



Return to Campus Support

May 2022

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Government and Public Health Guidance

We continue to follow [Scottish Government](#) and [Public Health Scotland guidance](#) to ensure a safe campus for our staff, students and visitors. We will continue to review the guidance and respond to any changes accordingly.

Health and Safety Advice

We have put in place health and safety measures to ensure that the workplace is safe and to minimise any risk to staff, students, and visitors to the University. Everyone has a duty to protect their own health and safety, as well as that of their colleagues. It is essential that all staff follow the health and safety guidance that is issued and displayed throughout the University buildings.


- ✔ Face coverings are no longer legally required in indoor spaces, including all our university premises, however, the Scottish Government strongly recommends that you continue to wear a face covering in crowded and enclosed spaces.
- ✔ To protect vulnerable / at higher risk staff and students, we expect all staff and students to respect those members of our community and especially those who are either wearing a lanyard or badge, or request that others keep a safe social distance.
- ✔ Follow the Scottish Governments guidance on good hygiene principles, wash your hands frequently.
- ✔ Sanitise your hands upon arrival and exit.

To ensure a safe workplace, we will continue to ensure that appropriate risk assessments (in line with Health & Safety Executive (HSE) guidelines) are in place to protect staff, students, and visitors onto campus. Any concerns of poor health and safety practice should be raised with your Line Manager, Director or Head of Service so that they can be resolved with support from the HR, or Health and Safety teams, as required.

All Health and Safety Information and support is available [here](#).

Health and Wellbeing

We are committed to placing health and wellbeing at the heart of the experience of working at the University.



We acknowledge that returning to campus may concern some staff, following a substantial period of time away from the campus life due to the pandemic. The University offers a range of support to assist staff and managers supporting staff. These are detailed on the [Mental Health and Wellbeing intranet page](#).

Managing the Psychological Transition Back to Campus

Some staff may need to make a psychological transition of some degree when returning to campus life. Support is available to help staff with this psychological transition:

- ✔ Firstly, a reminder that a huge amount of work has taken place to ensure that the University's campuses are safe for staff, students and visitors.
- ✔ Campus tours can be arranged to help support staff with their re-orientation of the campuses (these can be organised at a department level).
- ✔ Managers should have supportive return to campus / wellbeing conversations with each member of their team prior to returning to work on campus, to establish how they are feeling about returning and if any additional support measures are required to help them return.
- ✔ Managers should continue to check-in regularly with staff to ensure continued open and honest dialogue and while also maintaining a wellbeing element of one to one meetings.
- ✔ If you are travelling to campus via public transport, Transport Scotland have produced [guidance](#) on travelling safely on public transport.


Staff who fall within a higher risk group

Some staff may be more anxious about returning to work if they are at higher risk from Covid-19. It is important to assess those staff who fall within the groups more vulnerable to the effects of Covid-19 when planning for their return to campus, however, everyone is now expected to follow the same guidance as defined by the Scottish Government. If a member of staff has specific advice from their GP, this will be reviewed alongside a referral to OH to ensure the correct support is put in place. The same applies to staff who live with someone who is in a vulnerable group. Staff should discuss any concerns with their manager who will be able to seek additional support and advice from HR.

Covid-19 Symptoms

Scottish Government advice is that they will no longer advise people to test if they have COVID-19 symptoms (effective from 1st May 2022). COVID-19 PCR Test centres closed on 30th April.

The Scottish Government advises anyone who has symptoms of COVID-19 and has a fever or are too unwell to carry out normal activities to 'stay at home' while they are unwell, in order to aid recovery and reduce the risk of passing their illness to others.



You should stay at home and avoid contact with other people if you have symptoms of a respiratory infection such as coronavirus and have a high temperature or do not feel well enough to go to work or carry out normal activities.

The University's approach to recording and managing all sickness absence has now reverted to pre-pandemic arrangements as per the [Attendance Management Policy](#).

Conducting an effective wellbeing conversation

Wellbeing conversations are intended to be regular, supportive, coaching-style one to one conversations that focus on the wellbeing of an individual with the overall aim of creating a culture where people feel valued, heard, and respected. They provide space for staff to explore their wellbeing and focus on what is important to them. They provide an opportunity for managers to ask questions, show they care, actively listen, withhold judgement, and then establish what support may be appropriate and signpost accordingly.

