



Human Resources Frequently Asked Questions - Return to Campus

Managers and Employees

1. Where at the University can I get up-to-date information about the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Please visit [Faculty and Staff | Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) | University of Ottawa \(uottawa.ca\)](#)

2. Can I come to campus?

Based on the most recent changes to COVID-19 restrictions, the University of Ottawa reminds all employees that only authorized people are permitted on the campus grounds.

Only employees whose physical presence is required on campus, as determined by the dean or associate vice-president, are permitted to work in person on campus.

Since return to campus dates may change at any time depending on government announcements, we invite you to consult the [University of Ottawa website for return dates](#).

Letter of authorization for essential travel

If your duties have been identified as essential and you must come to campus, please make sure to carry identification (either your uOttawa employee card or government-issued ID) and the authorization letter. Technically, the need for letters has not changed since late fall: staff members who live in Quebec and need to travel after curfew should already have a letter of authorization issued by their dean or associate vice-president. Letters are not required in Ontario, but if an employee who must be on campus requests one because they need reassurance, we strongly encourage their supervisor to arrange to have a letter issued to them. Remember that we strongly recommend that all employees continue to comply with public health directives in effect in both Ontario and Quebec.

COVID-19 Daily Assessment tool

Because individuals who have COVID-19 may show few or no symptoms, everyone who intends to come to campus must complete the daily self-assessment questionnaire to screen for COVID-19 prior to reporting to work each day. This process is required to prevent anyone with COVID-19 symptoms, or possible exposure to COVID-19, from entering the workplace.

Employees can find the daily assessment tool on SecurUO or access it from the self-assessment tool webpage. If an employee answers yes to any of the questions in the self-assessment questionnaire, they must stay home, get tested, contact their supervisor, and send an email to the Health and Wellness team. Employees who are told to stay home must inform their supervisors of their absence by email. Supervisors should remind these employees to [send an email to Health and Wellness](mailto:hrhealth@uOttawa.ca) (hrhealth@uOttawa.ca) for follow-up as well. In their email to Health and Wellness, employees should indicate their name, contact information (phone number or email) and unit, and the result of the self-assessment.

3. In developing reintegration plans, what measures can be implemented to ensure social distancing of employees who are physically at work?

Health and safety is the University of Ottawa's top priority. Since the start of the pandemic, the COVID Recovery Task Force and the [Office of Risk Management](#) have been vigilantly ensuring that the University continues to comply with all public health guidelines while progressively restarting many academic, administrative, and support functions. The University of Ottawa is committed to providing students, faculty members, and staff members with a safe and positive environment as they return to campus.

Supervisors are creating work plans that allow for social distancing. These may include:

- Adjusting scheduled hours or days of work (rotating shifts, staggered days of work, or crew schedules)
- Telework
- Temporary "office hoteling" of a workspace
- Working in alternate locations on campus, limiting staff meetings and get-togethers
- Leveraging the use of technology for meetings, such as Microsoft Teams and teleconferencing. Note: some of the proposed solutions may require unique agreements with unions. Please consult with your Human Resources professional before implementing any changes.

4. What recourse do employees have if they believe the work or workplace is unsafe?

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* gives workers the right to refuse work that they believe is unsafe or poses a risk to themselves or another worker. During COVID-19, the provisions of the Ontario *Occupational Health and Safety Act* continue to apply.

The Act sets out a specific procedure that must be followed in any work refusal. It is important that workers, employers, supervisors, members of joint health and safety

committees (JHSCs) and health and safety representatives understand the procedure for a lawful work refusal.

Several steps must be followed if an employee wishes to exercise their right to refuse work that they believe is unsafe. [These steps are outlined on the Office of Risk Management's webpage.](#)

5. What if an employee refuses to comply with the safety measures?

Safety measures adopted by the University are intended in part to demonstrate that we understand and comply with our obligations under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

In accordance with the standard procedure, a staff member who violates a workplace policy or guideline must provide an explanation the University deems acceptable. There may be a medical reason for not following a safety rule (ex. not wearing a mask). It is important to give employees the opportunity to address any potential violation of University policy and for the University to explain from the outset our expectations and shared responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Failure to abide by the rules may result in disciplinary action.

Supervisors can contact their HR business partners or HR managers for more information on the disciplinary process.

Information on disciplinary provisions in collective agreements and the related University policy can be found in the links below:

Collective Agreements: [Human Resources | University of Ottawa \(uottawa.ca\)](#)

Policy: [Policy 2d - Disciplinary Measures for Reprehensible Acts | Administration and Governance | University of Ottawa \(uottawa.ca\)](#)

6. What if an employee has a medical reason for not complying with a safety measure?

If an employee has a medical reason for not complying with a safety measure, the employee must provide medical documentation to prove this is the case.

Medical documentation will enable the University to develop a special accommodation plan that will provide ways for the employee to adapt to the work environment while these measures are in place.

Accommodation plans will be developed and implemented with the support and involvement of Health and Wellness.

The employee should be instructed to send an email to Health and Wellness that includes a copy of the medical documentation.

7. Why must employees provide medical documentation to justify their inability to follow a safety measure?

An employee who requires a workplace accommodation must provide supporting documentation.

The University, like all employers, has an obligation not only to respond to an employee's request for accommodation, but also to ensure the safety of other employees.

The employee should be instructed to send an email to Health and Wellness with the medical documentation.

8. Given the current travel and movement restrictions, why should I take vacations? Can I reschedule my vacation plans to occur when the pandemic is over?

While the University appreciates that COVID-19 measures may limit holiday options, employees should nevertheless consider taking some time off. The pandemic has been a challenging time for many employees and we all need a break to recharge our batteries. In fact, taking a vacation is also taking care of one's mental health and wellness. Each employee is responsible for taking vacation time.

