

# OPERATING SAFELY WITH COVID-19

## July 2021.

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to ensure city teams have the appropriate procedures considered alongside COVID-19 mitigations ahead of and during the next Academic year.

### 1.2 Scope

This procedure will apply from July 2021 until there has either been a notable change to the risk the COVID-19 virus poses to our staff and student population, or when recommended mitigations or guidance's change. This document will be split in to 3 scenarios.

- The properties
- The people (our teams)
- The students

There is also a headline section for a quick view of continued mitigations.

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### 1.3 Responsibilities

- The Operations Board and Property Board hold overall accountability for the effectiveness of COVID-19 mitigation measures.
- The COVID and Health and Safety Teams are responsible for providing advice, guidance, and instruction to management teams on how to operate safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Procurement Team are responsible for sourcing and securing the relevant physical resources required for guidance contained in this document to be implemented effectively. The local teams will take ownership of maintaining stock of resources needed.
- The Heads of Operations are responsible for providing the relevant resources to enable to the guidance to be implemented in the cities. This includes physical, financial, and staffing resources. They are responsible for collating and escalating feedback regarding the effectiveness of measures in this document.
- The Area Managers are responsible for the measures contained in this guidance being implemented in their areas consistently.

- The Regional Estates Managers are responsible for managing the roll out of physical measures in properties in their area.
- The Regional Health and Safety Managers are responsible for advising their cities of any localised changes and assisting with risk assessment reviews.
- The Operations Managers are responsible for these measures being implemented in each property under their control.
- Employees are responsible for following this guidance and supporting students in properties to also follow the safe physical and hygiene measures set out in this document.

## 2 Operational guidance for COVID becoming business as usual.

### 2.1 Headline View

Although much of the legislation around coronavirus is changing, and may change again over the coming months, we continue to hold a legal and moral responsibility to keep our teams, students, and properties as safe as is reasonably practical.

Whilst COVID-19 remains a concern for all of us, we want to ensure all team members are clear on their responsibilities and our commitments to ensuring your safety as well as the safety of the student and public population.

This section, covers the headlines:

- Sanitisation of high touch point areas remains an activity we will carry out as a minimum twice per day.
- Like many other businesses, wearing face coverings (unless exempt for medical reasons) in circulation and public areas, reasonable distancing (1 meter) and hand hygiene will remain in place for the near future. (Hands, Face, Space)
- Twice weekly lateral flow testing, and PCR testing if symptomatic, are recommended to continue.
- COVID-19 risk assessments should continue to be live documents and updated as changes occur in your local area and be specific to each property.
- When indoors, continue to ensure spaces are well ventilated wherever possible.
- We will continue to wear full PPE when entering a student flat.
- Fogging areas when a confirmed case of COVID-19 has been reported, as well as relevant public areas on a frequent basis should continue.
- Outbreak plans should continue to be in place for each property. This needs to include contact details for public health bodies.
- Team meetings should follow relevant mitigations, including minimising attendees, be held in ventilated areas of appropriate size and add value to the business.
- Side by side or back-to-back working when in office spaces should continue wherever possible.
- Information provided to students should be accurate, international students especially may require further explanation of what they can and cannot do in the UK as their home countries guidance may differ.

- We will encourage students to register with a GP when they arrive to ensure they can access medical services and vaccinations.
- We will continue to support students who are isolating with deliveries, mail, and waste removal.
- We will continue to recommend all students and team members get vaccinated and we will support our teams with time away from the business to attend their appointments.

## 2.2 Managing properties, teams, and students under the relevant regulations.

It is important for the cities and regional teams to understand which restrictions or regulations apply to them as is highly likely to change between nations.

It is also important for team members to maintain up to date knowledge and understanding of the procedures applicable to them. These procedures can be found on The Hub linked [here](#)

You can find the link for the most up to date government guidelines below:

For England click [here](#)

For Wales click [here](#)

For Scotland click [here](#)

## 3 The Properties

Each property should be set out, and maintained with the following safety measures in place for the near future:

- Sanitisation stations at each reception, within the laundry rooms, common rooms, study spaces and gyms. If you have areas such as cinema rooms, karaoke rooms, post rooms and so on, you should also include these as areas which require continued access to hand sanitisation.
- Reception desks should have Perspex screens installed. If you have temporary reception areas (for a check in as an example), teams need to consider installing a temporary Perspex screen. If this is not viable, team members should continue to wear face coverings and maintain a 1-meter distance from others.

