COVID-19 Policy

Updated September 2022

Purpose

This policy is in place to ensure that the University has clear guidelines on managing outbreaks of COVID-19 now that free community testing is no longer available and vaccination programmes have substantially reduced the severity of infection and hospitalisation resulting from COVID-19. It should be noted that the emergence of a new variant of concern is possible and the long-term health effects of COVID-19 are unknown. The University is actively working with key stakeholders to regularly review this policy and its implementation. We will always be guided by national laws and guidance, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), and the Local Authority Public Health Teams, as well as our obligation to protect, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of our staff and students.

Scope

This policy summarises identifying and managing potential outbreaks of COVID-19 amongst staff and students at the University that might impact the

This policy applies to all UK based activity of the University of Reading and its UK based subsidiaries, including but not limited to Thames Valley Science Park Limited and Henley Business School Limited.

The University premises are occupied by a number of tenants and licensees. These are separate organisations and data controllers, which will also need to work directly with UKHSA should the need arise.

All actions envisaged by this policy are subject to change due to advice and guidance being received from the UK Government and UKHSA.

All overseas campuses and subsidiaries are required to put in place their own policy, which shall reflect the principles set out herein, but shall comply with local laws, restrictions and official guidelines.

This policy covers the following procedures:

Preventative action Action to be taken in the event of a suspected outbreak Familiarisation with the symptoms of COVID-19, which may be achieved through a variety of mechanisms, including through corporate and local induction of new staff and students. Staying at home and avoiding contact with other people following a positive test or suspected infection, which may be linked with any of the three main symptoms- a new continuous cough, a high temperature or a loss or change to your sense of taste or smell. Nature of symptoms to be kept under review given changing nature of the virus and government guidance www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/ sypmtoms/ main-symptoms/.

Good hand hygiene

Encouragement to take advantage of available forms of ventilation, including opening windows and the ability to raise concerns about poorly ventilated spaces with line managers and/or local Health and Safety Coordinators.

Restricting lifts to one person and prioritising based on need

Incorporation of COVID-19 into wider periodic review of public health matters, such as mumps, measles, food allergens, eating disorders, self-harm etc.

Action in the event of a suspected outbreak

In the event that a line manager or a hall warden observes a high rate of absence or illness in their area which might be related to COVID-19 infection, they should report this using the online <u>Health &</u> <u>Safety incident form</u>. The Health & Safety Services team will investigate the matter and make a decision as to whether to instigate a Major Incident Team (MIT), depending on the circumstances.

A COVID-19 Outbreak Management MIT, with the terms of reference and membership set out at Appendix 1, will operate in accordance with the University MIP. The role of the Outbreak MIT is to ascertain the extent and nature of the outbreak, reduce viral transmission and manage immediate communication regarding actions individuals should take and any cancellations or cessations of service or operations.

Thresholds for standing up an MIT include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

A high or rapidly increasing number of suspected cases, where intervention may slow the spread;

Staff resources depleted and/or teams experiencing pressure on services resulting in delivery of critical activities at risk, or concerns about safe running as a result of staff absences;

Warning from UKHSA (e.g. changes in epidemiology of virus, emergence of new variants of concern, increase in COVID-19 related deaths or hospitalisation, other factors requiring multi-agency coordination and decision-making);

Facilitating access to vaccination if appropriate;

Recommending reintroduction of more stringent infection control measures, which may include temporary remote working for some individuals

Appendix 1 MIT Membership and Terms of Reference

The role of the MIT in the event of a suspected outbreak is to ascertain the extent of the outbreak, reduce viral transmission and manage immediate communication regarding actions individuals should take and any cancellations or cessations of service.

Chair & Deputy Chair	Parveen Yaqoob	
MITSO	Caroline Redzikowska or Louise	
	Sharman	
Health & Safety Services	Jenny Mcgrother or Nick Bathurst	
Campus Services	XXXXXX	
Student Services	Paddy Woodman	
HR	Claire Rolstone	
Campus Commerce/ACMO	Matt White	
Corporate Communications	Vicky Pearson	
Legal Services	Julie Rowe	
RUSU	Ryan Bird & RUSU President	
RMBCO	Brett Dyson	

Membership

As per the Major Incident Plan, the MIT can call upon Subject Matter Experts at any time. It does not need to add them to its membership.

Terms of Reference

- 1. Ascertain whether it is possible to confirm suspected cases of COVID-19 by testing and determine the extent of the outbreak;
- 2. Put in place measures to reduce viral transmission, protect the health and wellbeing of the University community;
- 3. Maintain awareness of law and/or instructions and guidance from relevant authorities;
- 4. Provide analysis and advice to UEB on potential and actual impact arising from a suspected outbreak;
- 5. Provide guidance on policy and communications to support the overall aims of the
- 6. Provide guidance on exceptional expenditure required for response;
- 7. Manage communications to the University in accordance.

The MIT might wish to consider setting up tactical sub-groups, for example:

Student Support, Welfare & Academic (to include Accommodation & Catering & International) Estates & Infrastructure implications and management of local building/facility closures. Staff Support & Welfare