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1. Introduction

Dear Colleagues,

The Administrative Committee has requested the initiation of a COVID-19 recovery process for the resumption of University activities using a gradual three-stage approach mirroring that of the Ontario government. This gradual on-campus remobilization of employees will be implemented over the next several months using the concept of thirds as it relates to the pre-pandemic workforce present on campus:

- **Stage 1 (first third)** - Seeking to reach approximately one-third (33%) of normal on-campus activity/presence across all units
- **Stage 2 (second third)** – Seeking to progress to two-thirds (67%) of normal on-campus activity/presence across all units
- **Stage 3 (final third)** – Seeking to reach full (90–100%) on-campus activity/presence based on new normal operational models across all units

As part of COVID-19 prevention efforts, the University of Ottawa Human Resources Service has produced a new information guide to help managers plan for the return to work on campus of their employees after several months of lockdown.

This guide offers information on talent acquisition, health and wellness, labour relations, pay, benefits and resources available to support managers and leaders in human capital management and leadership.

This guide is evergreen and will be constantly updated as “reintegration” progresses.

This guide provides general guidance to uOttawa managers to assist you in your workforce remobilization as the University gradually resumes activities. In particular, this guide:

- Provides information to managers on HR practices that must be observed before and during the gradual reintegration of their employees on campus.
- Contributes to a work environment that supports the University of Ottawa’s response to provincial and City of Ottawa public health guidelines and directives.

We hope you will be able to successfully guide and support your employees returning to campus and fully meet the University’s academic and research mission while COVID-19 related restrictions remain in place.

2. Bringing employees back to campus

2.1. Employee concerns about returning to campus

As employees have been working from home for many months, expect different reactions when you broach the subject of returning to work on campus. Depending on their circumstances, some employees may be eager to return to see their colleagues, some may be eager to return but apprehensive about their health and safety, and some may be anxious about returning because of health or family obligation(s).
Employees who have accommodation needs or health concerns should not feel compelled to return to work on campus. Some may have personal reasons that prevent them from returning to campus under any circumstance until there is a vaccine for COVID-19. Engagement is key to effectively and safely getting people back on campus. Employees who report having concerns can speak to you directly if they feel comfortable doing so, or they can contact Health and Wellness, the Office of Risk Management or their union representative. Be understanding if the employee reports having child or elder care issues and speak with the human resources business partner or human resources manager in your faculty or service for guidance.

The University of Ottawa recognizes that employees with disabilities and underlying medical conditions are significantly and disproportionately affected by this pandemic. Some employees may face new accessibility barriers in the workplace, and it may be difficult for them to maintain physical distancing or getting around in altered workspaces. Hearing- or visually-impaired persons may encounter difficulties with signage, instructions and new work procedures. An inclusive approach to the return to campus will help remove some of these barriers, and measures to accommodate employees will be needed.

If the employee reports having a medical condition that may preclude or pose a challenge to returning to campus or having concerns about a family member with a compromised immune system, advise them to contact the Health and Wellness team. Health and Wellness will determine the employee’s fitness to return to work on campus as part of the accommodation assessment.

2.2. Assessment of ergonomic hazards

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 workplace injury risks. Based on the assessment, you may need to review work practices, change the configuration of the workspace or put controls in place. The University ergonomist is available should you require assistance with the assessment. Email her at hrhealth@uOttawa.ca.

2.3. Health self-assessment questionnaire

As persons infected with COVID-19 may have few or no symptoms, employees are encouraged to complete the Public Health Ontario self-assessment questionnaire prior to reporting to work each day. This is to prevent anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or anyone who may have been exposed to COVID-19 from entering the workplace. Reassure employees that the results of the self-assessment will not be shared with you, their faculty or service, or Health and Wellness. Remind employees regularly that they should not report to work if they are sick. Also remind employees to complete the self-assessment questionnaire before reporting to work, as this is critical to limiting the spread of the virus on campus.

When employees complete the self-assessment questionnaire they will be asked if:

- They are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms
- They have been in close contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with or who has had COVID-19 symptoms in the last 14 days
- They have a compromised immune system or chronic health condition or if they are 70 years of age or older

If an employee answers yes to any of the above, they will be told to stay home, isolate themselves from others and, depending on their circumstances, contact their health care provider.
Employees told to stay home must inform you of their absence via email. Tell them to email Health and Wellness at hrhealth@uOttawa.ca for follow-up.

