the [Health and Wellness website](#). They are now available to all employee groups, including contract employees.

- [Employee and Family Assistance Program](#)
- [COVID-19 mental health and wellness information for employees](#)
- [Ottawa Public Health](#)
- [City of Gatineau — COVID-19](#)

2.4 COVID-19 Assessment Tool

2.4.1 COVID-19 Daily Health Check-In

As recommended by Ottawa Public Health recommendations and in accordance with uOttawa requirements, everyone who comes to campus must complete the University's COVID-19 [Daily Health Check-In to screen for COVID-19 prior to reporting to work each day](#). This is to prevent anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, or who may have been exposed to COVID-19, from entering the workplace.

Managers are asked to regularly remind employees to complete the daily health check-in questionnaire in advance and **not to report to work if they or someone in their household are sick or have symptoms**.

It's important that **you not report to work if you or someone who lives in your household is sick or has symptoms related to COVID-19**. This is critical to limiting the spread of the virus on campus. Symptoms are outlined in the daily assessment tool.

If you must stay home

Advise your supervisor of your absence. Please follow the guidelines for self-isolation based on your primary residence. Please see the links below regarding isolation requirements per region. Should you have further questions, or your leave must be extended for any reason please connect with Health and Wellness and the Senior Health and Accommodation Advisor will be assigned to your faculty or service will connect with you as soon as possible.

- [Instructions for people with COVID-19 | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](#)
- [Information for those who have symptoms, test positive for COVID-19 and high-risk contacts - Ottawa Public Health](#)

2.5 Modified Work Arrangements

In developing the reintegration plans for your unit, you may consider implementing a variety of modified work arrangements to: enable a progressive return to work; address issues related to space; address issues related to compliance with public health guidelines; or minimize the spread of COVID-19 within large groups of employees.

Some of the options you may want to explore are:

- Adjusting the work schedule (rotating shifts, staggering days of work, or crew schedules)
- Telework
- Temporary “office hoteling” of a workspace
- Working in alternate locations on campus

Note that some of these options may require union agreement. Please check with your HR business partner or HR manager before implementing any changes.

2.6 If members of your team have concerns about returning to work on campus

Since employees have been working from home for many months, you can expect different reactions to the idea of returning to work on campus. Some employees may be eager to see their colleagues in person, some may be ready to return but worried about their health and safety, and some may have concerns about returning because of health issues or family obligations.

Employees may submit a request for accommodations for medical or family reasons. If they feel comfortable doing so, your subordinates who have concerns may share them with you directly. If they do not feel comfortable sharing their concerns with you, they can [contact Health and Wellness](#), or the [Office of Risk Management \(ORM\)](#), or their union representative.

2.7 Vaccination

2.7.1 Request for accommodation on medical grounds

An employee can request an accommodation on medical grounds but they will be required to provide documents supporting their request from their healthcare provider. This will be clearly explained to the employee when they use the [COVID-19 Vaccination Declaration tool to request an accommodation](#).

2.7.2 Accommodations for Religion/Creed

Employees must submit their request using the [COVID-19 Vaccination Declaration](#) tool.

Those faculty or staff members who have been granted an accommodation, or who are waiting for accommodation approval, will be required to undergo testing at least twice per seven-day period here on campus.

2.8 Accommodations for reasons related to a medical condition

If an employee reports having a medical condition that would prevent or complicate their return to campus, or impact their ability to comply with a safety rule (e.g. wearing a mask), advise them to contact the Health and Wellness team. Health and Wellness will determine the employee’s fitness to return to work on campus by conducting an accommodation assessment and/or will confirm limitations to the supervisor. The University must seek alternate solutions and may need to create an alternate plan to ensure workplace health and safety.

The University of Ottawa recognizes that employees with disabilities and underlying medical conditions are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Some employees may face new accessibility barriers in

the workplace, and it may be difficult for them to maintain physical distancing or get around in altered workspaces. Hearing- or vision-impaired persons may encounter difficulties with signage, instructions, and new work procedures. An inclusive return to campus approach will help remove some of these barriers. Measures to accommodate employees will be needed.