- Visual collateral should always be maintained to a high standard, (this includes floor stickers and posters) this will continue to be in place for the rest of this academic year as a minimum. New collateral can be found on [Bynder](#) and via the [COVID Wiki](#)
- High traffic area touchpoint sanitisation should continue in relation to doors, lifts, common spaces, meeting rooms, offices, and other relevant rooms twice per day as a minimum.
- Fogging of public areas and rooms or flats where we have reports of positive COVID-19 cases will continue, and we recommend public areas should be fogged where possible twice per week as a minimum, increasing in frequency if required.

All PPE and materials needed for properties can be purchased through the COVID-19 shop on Iproc. Cleaning products can be procured through the normal channels.

### 3.1 Cleaning rooms & TAR

We have an established cleaning routine for this process, this will not change for the remainder of 2021, you can find the link to the processes [here](#).

To recap:

Where there has been an established case of COVID in the 72 hours before the student has vacated the property, the room should be fogged prior to being cleaned. This would follow the established fogging procedure available on the [COVID Wiki](#).

If there have been no confirmed cases of COVID in the 72 hours, prior to the room being vacated the room can be cleaned as per the established [TAR procedure](#).

PPE should continue to be worn, including face coverings, gloves, and eye coverings/face shields. This is to protect our team members as far as reasonably practicable.

### 3.2 Key management

When keys are returned via students, staff, or contractors they should be sanitised before being recirculated. Signing keys in and out of properties continues as normal.

### 3.3 Common rooms and public area management.

Where restrictions have been lifted, we expect public areas to remain open for as long as it is reasonable to do so. We understand how important these areas are to our students. We are committed to keeping them as accessible as possible over the next academic year.

Team members should consider when is appropriate to close common, or public areas and not take a blanket approach in their closure. Common areas wherever possible should utilise the ventilation systems and have windows open wherever possible.

If there has been a person with a confirmed case of COVID in a common room (as an example), the area should be immediately closed for deep cleaning. This deep clean should include fogging the area where possible and deep cleaning as appropriate. Once this has been completed, the area can reopen. Touch points to and from these areas should also be cleaned as a matter of good practise.

We should continue to have maximum limits of people in spaces displayed based on distancing of 1m and teams should continue to display notification of when the area was last cleaned.

If there have been consistent small numbers or sporadic cases of COVID in a property, the OM or AM should consult with their Regional Health and Safety Manager and decide if these areas should be deep cleaned and fogged more frequently.

Where we have a confirmed (declared) outbreak or an escalating outbreak, the OM/AM and RH&SM should seek advice from their local public health body and close the areas, where possible to do so for the duration of the outbreak.

Once the outbreak has minimised or ended; these areas should be deep cleaned and reopened to the student population. Where NOMS contracts are in place, the university should also be included in this conversation.

If common spaces are being closed for any longer than needed for fogging or deep cleaning activities, the HOP should also be notified.

If these areas are closed a communication should be sent to the student population to confirm and as appropriate confirmation of reopening dates.

### **3.4 Collection of Post and Parcels**

There is no change to this process. Teams should continue to follow their normal procedure for logging and notification of arrival of parcels and ensure that when interacting with students on a face-to-face basis appropriate PPE is worn.

Where there has been a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a room or flat, teams should continue to deliver parcels, food and so on to the students in question. When doing so teams should follow the established procedures available on the [COVID Wiki](#) on the Hub. This includes wearing PPE, and sanitising areas before and after touching them.

### **3.5 Room entry in occupied flats**

Where a flat is occupied, the team should approach entry to a property in line with current guidance, this includes the use of PPE. We cannot guarantee every student informs us of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis, particularly if they do not have symptoms of COVID-19.

