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 with the planning and oversight of campus reintegration activities of their respective Units. As such, this document aims to:

- Inform managers about HR practices that must be observed during the gradual return to campus.
- Contribute to a work environment that facilitates compliance with provincial and City of Ottawa public health guidelines.
- Leverage lessons learned from faculties and services who have had employees working on campus throughout the pandemic to assist in development of reintegration plans for your respective units.

If you are faced with complex questions involving the workplace or relations with those who report to you, HR Business Partner or HR Manager can help. As needed, your HR business partner or your HR manager may call on other human resources experts or other University departments to support you.

2. Returning to Work on Campus

2.1. Modified Work Arrangements

In developing the reintegration plans for your respective Unit, you may consider implementing a variety of modified work arrangements to enable a progressive return to work, address issues related to space, address compliance issues with public health guidelines, or to minimize cross-contamination amongst large groups of employees.

Options that can be explored include, but are not limited to the following:

- Adjustments to scheduled hours of work or days of work (rotating shifts, staggering days of work, or crew schedules)
- Telework
- Temporary “office hoteling” of a workspace
- Working in alternate locations on campus

Note: some of the proposed solutions outlined above may require unique agreements with unions. Please consult with your Human Resources professional before implementing any changes.

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

As employees have been working from home for many months, expect different reactions to the idea of returning to work on campus. Some employees may be eager to see their colleagues in person, some are ready to return but apprehensive about their health and safety, and some may have concerns about returning because of health issues or family obligations.
Employees may make a request to be accommodated for medical or family reasons. If they feel comfortable, your subordinates with concerns can share them directly with you. If not, they can contact Health and Wellness at hrhealthOttawa.ca, the Office of Risk Management (ORM) at safety@uottawa.ca or their union representative.

2.3. 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. not 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, and the University must seek alternate solutions and may have 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 a particular situation that presents itself, contact your HR business partner or HR manager.

2.4. Accommodations for Reasons Related to Family Status

This process was developed to help managers respond to requests for accommodations to deal with family obligations, as many employees continue to struggle to balance work and home responsibilities. 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 can include:

• changing work shifts, or job or task-sharing
• shift work within child/parental care limitations
• flexible start time/altered work hours
• transfer to a different work location
• time off consistent with Policy 9a and collective agreement leave provisions 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 Team to learn more about the provincial unpaid leave provisions under the Employment Standards Act that apply such as family responsibility leave, family medical leave, family caregiver leave, critical illness leave and infectious disease emergency leave.

2.5. 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 of a home workstation or in the on-campus work environment to evaluate the risk factors for Musculo skeletal difficulties. The request can be made at healthhr@uottawa.ca. As supervisors are responsible for the health and safety of their employees, they should be informed of the request for an ergonomic assessment. For additional resources and tools please refer to the leading through COVID-19 website.

2.6. COVID-19 Self-Assessment Questionnaire

As persons infected with COVID-19 may have few or no symptoms, everyone who intends to come to campus must complete the daily self-assessment questionnaire to screen for COVID-19 prior to reporting to work each day. This process is required to prevent anyone with COVID-19 symptoms or possible exposure to COVID-19 from entering the workplace.

All self-assessment data are deleted after 30 days. Names, email addresses and the final answers (yes/no to report to work) are collected, but only the Office of Risk Management and the Health and Wellness team have access to this information.

Managers are asked to remind employees regularly to complete the self-assessment questionnaire in advance and not to report to work if they are sick or have symptoms.

If an employee answers yes to any of the questions in self-assessment questionnaire, they must stay home, get tested and contact their supervisor and email the Health and Wellness team. 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 as well. In their email to Health and Wellness, employees should indicate their name, contact information (phone number or email) and unit, and the result of the self-assessment.

The senior health and accommodation advisor of your faculty will contact the employee to ensure all public health recommendations are followed and confirm to the supervisor when the employee can resume work on campus.

2.7. Orientation Session before Resuming Work on Campus

Health and safety is at the forefront of uOttawa’s campus reintegration plans. The University has adopted various proactive measures to offer a healthy, safe work and study environment on campus to
all members of our community returning to the campus, including the development of a virtual the COVID-19 — Returning to Work on Campus: Protecting Yourself and Others orientation program. We recommend that employees complete this orientation, the goal of which is to ensure that employees are familiar with the changes implemented on campus and what they must do daily to ensure their health and safety and that of others when they return.

2.8. If an employee gets sick at work

Remind employees regularly that if they become ill while at work, they must isolate themselves immediately. As part of the orientation session 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.

Employees who think they have COVID-19 symptoms should immediately contact you and self-isolate until they can safely leave the workplace. For immediate 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.

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

The work area, tools 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 the Office of Risk Management (ORM).

The employee should also inform 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 to ensure all public health recommendations are followed. Health and Wellness will confirm duration of absence and ability to resume work on campus as per Public Health guidelines. Medical staff will determine the duration of the 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 advisor will keep in contact with the employee as needed and advise you when the employee can resume work on campus. 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.
2.9. 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.

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.

2.10. 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 to respect all workplace safety measures.
- It is important that managers uniformly apply the University’s regulations and policies.
- Like all employers, the University of Ottawa has the 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 the University deems acceptable. There may be a medical reason for not following a safety rule (ex. 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.

2.11. Well-being and Mental Health

The transition back to campus may be difficult for some employees, who must continue to adapt to the extensive impact of the pandemic, deal with family obligations such as childcare or eldercare, or who have concerns about their health or that of their family. Listen carefully and speak to 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 [Mental Health and Wellness website](#). They are now available to all employee groups, including contract employees.
3. Resources

3.1. Leading through COVID-19

Human Resources has created webpage titled leading through COVID-19 which includes a 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
- Developmental Coaching
- Express Coaching
- Action Learning Groups

Should you have any questions regarding the services offered 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 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).
- If the employee’s file is up to date, Human Resources 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.

3.3. 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. For more information, please visit the link provided.
3.4. Contact Human Resources

- Benefits: hrbenefits@uOttawa.ca
- Leaves: leaveshr@uOttawa.ca
- Employment and Immigration: immigra@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
- Labour Relations: hr labour@uOttawa.ca
- Health and Wellness: hrhealth@uOttawa.ca