# Return to UCL Checklist for Departments

The phased return to UCL will be driven by guidelines from the UK Government and Public Health England (PHE) and based on operational priorities. In order to ensure the safety of the UCL community, we have suggested a number of additional points on top of UK Government guidance.

Departments[[1]](#footnote-1) are expected to manage their own arrangements to comply with institutional policies and government guidance. These checklists focus on ensuring that immediately after reopening, departments have addressed priority measures for safety, infection prevention and control (Immediate Actions). It also includes a checklist for the period of time beyond the initial reopening phase (Ongoing Actions).

Government guidelines are available via the [Working Safely during COVID-19](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/labs-and-research-facilities) website. Information about UCL’s response to COVID-19 can be found on the dedicated [coronavirus website](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/coronavirus/). Local risk assessments to document the hazards and controls of restarting activity must be completed alongside this document.

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**2. Immediate Actions – to complete in the first week**

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# 2. Immediate Actions – to complete in the first week

For more information, please refer to the management responsibilities and guidance sections (below) which covers this and the reopening checklist documentation.

| **Measure** | **Y/N?** | **Action / comment** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Prepare your People** | | |
| 1. Brief FEMs and staff on evacuation social distancing. Remind building occupants as they evacuate or return to the building to socially distance as far as practicable. The priority, however, is always for a rapid evacuation |  |  |
| 1. Restart departmental training schedules for staff whose qualifications expired during the shutdown. This may include first aiders and those trained in transport of diagnostic and infectious substances. |  |  |
| **Prepare the Building** | | |
| 1. Check that in facilitating movement around buildings, that fire safety is not compromised. For example, fire doors must not be wedged open, even if this prevents touching handles. |  |  |
| 1. FEMs, or Senior FEMs to carry out a fire inspection of the whole building to ensure fire safety measures are still in place and walk the escape routes, to check all evacuation routes are clear and doors operate correctly. Use [form TN077a](https://search2.ucl.ac.uk/s/redirect?collection=website-meta&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ucl.ac.uk%2Fsafety-services%2Fsites%2Fsafety-services%2Ffiles%2Ftn-077a.pdf&index_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ucl.ac.uk%2Fsafety-services%2Fsites%2Fsafety-services%2Ffiles%2Ftn-077a.pdf&auth=X%2B9CH4XA9utMI9bHbFy67g&profile=_website&rank=1&query=TN077a) to record this. |  |  |
| **Social Distancing Plan** | | |
| 1. Staff should use a ‘put-down-pick-up’ strategy if they must use the same items, which will ensure social distancing. Items shared should be sanitised before being used by different individuals. |  |  |
| **Health, Safety and compliance** | | |
| 1. First aiders to [check the first aid kits](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/safety-services/sites/safety-services/files/fa-box-checklist.pdf) throughout the area. Some supplies may have been used and not replaced during shutdown. Remember to [report incidents](https://ucl.oshens.com/AIR2/Incbook/incbook_tab_begin.aspx?First=1) on riskNET if supplies have been used. |  |  |
| 1. Office, laboratory or kitchen equipment that normally contains water should be cleaned and washed out in case dampness or residual water was left in it before shutdown, so that a Legionella or other microbiological hazard is removed. |  |  |
| 1. Consider repeating electrical safety checks on restarting, such as Portable Appliance Testing (PAT). Alternatively, ask staff when they return to work to complete visual check of cases, cables and plugs for items that may have been moved around. This includes as toasters, kettles, microwaves. |  |  |
| 1. Where appropriate, arrange face fit testing for staff to cover any new work activities if a risk assessment requires use of **fitted** face masks. Note that the precautionary use of extra PPE to protect against COVID-19 outside clinical settings is not encouraged as other control methods must be adopted. |  |  |
| **Communications** | | |
| 1. Ensure there is effective two way communication between staff and management to handle queries, complaints or issues that need to be rethought or addressed. The very many changes brought in at short notice will present some previously unrealised problems. |  |  |
| **Items specific to laboratories, workshops etc.** | | |
| 1. Ensure there has been no unauthorised use, loss or theft of controlled chemical substances (under regulatory control or otherwise), biological agents or equipment. If there has been, report it immediately to [Safety Services](mailto:safety@ucl.ac.uk). |  |  |
| 1. Be wary of chemicals, or other hazardous substances, that may have degraded or passed use-by dates, and no longer be suitable for the intended activity. |  |  |
| 1. Some equipment may need a particular method for restart or a waiting period before it is safe to use. Make sure the restart of equipment is performed by a competent person such as the technician responsible for them. |  |  |
| 1. Vacuum pumps may need to be checked in case loss of vacuum for weeks has affected the seals. |  |  |
| 1. Purge gas lines on restart as there may be some loss of gas in the pipelines. This may be important for Helium, where the gas supplies very sensitive equipment and where it can escape containment easily, or Hydrogen which may have become mixed with Oxygen. |  |  |
| 1. As a precaution, some Dewars that have been kept at a higher fill level should have the level reduced before returning to normal use. |  |  |
| 1. Samples stored in liquid nitrogen that have been untouched for an extended period are more likely to now contain liquid nitrogen in the vessel and to explode when warmed due to liquid nitrogen evaporation, so warn workers to beware of the extra risk. |  |  |
| 1. Before opening natural gas or flammable gas supply pipes, ensure that all outlets or gas taps are closed so that there is no uncontrolled release of gas. |  |  |
| 1. As activities are restarted the risk assessment for the activity should be reviewed in light of current pandemic situation |  |  |
| 1. All risk assessments should be reviewed to consider all PPE which could cause a risk to health via contamination during this period of pandemic to include safety glasses, lab coats, face shields amongst others, and that these are assigned to individuals and **not** shared between staff and are stored so as to prevent contamination. |  |  |
| 1. Introduce a clear bench policy to all areas to assist cleaning and to reduce handling of objects by multiple people. |  |  |