If you have any questions regarding the process outlined above, or about a particular situation, contact your HR business partner or HR manager.

2.9 Accommodations for reasons related to family status

This process was developed to help managers respond to requests for accommodations to deal with family obligations. It aims to ensure that requests for accommodation related to family status are reviewed objectively, while considering how a particular request affects the team and the operations of the work unit. It also allows for managers to gather all the relevant information needed to make a decision and address any concerns raised.

Managers have a legal obligation to consider requests for accommodation based on the context and in good faith.

Requests for accommodation need to be assessed individually based on the context. Managers must consider the points listed below to fully assess the employee's request.

- What is the nature of the caregiving obligation that affects or conflicts with the employee's ability to fulfill their work obligations?
- Is the child or parent under the care or supervision of the employee?
- Is there a need for accommodation based on an essential or legal obligation that stems from the parent-child relationship?
- Does the employee have a power of attorney requiring them to make medical decisions for their parent?
- Are there other supports or caregiving arrangements available to the employee? Is the employee a single parent or an only child?
- Are there other people, such as a spouse, partner, or teenage or adult family member, or day or elder care facility, available to help provide care?
- Does the child or parent have a disabling condition for which special care is required? Is the employee providing the special care?
- Is the employee requesting not to return to work on campus because a family member has a chronic medical condition and may be at increased risk of hospitalization or severe complications related to COVID-19?
- Does the request for accommodation stem from an essential obligation or is it a preference?
- Do the hours of work or the job duties cause a real disadvantage for the employee based on their individual circumstances?
- What type of accommodation is the employee requesting?
- What is the duration of the accommodation the employee is requesting? Is it temporary or permanent?
- Is the accommodation needed only until more permanent arrangements for childcare or elder care are made?

The decision regarding the accommodation request should be communicated to the employee in writing and in a timely manner. The reasons for the decision should be clearly outlined and documented. If the request is approved, the manager must describe in writing the nature of the accommodation, work schedule, expectations, means of communication, availability, and the length of time the accommodation will be in place before it is reviewed.

Possible accommodation measures may include:

- changing work shifts, or job or task-sharing
- shift work within child/parental care limitations
- flexible start times or altered work hours
- transfer to a different work location
- time off consistent with Policy 9a and leave provisions in collective agreements to attend a child's or parent's medical appointments
- unpaid leave of absence where paid leave provisions have been exhausted

HR managers and business partners can provide advice to managers to support them in assessing and implementing the accommodation. They can also provide guidance on accommodation as it relates to collective agreements and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. Health and Wellness should only be consulted if the employee is asked to provide medical information to document that their family member has a disabling or chronic medical condition. The employee should be instructed to [email Health and Wellness](#) and provide the medical documentation.

Employees can [email the Human Resources Benefits Team](#) to learn more about the provincial unpaid leave provisions that apply under the *Employment Standards Act*, such as family responsibility leave, family medical leave, family caregiver leave, critical illness leave, and infectious disease emergency leave.

2.10 Ergonomics

If new work practices or changes to the work environment have been implemented in your faculty or service in response to COVID-19, consider whether an ergonomic assessment should be conducted to identify any accommodation factors. Please refer to the [Ergonomics webpage](#) on the Health and Wellness website for more information.

Employees and supervisors can [request an ergonomic assessment to evaluate the risk factors for musculoskeletal difficulties](#). Since supervisors are responsible for the health and safety of their employees, they should be notified of the request for an ergonomic assessment. For additional resources and tools, please refer to the [Leading through COVID-19 website](#).

2.11 If an employee has symptoms, or tests positive for COVID-19

Remind employees regularly that if they become ill while at work, they must isolate themselves immediately.

Employees who think they have COVID-19 symptoms should immediately contact you and self-isolate until they can safely leave the workplace. For immediate emergency medical assistance, call Protection Services.

If the employee cannot drive their own vehicle home, advise them not to use public transportation and to call a family member or a taxi instead. Remind the employee to wear a mask, wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before getting into the vehicle and to sit in the back seat with the window open. If the employee takes a taxi, record the company, name and number of the operator. Taxi fees will be covered by the employer.

