Loughborough University

Returning to Work on Campus

Guidance for Managers

Introduction

For many staff, the transition to remote working happened very quickly and many have become accustomed to this way of working. While it will be important for us as an institution to ensure we do not lose the flexibility and creativity in working that we have developed during the period of lockdown, it is inevitable that we'll need colleagues to return to working on campus in some form or other over the coming weeks.

The pandemic has had a big impact on people's lives and many will be cautious or even worried about the prospect of returning to work on campus. This guide aims to support managers in preparing their staff for this. It should be noted that a separate, longer term piece of work is underway to help us to identify new ways of working based on what we can learn from the experiences during lockdown.

Preparing to Return

It is important to plan the return to the workplace in advance so that you're able to deal with any concerns or queries in a timely way. Here are some initial tips:

- Engage early with the H&S requirements, such as completing a risk assessment and preparing the building for re-opening. See https://learn.lboro.ac.uk/enrol/index.php?id=14766 for further details.

- Share your plans and risk assessments, once approved, with the campus unions so that they're aware of the arrangements and can support their members accordingly.
    - Unison – Sandy Edwards (S.P.Edwards@lboro.ac.uk)
    - Unite – Graham Moody (G.P.Moody@lboro.ac.uk) and Spencer Aryeetey (S.Areyeetey@lboro.ac.uk)
    - UCU – Alec Edworthy (A.Edworthy@lboro.ac.uk), Sue Hignett (S.M.Hignett@lboro.ac.uk) and Marc Gibson (M.A.Gibson@lboro.ac.uk)

- Start talking to your colleagues now about returning to campus. Share your plans for the building with them so they can understand the practical measures that are being put into place to ensure their safety.

- Encourage colleagues to work together to plan the return to campus.

- Encourage colleagues who have any concerns to discuss these with you now so that you can work together ahead of any return to campus (further information is available below).

- Where feasible, arrange for members of the team to return to their work building for a short visit so they can visualise how working back on campus will operate.

- Make it clear that there is no expectation or requirement for staff to work exclusively on campus at this time, unless of course their role requires it. Discuss with your team how a rota can be established to enable colleagues to work remotely and on campus wherever possible.

- Ensure that all staff have completed the online training prior to returning to campus or in the small number of cases where this is not possible, that provisions are made to enable this prior to staff starting any work. (See H&S link above.)

Personal circumstances

There are a number of personal circumstances that may make people more nervous about returning to work on campus. Similarly, some will have circumstances that make it difficult for them to do so. These include:

- Having an underlying heath condition
- Colleagues who may be disproportionately affected by Covid-19 such as members of the BAME community or those over the age of 70
- Being pregnant
- Having health issues that make them vulnerable to Covid-19
- Having a close family member that they are living with or have caring responsibilities for who fall into any of the categories above
- Having childcare responsibilities due to the closure or partial closure of schools or nurseries

In addition, you may find that you have some staff who have none of the above, but who are nevertheless reluctant to return to working on campus.

It will be very important for you to talk to people who have expressed any concerns to offer them support and to reassure them about the arrangements being put into place to keep them safe while on campus. Your HR Partner can support you with this. Here are some tips you might want to consider:

- If you are aware that a colleague falls into one of the categories above, you should make contact with them to offer your support to them pro-actively rather than waiting for them to contact you.

- Consider a referral to Occupational Heath for further advice on any health issues.

- Prepare an individualised risk assessment to address specific concerns which could include identifying whether any personal protective equipment (PPE) could be issued.

- Allow teams to work together to agree how arrangements for returning to campus can be agreed.

Reaching a situation where an individual feels comfortable to return to campus is the ideal position. However, there may be an exceptional case where agreement cannot be reached. In this situation it will be important for you to discuss how to resolve this with the support of your HR Partner.

You should also discuss any cases with your HR Partner where colleagues have retained childcare responsibilities as a result of choosing not to allow their child to return to school or nursery.

Following Return

Once your colleagues are back working on campus, it will be important to monitor the situation so that you're able to deal with any issues quickly and effectively. Here are some further tips:

- Check in with your colleagues regularly to see how they are and to deal with any concerns or queries that they may have.

- If your teams are working on a rota basis, ensure that you manage your time so that you are on campus at different times and are therefore able to meet with all members of your team face to face.

- Follow up on the risk assessments to make sure that they are being complied with and intervene quickly if they aren't. It may be necessary to make changes to working practices once people are back working on campus. Make sure that you liaise with the relevant colleagues in H&S when doing so.

- Encourage a culture that enables people to speak up if they're feeling uncomfortable (e.g. if someone isn't complying with the social distancing rules). Ensure that those who don't feel comfortable doing this directly know

that they should speak to their line manager.

- Listen to the concerns of your team and act on them.

- Continue to manage holiday effectively to make sure appropriate staffing levels are maintained at all times.

- Remind colleagues regularly that if they develop symptoms of Covid-19 (https://www.lboro.ac.uk/internal/coronavirus/public-health-advice/) that they must remain away from campus. If they are well enough (and their role allows it) they can work remotely.

Furloughed Staff

Staff who have been placed on furlough may have had a considerable period out of the workplace and it's therefore important that they are re-inducted into the workplace effectively so that they can resume their work. You may wish to consider:

- Holding team meetings (with appropriate social distancing) to update them on any changes to the workplace and work practices.

- Having one to one meetings/telephone calls with those who have known personal circumstances described above so that their concerns can be addressed prior to their return to campus.

Colleagues in H&S (https://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/health-safety/about/) and your HR Partner (https://www.lboro.ac.uk/services/hr/contact/contactyourpartnerteam/) are available to support you with any aspect of supporting your staff to return to working on campus.