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| 1. Hand sanitiser is mostly a flammable alcohol, so those using naked flames as part of their work are at a greater risk of vapours catching fire on their hands. Adjust risk assessments so that staff are aware of the additional hazard. |  |  |

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| 1. **For containment laboratories -** Check if COVID-19 samples are stored in your department, associated with work during the shutdown. Consider if they can remain in place, need to be relocated, or destroyed. |  |  |
| 1. **For radiation laboratories:** Check the store of radioactive materials to ensure there has been no unauthorised use, loss or theft during the shutdown that must be investigated and reported. If you suspect losses, report this through contacting the [Radiation Protection Officer](mailto:radreporting@ucl.ac.uk). |  |  |
| 1. **For radiation laboratories:** Before flushing radiation in designated sinks, check for any leaks in the drain pipes underneath the sink. Pressure and air pockets in pipes can cause them to rattle and spurt so run the taps before disposing of waste. |  |  |
| 1. **For radiation laboratories:** Radiation waste poured into the sink may initially sit in the dry drains if not flushed properly, so ensure a lengthy flush. |  |  |
| 1. **For radiation laboratories:** Check that any accumulated radioactive waste does not exceed the limit specified in the department’s allocation prior to generating any further waste. Please contact the [Radiation Protection Officer](mailto:radreporting@ucl.ac.uk) if you have radioactive waste bins that have been accumulating waste for more than three months (even if they are not full). |  |  |
| 1. **For radiation laboratories:** Before recommencing radiation work, inspect the containers of sources, sealed or otherwise, for potential damage during the shutdown. |  |  |

## Completion and confirmation

Fill in the table below to confirm preparedness for restart:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Department and building:** |  | | |
| **Head of Department, or delegate:** |  | | |
| **Checklist completed by:** |  | **Date:** |  |
| **Verified by\*:** |  | **Date:** |  |

\*This can be a safety officer in your department.

# 3. Ongoing Actions – to check and complete in the first month

For more information, please refer to the management responsibilities and guidance sections (below) which covers this and the reopening checklist documentation.

| **Measure** | **Y/N?** | **Action / comment** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Prepare your People** | | |
| 1. Communicate the latest advice and guidance, rules and behavioural expectations to all staff. Consider timeliness, consistency and clarity of messaging and method of communication so that everyone is aware of the arrangements, such as ongoing changes to government guidelines, UCL policy or the departmental arrangements as the phased return progresses. |  |  |
| **Social Distancing Plan** | | |
| 1. Social distancing failure in the workplace is a hazard observation that should be [reported](https://ucl.oshens.com/AIR2/Incbook/incbook_tab_begin.aspx?First=1). This includes instances where staff or students carry out unplanned work in places without social distancing. Also in circumstances where efforts to ensure social distancing have been ignored. Put in place measures to monitor and review your social distancing plan. |  |  |

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| **Statutory requirements** | | |
| 1. Monitor the effectiveness of departmental procedures to ensure safe working at each new phase of restart by completing a regular review. The department must have a process and be prepared to close any areas where social distancing procedures have broken down or have become impossible to maintain. |  |  |

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| **Items specific to laboratories, workshops etc.** |

