**MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences**

**Results of Risk Assessment for return to site following COVID-19 lockdown**

On 11 May 2020 the UK Government set out guidance for organisations returning to work during the coronavirus pandemic. The Government's specific guidance on managing risk can be found in Appendix 1. The full document can be found at https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/labs-and-research-facilities

At the LMS we have assessed the risks associated with returning to site and implemented a series of measures to reduce these risks. Our objective is to ensure a safe return to site for LMS that reduces risk to staff, students, visitors and contractors, complies with government guidance, and allows as many research activities as possible to safely resume. We will take all staff into consideration including those who cannot attend site due to vulnerabilities or caring responsibilities. This activity is under the oversight of the LMS Virtual Institute Planning and Emergency Response (VIPER) team (membership can be found in Appendix 2). VIPER meets weekly.

To better manage the risks associated with the return to site and to ensure that control measures are effectively implemented and tested, we adopted a phased return plan. Phase 1 commenced on 11 May 2020 with no more than 10% of staff returning. Following feedback, measures were adapted and Phase 2, which allowed approx 20% of staff to return, commenced on 26 May 2020. Phase 3 commenced on 4 June 2020 and introduced shift working in research teams, allowing more staff to return but maintaining no more than 20-25% occupancy at any one time. All staff continue to work from home wherever this is possible.

In advance of our return to site, the key risk areas considered and a summary of the results of the assessment are as follows.

1. **Managing the risk of spread of COVID-19 Coronavirus in the institute**
   - Introduce social distancing (e.g. one-way systems, maximum room occupancies, reduced face to face contact with facilities)
   - Encourage frequent handwashing and promote public health measures
   - Introduce new requirements for disinfection of workspaces at the start and end of the work session and for protection and disinfection of common user equipment before and after use.
   - Symptom reporting and contact tracking processes established. Staff can now apply for antigen testing through the NHS testing website.
   - As per Government guidance, LMS will provide PPE in line with individual risk assessments for tasks. This will be kept under review and adapted in line with any further Government guidance.
   - Staff returning as part of Phase 1, Phase 2 and the Phase 3 baseline must be able to attend the institute without use of public transport and should not be in a vulnerable category or living with vulnerable persons.

2. **Managing the risk due to increased lone working as a result of reduced site occupancy**
   - Prior to Phase 1 return all team leads submitted a Phase 1/2 plan to VIPER for review. Only activities approved by VIPER may take place in Phases 1 and 2.
   - Team leads are responsible for ensuring that risk assessments and lone working permission are in place and that staff have had all required training before returning to site. All staff returning in Phase 1 and Phase 2 must have lone working risk assessments in place. From Phase 3, the normal rules for risk assessment and lone working apply.
   - Recommend staff to install Imperial College's SafeZone app on phones and recirculate emergency/security contact numbers.

3.  **Managing the increased risk of problems with equipment or infrastructure on reoccupying buildings (due to inactivity)**
    - Estates checks and precautions (e.g. pipe flushing) in advance of reoccupation
    - Lab checklists to be completed on return by all labs and facilities. Communal equipment rooms will be checked by central H&S and Lab Services teams
    - Provide guidance on where to raise issues (estates, lab services, IT)
    - Issue guidance for on-site contractor management

4.  **Managing the risk of disproportionately affecting staff who cannot attend site (eg because they are vulnerable or have caring responsibilities)**
    - Continue to support staff to work at home and to effect continuous improvement to working from home capability.
    - Team leads to consider how best to support productivity across the full team

5.  **Managing the increased risk of mental health problems among staff, both those working at home and those on site**
    - Reminder of Imperial and UKRI assistance programmes, occupational health arrangements and in-house mental health first aiders
    - Team leads should meet (virtually) or speak to all team members at least once a week
    - Additional support for students from the Director of Postgraduate Studies and the Imperial College Graduate School
    - On line meetings (e.g. WIPs, journal clubs) and social events (Happy Hour, Coffee Breaks) to continue.


VIPER continues to seek feedback on measures introduced so that we can adapt and improve. Please provide feedback through your team lead or Union representative.



---

Original Results of Risk Assessment issued 20/5/20

Updated version issued 4/6/20 for the start of Phase 3 return to site.

**HM Government**

# 1.1 Managing risk

**Objective:** To reduce risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures, in order of priority.

Employers have a duty to reduce workplace risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level by taking preventative measures. Employers must work with any other employers or contractors sharing the workplace so that everybody's health and safety is protected. In the context of COVID-19 this means working through these steps in order:

- In every workplace, increasing the frequency of handwashing and surface cleaning.

- Businesses and workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home as a first option. Where working from home is not possible, workplaces should make every reasonable effort to comply with the social distancing guidelines set out by the government (keeping people 2m apart wherever possible).

- Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, businesses should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the business to operate, and if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between their staff.

- Further mitigating actions include:

    - Increasing the frequency of hand washing and surface cleaning.

    - Keeping the activity time involved as short as possible.

    - Using screens or barriers to separate people from each other.

    - Using back-to-back or side-to-side working (rather than face-to-face) whenever possible.

    - Reducing the number of people each person has contact with by using 'fixed teams or partnering' (so each person works with only a few others).

- Finally, if people must work face-to-face for a sustained period with more than a small group of fixed partners, then you will need to assess whether the activity can safely go ahead. No one is obliged to work in an unsafe work environment.

- In your assessment you should have particular regard to whether the people doing the work are especially vulnerable to COVID-19.

The recommendations in the rest of this document are ones you should consider as you go through this process. You could also consider any advice that has been produced specifically for your sector, for example by trade associations or trades unions.

If you have not already done so, you should carry out an assessment of the risks posed by COVID-19 in your workplace as soon as possible. If you are currently operating, you are likely to have gone through a lot of this thinking already. We recommend that you use this document to identify any further improvements you should make.

**LMS Virtual Institute Planning and Emergency Response (VIPER) team**

**Institute Director**

**Head of Operations**

**Head of Health and Safety**

**Head of HR**

**Head of Estates**

**Head of IT**

**Head of Communications and Engagement**

**Director of Postgraduate Studies**

**Head of Animal Research Governance**

**Section Chairs**