These conversations should consider the whole wellbeing of a colleague, such as physical; mental; emotional; social; safety and lifestyle.

They help to identify areas where colleagues may need additional support and signpost them appropriately and ensure the wellbeing is monitored. Where necessary, a Wellness Action Plan (WAP) can be put in place to help managers and colleagues continue to have supportive conversations.

When to have a wellbeing conversation

Health and wellbeing should be regularly discussed by managers and specific wellbeing conversations can be incorporated into normal 1:1's or may be implemented as a standalone conversation. Ideally, they should form part of regular 1:1's to allow them to become normal practice with both parties feeling comfortable having them. In this context, you should have a wellbeing conversation with employees who are transitioning from home working to returning to work on campus.

It is important to remember that you are not expected to provide counselling support, your role is to hold a conversation, actively listen, be compassionate and if appropriate, signpost to the most appropriate support, whether this is through HR, Health and Safety or Wellbeing resources.

Preparing for the conversation

- You should reflect on any personal considerations that may be relevant, for example if a colleague has recently experienced a bereavement, you could consider the relevant support that is available.
- Ensure you have a confidential space to hold the conversation (whether virtual or in person) which can be standalone or incorporated into an existing conversation, such as a regular 1:1.
- Familiarising yourself with the University and external support options will help you signpost the member of staff to any specific services that may be appropriate for them.

Approaching the conversation

Reassure the staff member that this confidential conversation is there to support them. You could start the conversation by simply asking them how they are and how they are feeling about returning to campus. Allow them to reflect and respond. Very often a colleague will reply with *"I'm fine"* and if you don't think that's the case you could follow up with a further question like, *"are there any areas that you have concerns about?"*. Be present, actively listen with empathy and allow the conversation to flow.

Ask further open questions if needed, such as *"is there anything that is currently having an impact on your health and wellbeing?"* or *"how can I best support you?"*. Don't be tempted to rush to a solution or action, find out as much as possible before you get to this stage. If you already have concerns for a member of staff, broach these sensitively. Share your observations carefully and allow time to listen for the response.

If the colleague is not comfortable talking about their health and wellbeing, then you can reassure them that this is okay and ensure that they are aware that you are always open to having a conversation with them at a future 1:1 or that they are welcome to follow up at a different time or with someone else.

Wellbeing conversations - Key skills

One of the most important skills you can adopt when speaking with your team is listening and this is especially important to facilitate an effective and supportive wellbeing conversation. It is important for you to understand the objectives for a productive wellbeing conversation before undertaking one otherwise it can be counterproductive and can possibly make a situation worse.

A positive Health & Wellbeing conversation is	A Health & Wellbeing conversation is not;
Caring and compassionate. You use strong listening skills and allow the employee to explore their wellbeing.	A counselling or therapy session. You are not expected to cross the boundaries and should signpost appropriately to University resources and tools.
Employee led which means you should give ample opportunity to the employee to focus the conversation where they feel comfortable. This may require a few conversations to allow the employee to feel comfortable sharing information with you.	Judgemental or performance related. You can instigate a wellbeing conversation by saying that you are worried about a change in approach to work, but it should not be used to judge the quality of work. A wellbeing conversation is used to establish if there are health and wellbeing concerns affecting work to help get to the root problem so that support can be provided.
Supportive and regular. You should be prepared to signpost to the most appropriate support and to have regular wellbeing conversations.	A formal mental health assessment as these should be carried out by a trained professional. You should access support via the HR team or signpost the employee to the most relevant support.



Identifying support

Ask them what will help to enable them to cope better with the situation. Consider any reasonable steps that could be taken to support their circumstances and try to be flexible in meeting individual needs or where appropriate, in finding reasonable alternative solutions to address concerns. Have an awareness of the University's wellbeing options, employee assistance programme and access to formal support services such as Occupational Health so that you can identify appropriate support and action signposting.

Work together to agree a plan with actions that the member of staff will take, and that you will take. Follow up with any links to signposting that you discussed and agree how and when you will regroup to review progress. Keep plans flexible so they can change in line with changing needs and maintain regular 1:1s to support this.