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| 1. Hand sanitiser is mostly a flammable alcohol, so those using naked flames as part of their work are at a greater risk of vapours catching fire on their hands. Adjust risk assessments so that staff are aware of the added hazard. |  |  |
| 1. High risk activities must not be carried out unless the provision of support from nearby colleagues and first aiders in confirmed. This includes the use of cryogenic liquids or other asphyxiants, highly reactive or toxic materials or large quantities of hazardous liquids. |  |  |
| 1. Any work involving the handling human tissue needs to consider SARS-CoV-2 infection. Make sure to update any risk assessments and procedures to mitigate this risk. |  |  |
| 1. PIs have reviewed and approved revised risk assessments for activities so that they reflect the changes in control measures brought about by the risk of COVID-19 transmission. |  |  |

## Completion and confirmation

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\*This can be a safety officer in your department.

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**Management responsibilities**

## Head of Department

The Head of Department is responsible for ensuring any statutory requirements for departmental equipment are complied with before equipment is used by employees. Examples of such requirements are:

* Written scheme of examination as applied to departmental pressure systems.
* Servicing of fume cupboards and other local exhaust ventilation (LEV) as required every 14 months.
* Statutory checks of lifting equipment.
* Maintenance of gas alarms, gas manifolds and regulators.

Management must prepare a start-up plan ensuring a safe restart, using this guidance to assist, to cover any department-specific issues not written here. It will include details on how to apply, monitor and review such plans. They must ensure staff and students returning are aware of the new arrangements in place and have been trained as required.

## Principal Investigators and Academic Supervisors

All PIs and supervisors are responsible to ensure their staff have risk assessments in place for their activities. It is likely that new circumstances to prevent COVID-19 spreading and adapting to social distancing require these risk assessments to be updated. As there may still be reduced support regarding supervision, first aid and FEM cover; risk assessments must be revised even for standard activities. Supervision of staff in buildings with reduced numbers where lone working is more likely, is also the responsibility of the line manager or supervisor.

Updates to risk assessments must also include any activity that was performed recently during the lockdown.

## Laboratory Managers

Laboratory managers must do a final check of their areas of responsibility to ensure the work area and specialist equipment is ready for activities and the departmental plan for restart has been complied with.

## All staff and students

Staff and students must take all reasonable precautions to protect themselves from the SARS-CoV-2 virus. They should familiarise themselves with departmental ways of working and social distancing arrangements. This may change often and at short notice.

Staff and students must be aware that although they may have performed their activity regularly, even during lockdown, their previous risk assessments are no longer suitable or sufficient due to newly published return to UCL and departmental risk assessments, and so must be revised.

Staff and students have a duty of care to themselves and to others who may be working during the phased restart, so as to comply with departmental working and social distancing arrangements and not to impact their own or others health and safety.

# Guidance to support the checklist items

## Social distancing

The Health and Safety Executive have declared that employers not ensuring social distancing may be subject to enforcement action, including prosecution. It is therefore essential to focus on 2 metres social distancing. There are options if social distancing is not possible, but the following must be considered:

* + The activity must have vital importance to the business.
  + Consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate.
  + Increase the frequency of hand washing for 20s and clean surfaces more often.
  + Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible, less than 15 minutes.
  + Use screens or barriers to separate people from each other.
  + Use back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face).
  + Reduce the number of people each person has contact with by using ‘fixed teams or partnering’.

Reduce the numbers in classroom, laboratory and office activities, to enable people to sit at least 2 metres apart. This may be achieved by:

* + Using daily shift systems for staff.
  + Extending hours, but only if support is available and can be arranged.
  + Using alternate or nominated days for staff and students to be at UCL to reduce the population in office or lab areas.
  + Asking individuals to continue to work from home where possible.
  + Stagger lunch hours and breaks to relieve demand for access to any communal facilities needed.

Ensure desk spacing for all office or communal study areas allows for 2 metre separation. This may require desks to be removed or ‘closed’ or that alternate ones are used.

Where there may be queues, such as to enter buildings, in canteens or to use facilities, put markers for the queue and 2 metre distances in place so that individuals can wait in turn calmly.

Ensure traffic routes are identified at entrances, exits and throughout the workplace. A major source of contact is for those entering and leaving a building or moving through it. It may be possible to arrange a single route in and out of any building, room, laboratory or office and a separate route to leave (except in emergency). Crossing on stairs should be prevented where possible through defining traffic routes.

Agile working should be suspended so that individuals have more control over the work area they will be using. In a phased restart, fewer numbers will mean space is available in the first instance. If the same space must be occupied by different people on the same day, or by different shifts, apply a clean desk policy and users should wash their hands for 20 seconds and clean the station before and after each session.