In the email to Health and Wellness, employees should indicate their name, contact information (phone number or preferred email) and unit, and the result of the self-assessment.

You should also inform Health and Wellness at the above email address of the employee’s absence. The senior health and accommodation adviser assigned to your faculty or service will contact the employee and determine if they need to self-isolate and get tested for COVID-19 or if they can return to work.

2.4. Required orientation session before returning to work on campus

COVID-19 — Returning to Work on Campus: Protecting Yourself and Others

Health and safety are at the forefront of uOttawa’s plans as we prepare, as part of Phase 1 of our return, to gradually ramp up our research activities and course offerings for the summer and fall 2020 terms. The University has taken proactive protective measures to create a healthy and safe work and study environment for those returning to campus. The past few months of confinement have given us the opportunity to evaluate and mobilize the resources needed to plan a healthy and safe environment in response to COVID-19 for uOttawa community members.

Prior to returning to work on campus, each employee is asked to:

- Complete the COVID-19 Returning to Work on Campus: Protecting Yourself and Others orientation.
  The goal of the session is to ensure that employees are familiar with the changes implemented on campus and what they are encouraged to do daily to ensure their health and safety and that of others when they return.
- In addition to completing the Returning to Work on Campus: Protecting Yourself and Others session, employees who must work on campus are encouraged to complete the Public Health Ontario self-assessment questionnaire.

2.5. Employees who get sick at work

Remind employees regularly that if they become ill while at work, they must isolate themselves immediately. As part of the orientation specific to your work area, employees should be informed which areas will be used for self-isolation in your faculty or service. These areas should be clearly identified and used only for people who need to self-isolate until they can safely exit the workplace.

Employees complaining of COVID-19 symptoms should immediately contact you and self-isolate until they can safely leave the workplace. Call Protection Services if an employee requires immediate medical assistance.

If the employee cannot drive their own vehicle home, advise them not to use public transportation. Arrangements for a ride with a family member or by taxi should be made. The employee should wear a mask and wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before getting into the vehicle, as well as sit in the back seat and open the window. If the employee takes a taxi, record the company, name and number of the operator.

Email Health and Wellness at hrhealth@uOttawa.ca to inform the section that the employee reported feeling unwell and has left the workplace, and complete an Accident, Incident, Occupational Illness or
Near Miss report form. The Health and Wellness senior health and accommodation adviser will contact the employee to determine what follow-up measures are needed.

The work area, tools and or equipment and common areas (such as washrooms, kitchenettes or the self-isolation area) accessed by the employee should immediately be cleaned and disinfected in the manner outlined by Facilities and ORM.

The employee should also email Health and Wellness at hrhealth@uOttawa.ca, and include their name, contact information (phone number or preferred email) and unit.

The senior health and accommodation advisor will contact the employee and, depending on the circumstances, determine how long they need to self-isolate, and whether they must get tested and/or seek medical care. Medical staff will determine the duration of their absence, if applicable. You will be informed of this, as well as if special measures to limit the spread of the virus in the workplace are needed. It is important to protect the privacy of the employee. Health and Wellness will inform you if other employees need to be informed of the incident and if they must self-isolate or get tested. The senior health and accommodation adviser will keep in contact with employee as needed and advise you when the employee can resume work on campus. All absences from work for administrative and support staff should be recorded in the FAST leave management system as per usual. Employees absent because of COVID-19 will be told to enter leave using the COVID sick leave category.

2.6. Work refusal under the Occupational Health and Safety Act

During COVID-19, the provisions of the Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act continue to apply, including the employee’s right to refuse unsafe work. All employees have a right to a work environment that protects their health and safety and the University has a legal obligation to take all reasonable precautions to protect employees from injury and illness. Employees who fear contracting the virus may refuse work if they believe their jobs or work assigned to them may create a danger to their health.

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.

Should an employee refuse work, contact the Office of Risk Management. A member of the ORM team will contact a worker member of the Health and Safety Committee.

2.7. COVID 19 Safety Measures: Managing Non-compliance Issues

As we continue with a gradual return to campus, the University has established and shared information on safety measures that support staff and faculty are expected to follow when on campus. Managers and deans must reinforce the need for compliance and ensure adherence to the workplace directives, policies and guidelines.