All absences from work for support staff should be recorded in the FAST leave management system as per usual. COVID-related absences must be entered under the “COVID” category. Please review isolation requirements for staff who are deemed high-risk or have symptoms of COVID-19.

- [Instructions for people with COVID-19 | Gouvernement du Québec \(quebec.ca\)](https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/covid-19/instructions-for-people-with-covid-19)
- [Information for those who have symptoms, test positive for COVID-19 and high-risk contacts - Ottawa Public Health](https://www.ottawa.ca/en/health/covid-19/information-for-those-who-have-symptoms-test-positive-for-covid-19-and-high-risk-contacts)

2.12 Work refusal under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the provisions of the *Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act* continue to apply, including the employee’s right to refuse unsafe work. Although the University has implemented a number of measures to meet public health requirements and ensure employee health and safety, an employee who feels unsafe may initiate a work refusal in accordance with the [established University work refusal procedure](#).

In the event of a work refusal, contact the Office of Risk Management. This office will contact a [worker member of the Health and Safety Committee](#).

2.13 COVID-19 Safety Measures: Managing Rule Breaches

Safety measures adopted by the University are intended in part to demonstrate that we understand and respect our obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

Important considerations

- Staff members must understand their shared responsibility in respecting all workplace safety measures.
- It is important that managers consistently apply the University’s regulations and policies.
- Like all employers, the University of Ottawa has an obligation to implement such safety measures to manage pandemic risks.
- These measures are clear, reasonable, and are part of the University of Ottawa’s obligations under the *Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

In accordance with the standard procedure, a staff member who violates a workplace policy or guideline must provide an explanation that the University deems acceptable. There may be a medical reason for not following a safety rule (e.g. not wearing a mask). If this is the case, please follow the process outlined in section 2.3. It is important to give employees the opportunity to address any potential violation of University policy and for the University to explain from the outset our expectations and shared responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Failure to abide by the rules may result in disciplinary action.

If you need help managing a failure to follow rules, contact your HR business partner or HR manager.

3. Resources

3.1 Leading through COVID-19

Human Resources has created webpage titled [Leading through COVID-19](#) that includes a [toolbox with resources](#) for managers and executives across the campus. It contains information on:

- Leading virtual teams
- Develop your resilience
- Taking care of yourself and of your employees
- Continue to grow and apply your mobilizing leadership skills
- Training sessions via Microsoft Teams
 - Developmental coaching
 - Express coaching
 - Action learning groups

Should you have any questions regarding the services available, please contact your HR business partner or HR manager.

3.2 Procedure for new or lost employee cards

- The employee must take a picture of themselves, preferably against a white or neutral wall (no objects on the wall), and save the picture in JPEG format.
- The employee must email the picture to HRinfo@uOttawa.ca with the subject line “Employee card request — 100#####” (with the hashes indicating the employee number).
- If the employee’s file is up to date, Human Resources will print the card and send it by internal mail to the employee’s faculty or service. It is important that faculties and services have someone on site to receive internal mail.

3.3 University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) coverage

[University Health Insurance Plan](#) (UHIP) coverage is mandatory for all international employees and for visitors who are on campus for more than 20 days. Faculties and services must continue to follow the steps to provide UHIP coverage for employees and visitors who arrive from abroad. For more information, visit the [University Health Insurance Plan](#) website.

3.4 Contact Human Resources

- Benefits: hrbenefits@uOttawa.ca
- Leave: leaveshr@uOttawa.ca
- Employment and immigration: immigrat@uOttawa.ca
- Talent Management: hrtalentmanagement@uOttawa.ca
- HR Info: HRinfo@uOttawa.ca
- Leadership, Learning and Organizational Development: HRlearning@uOttawa.ca
- Compensation: infopay@uOttawa.ca
- Performance Management and Development program: performance@uOttawa.ca
- Pension plan: hrpension@uOttawa.ca
- Health and Wellness: hrhealth@uOttawa.ca