



POST-PANDEMIC WORKPLACE TOOLKIT

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In the following report, Hanover Research presents a workplace toolkit designed to aggregate strategies that foster a healthy and safe workplace in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

To assist University A as it embarks upon its post-pandemic planning process, Hanover developed a workplace toolkit to identify key strategies for protecting employee health and safety upon their return to the office. The toolkit aims to provide an introduction to key areas for consideration prior to resuming operations, as well as resources for additional reading.

The following analysis is based on a review of information drawn from institutional websites as well as publicly available sources, including higher education associations, departments of health, and newspaper articles. While the toolkit aims to provide the most up-to-date information as of May 2020, many universities are currently in the midst of planning their return to campus, and guidance is likely to evolve in the coming months.

KEY CONCEPTS

Prior to re-occupancy, higher education institutions must consider both the physical layout of their offices as well as the human resources policies necessary to maximize employee health and safety. Administrators should work with facilities management to ensure that building conditions minimize the risk of virus transmission. Such tactics can include conducting a deep cleaning of office buildings or reorganizing the layout of employee workspaces to minimize contact between individuals. Additionally, institutions will need to adopt appropriate policies and procedures to protect employee health. Policies may involve COVID-19 screening and/or flexible work scheduling.

This report will broadly cover the following topics:



- Physical buildings
- Office spaces
- Staff training and equipment
- Scheduling practices
- Health and wellness

Additionally, institutions must provide the support services necessary to assist faculty in effective classroom leadership, in spite of pandemic conditions. Institutions can aim to provide professional development and mentoring opportunities to faculty members, who are likely unaccustomed to the uncertainty in course modality fueled by the pandemic.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What safety protocols and procedures are employers developing to encourage social distancing and maximize employee safety in the post-pandemic office?
- Are there any safety considerations and policies that are unique to the higher education sector?
- What additional support services should be offered to faculty in beginning the fall semester?

SAFETY PROTOCOLS AND PROCEDURES

PHYSICAL BUILDINGS



Facilities staff will have a large role in enacting appropriate maintenance and cleaning procedures to maximize the safety of employees returning to individual buildings. However, higher education administrators will have a role in determining the usage and occupancy of different spaces, as well as procedures for accepting outside visitors.

Reduce overall occupancy to limit exposure, and close spaces that are unoccupied.

Develop a controlled sign-in procedure to track and monitor every person who enters buildings.

Establish a procedure for deep cleaning using safe, non-toxic cleaning products, including the cleaning of regular touchpoints.

Monitor building and room use, and forward information to cleaning staff.

Source: [NACUBO](#)

Additional Reading

- [American Society for Microbiology](#): Reducing transmission of COVID-19 in the built environment.
- [Facilities Net](#): Facility management strategies for preventing COVID-19 spread.
- [Fanning Howey](#): Best practices for building operations.
- [The Receptionist](#): Developing sign-in procedures for accepting visitors to the office.
- [University of California-San Francisco Case Study](#): Managing campus buildings during COVID-19.
- [Workable](#): Template workplace visitor policy.



Consider utilizing the American Institute of Architects' [re-occupancy checklist](#) (see appendix) to determine the safe and appropriate time for reintroducing staff members to the office.

OFFICE SPACES



While faculty members frequently have access to individual office spaces, higher education institutions must still properly evaluate how to situate administrative units and common areas that pose greater health risks. When possible, institutions must consider practices for maintaining boundaries and developing social cues to signal appropriate distance between employees.

Common Areas

- ❑ [Reduce seating options](#) in spaces like meeting rooms and kitchens.
- ❑ Post documentation of the last time areas were cleaned.
- ❑ Add [sanitation stations](#) throughout the office.

Desk Setups

- ❑ Ensure sufficient distance between desks, and reposition [desk setups](#) so individuals sit back-to-back (rather than face-to-face or side-by-side).
- ❑ Create [barriers between desks](#), including cubicles or plexiglass dividers.
- ❑ Ensure that individuals do not [share desks](#).

Common-Use Items

- ❑ Remove high-touch items (e.g., magazines, common pens).
- ❑ Remove shared appliances (e.g., coffeemakers) or replace with single-use items.
- ❑ Reduce the sharing of [common computers](#) or other devices.

Additional Reading

- [MRA](#): Short- and long-term office layout strategies.
- [Cushman & Wakefield](#): Project conceptualizing the “6 Feet Office”
- [Hong Kong University](#): Guidelines for university work arrangements, beginning from March 2020.
- [Open Path](#): Checklist for promoting office safety during COVID-19.
- [University of Arizona](#): Guiding principles for restarting university operations.
- [University of Washington](#): Enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols developed by the Environmental Health & Safety Department.
- [Work Design Magazine](#): Strategies for mitigating risk in different types of spaces within the office.