Safety measures put in place by the University serve, in part, to demonstrate our understanding and compliance with our heightened obligations under Ontario’s Occupational Health and Safety Act.

As per the standard process, if employees fail to comply with workplace policies or directives, they must provide an explanation acceptable to the University. It is important that employees be provided an opportunity to explain any failure to follow University directives and that efforts be made at the outset to ensure employees understand expectations of them and their shared obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Continued failure to comply can result in disciplinary measures.
For support in managing non-compliance issues, contact your Human Resources business partner or Human Resources manager.

**Medical reasons for non-compliance**

Some employees may have medical reasons for not complying with a safety measure, for example, wearing a mask. An employee who cannot comply with a safety measure and is requesting to be relieved of the obligation to comply with it is essentially requesting a workplace accommodation.

The University will require that medical evidence be provided to support such a request. This will validate the employee’s claim, help determine the extent to which the employee might be able to comply with safety measures (for example, wearing the mask for a pre-determined period) and allow the University to effectively respond to the request while meeting our obligations to ensure the safety of other employees.

When employees cannot wear a mask, managers should examine alternative work arrangements and possibly devise plans for how these employees should navigate the work environment.

To initiate the accommodation process and develop a plan for such employees, contact your Human Resources business partner or manager or health and wellness adviser. Accommodation plans should not be implemented without the involvement of your health and wellness adviser.

**Some important considerations:**

- It is key that employees understand that they share responsibility for compliance with safety measures in the workplace.
- It is important that our policies and directives be consistently enforced by leadership across the University.
- All University managers must effectively address the potential risks and liabilities associated with the pandemic by introducing these safety measures.
- The measures put in place are reasonable and clear and, crucially, are required under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

**2.8. Well-being and mental health**

The transition back to campus may be difficult for some employees, as they continue to adjust to the various effects of the pandemic, and deal with family obligations, such as child or elder care or concerns about their health and that of their family. Listen carefully and talk with employees 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, many resources to help employees have been added to the Health and Wellness website and access to short-term counselling is now available for all employee groups, including contract employees.

- Employee and Family Assistance Program
- COVID-19 mental health and wellness information for employees
- Ottawa Public Health
- Ville de Gatineau, COVID-19

2.9. A new normal

It is important to keep our new reality in mind, as the individual and team experience of returning to campus will vary. Some employees and teams may experience challenges before they return or on their return to campus. Don’t underestimate the impact of coming back to a campus that does not look like or operate the same as the one we left back in early March. Employees are not only navigating the physical changes to the campus but also dealing with their personal experience of this evolving situation.

You can be assured that Human Resources will use a case management approach to provide holistic advice when you are faced with complex labour and employee relations matters. Your Human Resources business partner or Human Resources manager will work with relevant HR experts and, if necessary, other services across the organization to best support you.

For support to manage challenges associated with employee responses as we advance through each phase of recovery, including such things as requests for alternative scheduling arrangements or employee refusal to complete the return to campus orientation, contact your Human Resources business partner or manager.

3. Staffing procedures

3.1. Workforce requests for support staff

Given the increasing importance of optimizing resources, University senior leadership has put in place monitoring measures for workforce requests. To simplify the process, a form has been created to channel all workforce requests.

A workforce request form must be submitted for all support staff workforce requests: regular or contract positions, contract renewals, additional temporary resources and short-term contracts without posting.

Workforce requests are reviewed on a regular basis and are processed within two weeks of receipt.

3.2. Hiring temporary staff

Temporary staff should only be hired for a limited period, when required to reduce the impact of an occasional work overload or employee absence.
Procedure to follow:

- When a temporary need arises, the faculty or service completes a workforce request form and consults the Human Resources Talent Acquisition and Workforce Planning team, to jointly determine the steps to take to fill the temporary position.
- The HR Talent Acquisition and Workforce Planning team recommends options to fill the need, including using existing talent pools.
- Should the options presented not achieve the desired results, the faculty or service can then explore the possibility of using a recruitment firm or temporary help agency to fill the need.

Procedure for using an external recruitment firm:

- The Human Resources Talent Acquisition and Workforce Planning team determines the recruitment firm or temporary help agency to approach and follows up as needed.
- The recruitment firm presents and recommends potential candidates to the faculty or service.
- The faculty or service chooses a candidate for the position.
- The Human Resources Talent Acquisition and Workforce Planning team determines compensation and negotiates an agreement with the recruitment firm or hiring agency.