### **3.6 Outbreaks of COVID-19 – Sporadic Cases and Public Health declared outbreaks.**

When there are sporadic cases of COVID-19 in a flat or sporadic flats have COVID-19, this would not be considered as a property wide outbreak. Where we have small numbers of isolated cases, we should continue to follow procedures which mean all team members, and contractors relevant to the specific area of the property, (especially if they may need to enter the flat) are aware of the risk.

Teams should be especially vigilant around the hands, face and space measures and ensure high traffic touch point sanitisation is prioritised and increased if needed.

Where numbers are low and below the threshold of contacting public health bodies. For the moment this would be 2 positive cases in a flat, as a general guide (but this does differ in various public health bodies).

OM's should maintain up to date information on this threshold for their home city and keep city team members updated of any changes.

It is worth noting that public health guidance on when to contact them and numbers of cases involved before making contact, will also change dependant on the prevalence of COVID-19 in the immediate area and you can seek advice from your local public health body as relevant.

Where there is an outbreak, or escalating outbreak of COVID-19 in a property, which had been declared, or confirmed by a public health body, teams should follow the current established procedures to protect the rest of the student population, teams, and public.

These include student and staff communications, closure of public areas such as gyms and common areas, additional security where needed and reducing the numbers of staff and visitors to the property involved to only a core team working within a property.

If critically extremely vulnerable team members are assigned to a property going through an outbreak, with their agreement, they can be moved to a property with lower prevalence of the virus for the duration of the outbreak.

Reduce access to flats in the property to essential or emergency only and increase high traffic area sanitisation. Reminder communications covering the hands, face and space messaging should be shared with the team.

This also means reminding students to inform us on the MyUnite App of their diagnosis, ensuring we support through delivery of food and post, collection of waste and management of welfare.

Reception areas would be the last areas to close and should only be closed with agreement from your Head of Operations.

Local teams should also continue to inform and update their local public health bodies of escalating case numbers, and incorporate advice given to them by the relevant body.

If there is an established outbreak within a property, an incident management team will be convened by the PH body. They will make recommendations which should be considered and implemented where reasonable and possible. This could include measures such as using common space as a testing area.

Teams should also inform their OM/EM and regional leadership team of any ongoing or escalating outbreaks. This will allow for them to refine city outbreak plans to include targeted local activity in line with the public health advice and localised restriction guidelines.

When the outbreak has ended this should be communicated to the regional leadership team, as well as the remainder of the city team and student population.

### 3.7 Maintaining flats or rooms with COVID positive cases.

If there are maintenance tasks within a room where there are positive cases of COVID-19, which cannot be delayed (until the students are out of isolation), this should be carried out in line with established procedures. This procedure is available on the [COVID Wiki](#).

To recap:

- If a cooker is broken as an example, this should be repaired or replaced.
- On receipt of this task the team members within the property should establish some communication with the flat to ensure our team member can go into the kitchen area with no students present.
- Entry to the flat should be in line with the established room entry procedure.
- Sanitisation of relevant areas should be completed before carrying out the task.
- Once the task has been complete the area should be sanitised again.
- All waste removed from the property and disposed of appropriately.
- PPE worn in this flat should then be disposed of, again following the established procedure.
- Where possible delay PPM tasks, or non-essential 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractor works for the duration of the isolation period specific to the flat/s or property in question.

Where an outbreak is declared, wherever possible, delay any 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractor works for non-essential repairs.

Delay all non-essential in person meetings, and any non-virtual student events for the duration of the outbreak.

## 4, Managing teams and movement of team members:

In addition to the governmental testing and vaccination programmes, Unite students as a business, line managers and all employees continue to hold the responsibility of keeping themselves, their teams, students, 3<sup>rd</sup> party contractors, visitors, and public as safe as is reasonably practicable:

City team members should continue to minimise their travel between properties wherever possible. There may be exceptions to this, such as electricians who need to attend maintenance tasks over several properties in a day, safety team members carrying out patrols or attending calls, sickness or absence cover, licencing, or valuation inspections.