STAFF TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT



Prior to re-entering the office, institutions must ensure that all staff are on the same page with regards to COVID-19 prevention and mitigation techniques, and are fully aware of all institutional protocols related to social distancing. Institutions should also try to provide employees with the equipment necessary to promote a safe and healthy workplace.

Training



[Communicate](#) with and train staff in proper social distancing protocols.

Clearly communicate expectations surrounding [health and safety requirements](#), including hand-washing and other hygienic measures.

Provide training for staff regarding [how to clean and disinfect their desks](#) and office spaces.

Ensure that all staff are aware of COVID-19 symptoms that would necessitate isolation and/or reporting.

Equipment



If possible, provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for employees, prioritizing any public-facing staff.

Encourage employees to wear cloth face coverings when moving through common spaces.

Provide [disposable wipes](#) to employees to allow them to easily wipe down used surfaces.

Additional Reading

- [Boston Public Health Commission](#): Guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting to prevent COVID-19.
- [HR Daily Advisor](#): Key elements of a COVID-19 training response.
- [Pennsylvania Department of Health](#): Sample social media graphics modeling topics such as proper health habits, different types of masks, and when to seek care for COVID-19.
- [The University of Alabama at Birmingham](#): Guidelines for properly wearing and cleaning a cloth face mask.

SCHEDULING PRACTICES



In order to prioritize safe and healthy practices in the office, institutions may need to consider their inability to return to full occupancy and normal operations in the immediate future. The adoption of alternative scheduling practices can allow institutions to conduct necessary face-to-face activities, while mitigating the risk for infection and transmission of disease.

Consider adjusting staff locations or schedules – for example, by asking professors to work from home on days when they do not teach (or if classes are online).

Consider adopting a phased reopening, allowing administrative staff to continue with remote work, when feasible.

Develop plans for an immediate return to full-time work-from-home operations, in event of further COVID-19 outbreaks.

Consider staggered work hours and break times during the day.

Continue holding virtual meetings, even when physically in the office, and keep in-person meetings to less than 10 individuals.

Additional Reading

- [American College Health Association](#): (p. 3) Guidance related to employee and supervisor considerations.
- [APPA](#): Raw responses to a higher education survey into processes and procedures used for staggering shifts.
- [Baylor University](#): Timeline for staggered return to on-campus operations.
- [Central Michigan University](#): Case study of placing employees into tiers and timing the return to campus of different tiers of staff.
- [Duke University](#): Guidance for leading effective virtual meetings.
- [Goodwin Law](#): Guidance for meeting the needs of different populations who may need to request continued remote work.



Once employees have returned to the office, institutions must still maintain careful health monitoring procedures to ensure that employees do not contract or spread COVID-19 in the workplace. Institutions must also be cognizant of employees' privacy and rights, and ensure that any monitoring of symptoms takes place in a respectful, discreet manner.

Conduct discreet temperature checks upon employee arrival to the office.

Develop policies for the self-monitoring of COVID-19 symptoms, and appropriate reporting procedures to immediate supervisors and human resources.

Develop flexible sick leave policies so that sick employees do not feel compelled to return to work. Policies should account for self-quarantine due to exposure, or the need to care for a sick family member.

Prepare procedures for conducting deep office cleaning in case of employee infection.

Additional Reading

- [American College Health Association](#): (p. 2) Guidance on health-related containment and surveillance capabilities
- [CDC](#): Guidelines for preventing and reducing COVID-19 transmission among employees.
- [CDC](#): Guidance for the appropriate conditions in which an individual recovering from COVID-19 can discontinue home isolation.
- [Goodwin Law](#): Considerations for appropriate monitoring and collection of employee health information.
- [Johns Hopkins](#): Free contact tracing course
- [NYC Health](#): Guidance for cleaning and disinfecting non-healthcare settings.
- [The University of Tennessee System](#): Sample self-observation questionnaire of health symptoms.
- [Virginia Department of Health](#): Interim guidance on screening, monitoring, and testing of non-essential employees returning to work.

ONLINE SUPPORT SERVICES

STUDENT SERVICES FOR ONLINE PROGRAMS



Given the possibility of a return to online education if necessitated by the continuation of the pandemic, institutions can assist faculty in providing sufficient support to students. Online students can suffer from a lack of engagement, affecting success and retention, making it important for faculty to adapt their curricula and course delivery to meet the unique conditions caused by the virus.

Offer online orientations to foster student engagement and support, and allow students to familiarize themselves with available tools and resources.