All temporary employees must participate in mandatory training when starting their job. See the list of mandatory training sessions.

4. Resources to foster employee engagement and a climate of trust

4.1 Leading through COVID-19

Human Resources has created this toolbox with resources for managers and executives across the campus:

- 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

4.2 Express Coaching

We have created a virtual, customized, on-demand Express Coaching service to meet your needs. Express Coaching will assist you in exercising motivational leadership, recognizing your employees and fostering their engagement in these exceptional times.

Managers in the Leadership Development Program expressed the need for on-the-spot, goal-focused discussions as often as necessary, especially during COVID-19, to manage stress, think clearly, ensure self-care and support their employees’ well-being with extraordinary change happening at lightening speed.
Express coaching is common in organizations that favour a human-centric leadership approach — essential in times of crisis! We wish to support you and your employees — because you matter and we care!

Express Coaching consists of 45-minute in-the-moment sessions with a certified coach that take place at opportune times throughout the workday through MS Teams, Zoom or Skype.

**Set up a discussion with a coach**

4.3 Action Learning Groups for managers and leaders: Developing leadership and coaching skills in action

- Are you looking for quick, effective, innovative solutions?
- Do you want to hone your leadership and management skills?
- Would you like to be part of a small group of professionals looking to improve their leadership in keeping with Transformation 2030?
- Are you trying to create a setting in which you can reflect and innovate?
- Do you believe that effectiveness matters?

To join a group, email HR Learning.

5. Distance 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 it as a JPEG.
- The employee must email the picture to HRinfo@uOttawa.ca with the subject line “Employee card request — 100#######” (the employee’s number).
- When we receive the picture, we check the employee’s status in Banner.
- If the employee’s file is up to date, we print the card and send it by internal mail to the employee’s faculty or service. It is important for faculties and services to have someone onsite to receive internal mail.

6. University Health Insurance Plan (UHIP) coverage

*University Health Insurance Plan* (UHIP) coverage is mandatory for all international employees and visitors on campus for more than 20 days. Faculties and services must continue to follow the steps for UHIP coverage for employees and visitors who arrive from abroad.

Employees and visitors with at least a six-month work permit are eligible for provincial health insurance:

- Those residing temporarily in Ontario for at least six months must apply to the *Ontario Health Insurance Plan* (OHIP) through ServiceOntario.
- Those residing temporarily in Quebec for at least six months must apply for RAMQ coverage.

UHIP coverage must be purchased for the waiting period.

Visitors without a work permit or those staying in Canada for less than six months are not eligible for provincial health insurance and must purchase UHIP coverage for the length of their stay at the University.
Faculties and services must continue to follow the steps for UHIP coverage when work permits for employees and visitors already in Canada are renewed. To extend or renew a work permit, employees and visitors must:

- Request the work permit renewal before the current work permit expires. See the work permit processing times.
- Purchase UHIP coverage when their current work permit expires.

Steps to follow:

- Email HR Info at HRinfo@uOttawa.ca. Provide the necessary documents: work permit, proof of renewal of work permit, proof of application for provincial health insurance.
- HR Info determines if coverage is necessary. If it is, it prepares the documents and accepts Visa or MasterCard payment by phone. Unfortunately, Info HR can’t accept payment by debit or credit debit card (e.g., Visa Debit).
- Once payment is made, documents are emailed to the employee or visitor (e.g., copy of the Visa or MasterCard receipt, copy of UHIP payment receipt, copy of UHIP card).

7. Contact Human Resources

- Benefits: hrbenefits@uOttawa.ca
- Compensation: infopay@uOttawa.ca
- Employment and Immigration: immigrat@uOttawa.ca
- Health and Wellness: hrhealth@uOttawa.ca
- HR Info: HRinfo@uOttawa.ca
- Labour Relations: hr_labo(u)@uOttawa.ca
- Leadership, Learning and Organizational Development: hrlearning@uottawa.ca
- Leaves: leaveshr@uOttawa.ca
- Pension Plan: hrpension@uOttawa.ca
- Performance Management and Development Program: performance@uOttawa.ca
- Talent Management: hrtalentmanagement@uOttawa.ca