Team members who are required to move between multiple properties over a working day must ensure they follow a common-sense approach and remain vigilant by wearing face coverings, distancing themselves by 1 meter and follow hygiene mitigations.

Wherever possible, if you need to move between properties, but are not required to be in multiple properties per day, team members should restrict the number of properties attended to a minimum. Consider where you can spend a day in a property to minimise any risk to yourself or the wider team and student population.

Where team members who do not need to move between properties, they should be assigned a primary property, this would be the property where most of their time is spent.

Start/finish times and lunch breaks should continue to be staggered over the appropriate shift patterns, i.e., 24/7 for safety teams and 8am to 8pm for all other city and estates team members.

Regional employees should not physically attend properties, or cities with significant outbreaks of COVID-19, unless it is for business-critical reasons. In these cases, authorisation should be sought from their line manager, prior to commencing travel.

PPE such as gloves and face coverings should be available at all sites for as long as the mitigations remain in place. Managers should consider any allowances when setting budgets for the next fiscal year.

#### 4.1 Vaccinations, Testing and Self-isolations

We continue to strongly recommend team members get both doses of the vaccination, (including, any booster vaccinations which may become necessary) as appointments become available. If you can only secure an appointment during your shift, we will ensure you get the appropriate time off to attend your appointment. You should inform your line manager in sufficient time prior to your appointment to ensure the properties are covered as appropriate to maintain the required service level for our students.

If you feel unwell after you have received your vaccination you should follow the normal absence procedure.

We also strongly recommend team members order sufficient home testing kits from the local government's website, and test twice weekly. If you test positive for COVID-19 you should self-isolate and inform your line manager as soon as possible.

We cannot compel team members to receive the vaccinations or to self-test however, we believe vaccinations, and self-testing alongside the mitigations involving the use of face coverings, social distancing and hand hygiene remains the best way for you to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

If you are asked to self-isolate by clinicians, you must inform your line manager as soon as possible. You should follow clinical advice in respect to length of isolation, or testing. You do continue to have the responsibility of keeping your line manager informed during this period.

Please note in England from 16 August, double vaccinated individuals, and those under the age of 18 will no longer need to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19.

Scottish and Welsh guidance will differ and please refer to local guidance for the most up to date information around isolation rules.

## 4.2 Outbreaks within a city - Teams

Where a city is seeing an outbreak of COVID-19, or where local restrictions are increased, we should take a common-sense approach to ensure our teams are protected as far as is reasonable.

Team members based at the property in question should be rigorous in wearing face coverings, socially distancing and hand hygiene to minimise the risk to themselves. This is a minimum risk measure. If team members wish to, they can wear additional PPE to their personal comfort level, such as face shields and disposable gloves.

Regional employees should take a lateral flow test prior to travelling between cities as a matter of routine and not attend a city if they test positive for COVID-19. These team members should not physically attend cities if they have an ongoing declared outbreak of COVID-19, unless it is essential for the continuation of the business.

Non-essential staff should restrict any movement between properties wherever there have been declared outbreaks of COVID-19.

If you are called to a property, or specific flat where there has been an outbreak, or escalating outbreak of COVID-19 to deal with negative student behaviours you should ensure you are wearing appropriate PPE prior to attending the property, and where appropriate follow the established flat entry procedure.

If student behaviour is not manageable at a local level, do not feel safe, or you cannot enter a property, do not put yourself at risk and contact the police to assist, as per our standard procedure's teams should contact the ECC to make them aware of the situation. They will follow the relevant on-call procedures dependant on the situation at hand. This means if a night-time team member cannot safely manage a situation (like an out of control party) in a property they should contact the local authorities and let them take over the management of the issue.

### 4.3 Team meetings (Physical)

Any general meeting, or large group meetings, should follow local guidance and a common-sense approach, such as:

- Consider if the meeting needs to be held physically, or can it be carried out virtually?
- If in person meetings are needed, reduce them too as few as possible.
- Ensure spaces used for meetings are well ventilated & large enough to accommodate all attendees with social distancing measures applied.
- In meeting rooms, 1m distancing is mandatory and we recommend the number of chairs in a room is reduced to ensure this is observed.
- PPE (personal protection equipment) should be in stock and available for all attendees.
- Hygiene measures should be followed by every individual and hand sanitiser should be available for all attendees.
- As meetings finish the parties hosting the meeting are responsible for ensuring the area is sanitised before the meeting and at the end of the meeting.