Develop online accessibility for commonly-utilized on-campus supports, such as career services.

Place online students into learning cohorts to foster their sense of connectivity and community.

Develop mentoring and tutoring services for online learners, particularly for large courses where faculty may not be able to develop a personal relationship with each student.

Additional Reading

- **Frontiers in Education**: Considerations in developing a successful online orientation.
- **Inside Higher Ed**: Strategies for student affairs and academic support staff to serve online students.
- **Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute**: Role and responsibilities of mentors in online learning.
- **Online Education**: Student services for online learnings, including academic advising, career services, financial aid advising, and more.
- **The Learning House**: Survey of online college students suggests strategies for providing effective teaching and assistance.
- **University Business**: Process for building virtual services for online students.
- **University of Sheffield**: Approaches for supporting and facilitating learning in online classes.
- **U.S. News and World Report**: Common challenges students are facing in online classes.

FACULTY SUPPORT SERVICES



Faculty members must ensure that they have the capacity and resources to meaningfully engage students who must continue to attend classes while coping with the unique effects of the pandemic. At the same time, institutions must also make sure that they provide sufficient training and professional development opportunities for faculty members, particularly those who may not be accustomed to delivering classes in a non-traditional format.

Create a faculty development program that helps faculty adjust to teaching online and troubleshoots issues that arise.

Adopt effective faculty supports, including time allocations for online material development, faculty peer mentoring, faculty evaluation and teaching guidelines, and support for creating class media.

To foster student engagement and persistence, faculty must provide prompt and meaningful feedback, participate in student discussions, and create a supportive and safe environment.

Focus on active learning activities, rather than long lectures. Break up long lectures into smaller chunks, and embrace greater usage of media.

Recognize the unique physical and mental effects of COVID-19, and adopt practices that will support student mental health, regardless of the course delivery format.

Additional Reading

- [Association of College and University Educators](#): Provides an online teaching toolkit and effective online teaching practices.
- [Computers in Human Behavior](#): Techniques for developing personal connections with students in an online environment.
- [Educational Technology Research and Development](#): Strategies for improving the effectiveness of online video.
- [Faculty Focus](#): Online mentoring for faculty members.
- [Inside Higher Ed](#): Human strategies for moving online and fostering a supportive online learning environment.
- [Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks](#): Strategies for creating a faculty development program.
- [Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration](#): Highlights teaching strategies and course activities that are predictors of online student engagement.
- [Online Learning Journal](#): Provides best practices for professional development for online education.
- [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#): Guidance for developing better online education practices for faculty.

APPENDIX

RE-OCCUPANCY CHECKLIST

The following checklist about restarting operations is taken from the American Institute of Architects, and adapted to focus only on those elements that would be relevant to higher education institutions.



PHYSICAL CONTROLS

- Consider designating separate entrances and exits.
- Utilize natural daylight when possible.
- Utilize operable windows for outside air intake if possible.
- Install physical barriers such as clear plastic sneeze guards.
- Utilize temporary, movable partitions to subdivide large working spaces.
- Reduce density and/or increase spacing of furniture.
- Stagger work stations where possible.
- Provide cleanable, transparent films over surfaces such as elevator buttons.
- Consider a fixed maximum number of occupants per HVAC zone.
- Prioritize fresh air intake versus recycled air where possible.



PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

- Utilize CDC guidelines to identify when and what type of protection is to be used.
- Regularly inspect, maintain, and replace supplies.
- Provide gloves.
- Provide face masks.
- Provide respiratory protection.



ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROLS

- Develop an emergency communications plan.
- Provide up-to-date education and training on COVID-19.
- Identify occupants in higher health risk categories.
- Establish a protocol for anyone not feeling well.
- Establish procedures for immediately isolating those who have signs or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Create virtual communication and telework policies.
- Implement occupancy-reduction policies (e.g., alternate days).
- Institute workplace entrance screening.
- Promote hand washing and personal hygiene.
- Post hygiene signage.
- Provide tissues, touchless hand soap and towel dispensers, and alcohol-based hand rubs containing at least 60% alcohol disinfectants.
- Educate occupants on respiratory etiquette.
- Encourage self-monitoring for symptoms.
- Conduct regular housekeeping.
- Institute guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting the surfaces of chairs and tables, equipment, etc.
- Provide disposable towels to clean work surfaces.
- Avoid and/or greatly limit the use of common equipment.
- Limit the number of people allowed simultaneously in break areas.
- Install markings/signage encouraging one-way travel where practical.
- Implement floor markings (i.e., tape) to visualize recommended spacing among occupants.
- Discontinue nonessential travel in lieu of virtual communications.



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