Delaying vacation plans may also become an issue after the pandemic when the University will need to resume full operations. Resources will be required on campus and employees may not be allowed to all go on leave at the same time due to operational constraints.

Managers should establish a plan to ensure the continuity of operations for the balance of the year and avoid conflicting leave requests from employees. Employees should provide their manager with a vacation plan. As usual, vacation leave requests must continue to be approved based on staffing and operational needs, and should be managed in accordance with current policies and the provisions of the relevant collective agreement.

Generally speaking, pre-approved vacation should not be cancelled. Each request for cancellation should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and managers must carefully assess the rationale if the employee provides an exceptional reason.

9. I requested special accommodations for obligations caused by pandemic measures and arising from my family status. Can I continue to benefit from such accommodations?

The declaration of a state of emergency for Ontario on March 17, 2020, resulted in the closure of schools, daycare centres, and other resources in our communities. Some of our employees affected by these closures were able to enter into a flexible work arrangement with their managers, while others declared an inability to work due to their individual family status obligations.

The University extended receipt of regular pay to all employees with family status obligations until April 30, 2020.

As of May 1, 2020, employees who are unable to work due to family status obligations must access their accrued leave banks (annual leave, family obligation leave, banked time, etc.) in order to continue to receive payment from the University.

Managers may discuss options with employees and assess specific requests on a case-by-case basis.

10. If an employee would like to request an accommodation for reasons related to family status, who should they contact?

The University and managers understand that the pandemic is affecting employees in different ways. Employees must send requests for accommodation for reasons related to family status to their manager. Managers can contact their HR managers and business partners for support in assessing and implementing the accommodation.

11. What can I do if I have exhausted my paid leave bank and still have to deal with obligations related to my family status?

If accessing [personal leave banks](#) is not an option, affected employees may be eligible for government programs. Please visit the [Government of Canada Economic Response Plan](#) , [Service Canada](#), and the [Government of Ontario's Employment Standard Amendment Act \(Infectious Disease Emergencies\)](#) websites for more information.

12. When will the University allow faculty and staff members to travel internationally?

Effective immediately, the University is lifting restrictions on international travel for faculty and staff members provided that travellers follow local health guidelines during their trip and when returning to Canada. Travellers must research and accept the risks inherent in their trip; they must also plan appropriate time and resources for post-trip quarantine and potential trip delays or cancellations.

Faculty and staff members are required to register official trips with the University so that we can contact you in an emergency and introduce you to the full range of services available to you through International SOS. Travellers who decide to take personal trips should also register with the University if they intend to access these services. For further information about travel abroad for faculty and staff members, send an email to: voyages.int@uOttawa.ca .

Employees who wish to take personal trips must do so during their time off and must comply with all government-issued quarantine regulations. If the employee is required to quarantine following personal travel, they must factor the quarantine period into their leave plans.

13. What health and safety measures has the University put in place to protect employees who must return to campus?

Health and safety are at the forefront of uOttawa's campus reintegration plans. The University has adopted various proactive measures to provide all members of the University community who return to campus with a healthy, safe work and study environment. This includes the creation of the [COVID-19 — Returning to Work on Campus: Protecting Yourself and Others](#) online orientation program. We recommend that employees complete this orientation, which aims to familiarize employees with the changes implemented on campus and with what they must do daily to ensure their health and safety and that of others when they return.

For more information on the health and safety measures in place at the University, [please visit the Office of Risk Management COVID-19 webpage](#).

14. If an employee gets sick at work, what process should be followed?

Supervisors should regularly remind employees that if they start feeling ill while at work, they must isolate themselves immediately. As part of the orientation session specific to their work area, employees should be informed which areas will be used for self-isolation in their faculty or service. These areas should be clearly identified and used only for people who need to self-isolate. Employees who think they have COVID-19 symptoms should immediately contact their supervisor and self-isolate until they can safely leave the workplace.

Supervisors must then [inform Health and Wellness](#) that the employee reported feeling unwell and has left the workplace, and complete an Accident, Incident, Occupational Illness or Near Miss report form.

The senior health and accommodation advisor at Health and Wellness will contact the employee to determine what follow-up measures are needed.

The work area, tools, equipment, and common areas (such as washrooms, kitchenettes, or self-isolation area) that the employee accessed should immediately be cleaned and disinfected in the manner outlined by Facilities and the Office of Risk Management (ORM).

The employee should also [send an email to inform Health and Wellness](#) that includes their name, contact information (phone number or preferred email), and unit. The senior health and accommodation advisor will contact the employee to ensure all public health recommendations are followed. Health and Wellness will confirm the duration of absence and ability to resume work on campus, in accordance with Ottawa Public Health guidelines. Medical staff will determine the duration of the absence, if applicable.

Supervisors will be kept informed of this, as well as whether special measures to limit the spread of the virus in the workplace are needed. It is important to protect the privacy of the employee. Health and Wellness will inform supervisors if other employees need to be notified and if they must self-isolate or get tested. The senior health and accommodation advisor will

keep in contact with the employee as needed and notify the supervisor when the employee can resume work on campus. Support staff absences should be recorded in the FAST leave management system, with COVID-related absences entered under the “COVID” category.

15. Despite all the safety measures, I still feel nervous about returning to campus. What support can I get to manage my stress?

If you are feeling nervous about the return to campus, please discuss this with your supervisor.

HR has put in place a support strategy for managers and employees. This includes a variety of new workshops on stress management, resilience, agility in the context of change, and more. [Visit HR’s Workshop Calendar](#). The coaching program is also offering [Express Coaching](#) to all employees and managers.