### 4.4 Regional Roles and Travel

While the various legal regulations have relaxed, we do have a duty of care and responsibility towards every team member to ensure we are not spreading COVID from property to property, city to city or region to region. Regional employees should also be aware of any risk factors within cities they are travelling to:

- Consider minimising travel to cities, attending only where you add value. If you do not have to be in a city physically you should where possible conduct your business virtually.
- If you are travelling to attend meetings, consider if this can be carried out virtually. If not, consider outdoor meetings before booking meeting rooms.
- Before attending any city or a central support office (which you do not normally work from), you should take a lateral flow test. If this tests positively, you should not attend work, book a PCR test, confirm your diagnosis, and follow appropriate advice.
- Where there has been an outbreak of COVID-19 within a property, central support office, or restrictions are changed to include restriction of movement, regional employees should not attend the city or property in person, unless it is essential to the continuation of the business.
- When travelling to a city, or office be mindful of the sensitivity that team members may have, especially if they have recently been in, or are currently managing a declared

outbreak. This means that in addition to being diligent with hygiene factors, you should ensure the managers responsible for the city are aware of your visit, or group visits, before arrival to ensure they can manage their teams' expectations and sensitivities to the best result for all. This is especially important for team members who are more vulnerable and may feel more comfortable working elsewhere for the duration of your visit.

- If local guidance compels a work from home order, this should be followed where relevant. If the local guidance recommends a level of home working to minimise contact exposure (as an example), this should be discussed with your line manager to seek a balance of in person attendance and at home working.

#### 4.5 Using vehicles.

When utilising company vehicles, you should continue to sanitise the vehicle before and after use and face coverings should be worn. Car share should be avoided if possible.

If you are travelling with a passenger, please ensure this is permitted within your local area, before making the journey. It is recommended that the vehicles remain well ventilated (open windows), and face coverings continue to be used within this setting.

### 5. The students

We continue to be committed to providing students with the best experience possible. We also continue to hold a responsibility to maintain as safe an environment as reasonably practical. Over the last academic year, we needed to be very directive in our messaging and responses to complaints. As many of the legislations have changed, we can no longer be as directive and need to communicate with our students on an adult-to-adult basis.

We need to remain aware of any local guidance changes, but rather than telling students to wear face coverings in a public area of one of our buildings, we need ask if they can and where we need to, explain why we would like them to do so.

#### 5.1 Guests

As restrictions relax and there are no legal limits to the volume of guest's people can host in their homes. We cannot prevent guests from visiting properties. Students living in our properties hold the responsibility for the behaviour of guests and we continue to reserve the

right to ask a guest to leave the premises if they are being disruptive to other students or team members.

Normal guest measures would apply in this case.

Where there has been an outbreak within a flat or property local teams can, in conjunction with their senior leadership team decide to implement a guest ban for specific areas or entire properties for the duration of the isolation or outbreak period.

Where this is the case any guest restrictions must be communicated out to the individuals impacted and as the local restriction ends, the students impacted must be informed that this has ended.

## 5.2 Self-isolation, quarantine, and outbreak advice

Where there are students isolating, quarantining or there has been an outbreak of COVID in a property, teams should follow the established procedure by asking students to inform us on the MyUnite App of their diagnosis, ensuring we support through delivery of food and post, collection of waste and management of welfare all procedures are available on the [COVID Wiki](#)

When speaking to students on arrival to a property it is recommended that students are advised to register with their local GP to ensure they can get medical assistance or invites to vaccinate as required. This is being communicated to students through various channels, but it is always valuable to communicate this verbally where appropriate.

If we see an escalation of cases or a declared outbreak, we should follow the guidance noted within this document, in conjunction with the advice from public health bodies.

## 5.3. Managing student behaviour

The behavioural management process has recently been revised and should be followed where needed.