Changing facilities or shower rooms, if kept open, should be restricted to one person at a time. Keep group activities in the department suspended as per government guidelines.

Do not share food, cups or kitchen utensils. If possible, it may be better to shut canteen areas and provide trolley service for coffee / tea.

Use videoconferencing, even when speaking to colleagues within the department to ensure social distancing and reduce movement around site. Do not hold face-to-face meetings. If you must have a meeting that cannot be carried out electronically, hold them in large, well ventilated spaces that allow sufficient space to socially distance. As guidance, a meeting of 5 people will require a room for a minimum of 20 people to ensure 25% occupation is not exceeded.

Do not shake hands or approach within 2 metres when greeting colleagues.

## Planning for restart – what to do before people return.

Departments using the checklist should understand that Estates should first prepare the building for safe re-occupancy. Departments’ plans must therefore consider the subsequent safe operation and occupancy of the premises in respect to social distancing and hygiene measures, changes in risk level of activities and to people. Any building change requirements as part of a departmental plan must be submitted to Estates for consideration before re-occupancy.

Work areas must be prepared and checked so they are able to be used to restart work before anyone enters the area to start work. The first staff to arrive will be part of the effort to ensure a safe restart before activities begin. Staff who are the initial wave of a phased restart must have plenty of notice so they can engage with management.

The new arrangements for departments are:

* First to ensure the building is in safe condition (Prepare the building). Estates are responsible for the building but if there are concerns or repairs needed that have arisen, the departments should raise these before general reoccupation. Traffic routes must be developed to enter and leave the building and to move around floors (one way systems). These will not apply to emergency evacuation. Ensure staff have card access enabled appropriately and the building is secure.
* The second is to ensure safe equipment and facilities within the department, and safe start up. This will rely on department experts and technical staff being present and to ensure that restarting equipment is done as per manufacturers’ instructions and that equipment utilities, for example vacuum lines or gas supplies, are operational and as required before restarting. Activities such as the sharing of essential equipment, using control stations and the potential communal use of tools must be risk assessed for each activity.
* Finally, the staff asked, or offering to return must be considered individually where their personal risks to COVID-19 are proven to be increased (Prepare your people). They must have a very clear induction and training on the new departmental arrangements in place and how they are expected to work and behave and how the department will support them and respond to concerns and developments, such as issues overlooked before the restart (Communication). Departments will need to define social distancing measures (Create a social distancing plan). The use of building plans showing one-way entry, exit and circulation will avoid confusion.

Where there is shared space between different organisations, such as UCL and the NHS, or between two UCL departments, written agreements to assure coordination and cooperation should be in place as described on the [Safety Services website](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/safety-services/a-z/shared-workplaces). It is vital that measures to control COVID-19 are known and compatible through cooperation and coordination between different employers within the same workspace.

Equipment managed by departments may need to have statutory checks completed before restart. Examples of such equipment are:

* Pressure vessels.
* Lifting equipment.
* Local Exhaust Ventilation (LEV).
* Fire alarm systems.
* Gas cylinder manifolds.

## Actions once you have restarted

In addition to the items in the checklist above, further actions will be required during the first few weeks back in your building.

Consideration must be given to briefings such as on evacuation and social distancing. The key messages around evacuation are as follows:

* Evacuation routes and exits are unchanged, regardless of one-way systems.
* Use every evacuation route so one route is not crowded at the stairs and exits and social distancing does not fail.
* Keep as far apart as reasonably practicable during evacuation and at fire assembly points (there will be fewer occupants).
* At Fire Assembly Points, maintain social distancing.
* On the all clear to return to the building, re-enter the building by staggering the return.
* On returning, ask occupants to wash or sanitise their hands.

As more staff enter the workplace, ensure staff are aware of the actions carried out in the first phase of a restart, such as training in the new arrangements, social distancing measures, fire safety refresher and any changes to risk assessments.

## Document control

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| Version 1 | Published 29th May, 2020 as a checklist in two parts. |
| Version 2 | Published 5th June, 2020 as a combined checklist. Duplicated items removed, structure improved and additional links added. |
| Version 3 | Published 13th July, 2020 reflecting lessons learned from the initial restart activities. Structure changed, with some items previously included in a combined checklist moved into this document to be used once a building, or departmental area, is approved to reopen. |

1. Department in the context of this document refers to principal organisational units below Faculty level. These groups may be called School, Division, Institute or Office but are referred to here as departments. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)