We never want our teams in a situation which is unsafe, if you are dealing with a student where you feel unsafe for any reason, you should withdraw from the situation and contact the necessary authorities where relevant.

Team members attending student flats should always follow the room entry procedure and wear appropriate PPE as expected for any other visit.

We cannot always manage student behaviour as we would like. We have seen over the last year the challenges the pandemic has highlighted around student behaviour under legal restriction. As the next academic year will highly likely have no legal restrictions around public gatherings, we recognise this will be challenging for team members. We must continue to deliver the best service we can, while engaging with the student population, but never put ourselves or others at risk of harm.

As such we are not asking teams to break up “normal” parties and gatherings unless the legal restrictions change. We would only require this type of gathering to be managed if it were to pose a risk to the property or persons, i.e., noise issues, damage to the property, or risk to wellbeing.

If there were to be a party, or behavioural issue which the teams on site cannot manage safely, the police must be contacted, and the team withdraw to a safe environment.

It continues to be important for teams who may be lone working to always utilise their solo protect devices.

#### **5.4. Communicating with students**

There are various templates available for teams to utilise when managing students, please check the Ops and COVID wikis for the existing templates. If you cannot find a template to fit your situation, please contact the Customer Communications Manager for advice and support.

#### **5.5. Student cancellation of tenancy requests**

In England and Wales there has been no change to the cancellation process, any requests especially of they are related to COVID should follow the normal procedure.

In Scotland, the Coronavirus emergency legislation has been extended for a further 6 months to the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2022, teams in Scotland should follow the advice relevant to this legislation.

#### **5.6. Student Events**

These are important to help students build community, help us to engage with the students and should uphold our business values and reputation. As such we encourage events to commence with the relevant risk mitigations and risk assessments in place.

- Where virtual events are being utilised, this can continue in line with business guidelines.
- In person events should always follow local guidance. If our teams attend any student events, we expect PPE to be always worn, for teams to maintain the relevant distance and for vigilance with sanitisation of surfaces and hands.
- After any in-person events areas should be fogged and deep cleaned as an additional risk mitigation.
- If there is an escalating outbreak within a property in person events should be delayed or cancelled until the outbreak has subsided.

## Appendix A – Document Control Information

Document Management			
Document Ref / Title			
Version #		Status	Click here for dropdown
Classification		Click here for dropdown	
Reason for development			
Summary of changes			
Applicable parties			
Author(s) (name / title)			
Owner (name / title)			
Function			
Approved by (name/ title)			
Date Approved		Click or tap to enter a date.	
Review date		Click or tap to enter a date.	
Location			
Distribution			
Consultation			
<input type="checkbox"/> Data Protection	<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> NCC / ECC	<input type="checkbox"/> City Teams
<input type="checkbox"/> Sales	<input type="checkbox"/> IT Service Desk	<input type="checkbox"/> IT	<input type="checkbox"/> Legal
<input type="checkbox"/> Finance - AR	<input type="checkbox"/> Finance - Treasury	<input type="checkbox"/> InfoSec	<input type="checkbox"/> HR
<input type="checkbox"/> Finance - AP	<input type="checkbox"/> Procurement	<input type="checkbox"/> H&S	<input type="checkbox"/> Business Intelligence
<input type="checkbox"/> Estates	<input type="checkbox"/> Environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Marketing	<input type="checkbox"/> Asset Management
<input type="checkbox"/> Digital	<input type="checkbox"/> Office Support	<input type="checkbox"/> PMO	<input type="checkbox"/> Fleet
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Finance	<input type="checkbox"/> Acquisition / Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Student Services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Version History (copy and paste from top section to here as a record)			
Version	Date approved	Author	Summary of changes


This table is to be used to record all revisions made to this document. Changes made should also be recorded on the Business Management System.

**Procedure Template Version Control – delete**

<i>Version:</i>	<i>Date of issue</i>	<i>Owner / Function</i>	<i>Summary of changes</i>
2019.1.0 Title: Author: Date:	14/07/2021	Jo Blair	Creation or doc for circulation and feedback.