

Subject: Coronavirus Update
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Dear colleagues,

Welcome to a new year at Federation and what we hope will be a less disrupted one across Victoria and Queensland than 2020.

As we have all seen in news services, governments across Australia continue to make significant and at times sudden changes to COVID-19 restrictions to continue the country's extraordinary run of low cases (find restriction information for [Victoria](#) and [Queensland](#)). As always, Federation continues to follow government directions and guidelines, to keep our students, staff and community safe.

One impact of this has been a more gradual return of staff to campus. We are being more measured and cautious in our return in January, so for those staff members who have made the transition to campus this month, welcome! We expect to see the majority of staff joining you to make a fresh start on campus from now until early February.

There are some important health and safety measures that must be in place to keep everyone safe on campus, which are outlined below, including revised face mask rules and a new ONLINE HIRAC process.

Face masks

Face masks are an important public health measure to prevent transmission of COVID-19 and the rules have changed in Victoria and Queensland.

In Victoria

As of Monday 18 January, while you must carry a face mask with you at all times, you no longer need to wear your face mask on campus or in the office, if you can effectively physically distance yourself from others.

This means if you cannot maintain 1.5 metres difference between yourself and others, then you should wear a mask, otherwise the face mask can come off. Face masks are still mandatory in some settings in Victoria, including supermarkets and on public transport. You can [find the details here](#).

In Queensland

Face masks are required in certain indoor spaces in "Impacted Areas" including the City

of Brisbane but not across the state of Queensland. As our Brisbane Campus is in an impacted area, staff do need to wear a face mask in indoor workplaces when physical distancing is not possible, in compliance with the '[Restrictions for Impacted Areas](#)' directions.

We strongly encourage staff to familiarise themselves with the restrictions in their area and know where to find that information, as restrictions change often. In Victoria, go to www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au and in Queensland go to www.covid19.qld.gov.au. You can also follow the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and Queensland Health on social media for updates and exposure site information.

NEW online process for COVIDSafe HIRACs

At the end of 2020, Deans and Directors took on responsibility for the transition to campus process in their area, in compliance with the university's [COVIDSafe Plan](#). No one understands the requirements of your work and the available resources better than your Deans, Directors and yourselves – in terms of physical space, IT and other resources, and suitable flexible work arrangements (see *Blended workforce principles* below).

Before any on-campus activity, a HIRAC must be in place to identify any COVID risks and mitigations must be put in place. This includes ensuring that density limits and physical distancing are observed across all campus spaces.

From Monday, 18 January the COVIDSafe HIRAC form will be available through Service Now. It reflects the health and safety measures applicable in the current phase of the pandemic, and it replaces the previous form. This new process now controls the preparation, submission, approval and central record-keeping of COVIDSafe HIRAC forms across the entire organisation. Deans and Directors are working with Health and Safety Implementation Teams to coordinate the HIRACs at the School/Directorate level.

The [Risk, Health and Safety department](#) continues to be available for advice.

Blended workforce principles

Federation University endeavours to provide a flexible and supportive work environment that encourages staff to live a balanced lifestyle, but it is also vital that our campuses return to being vibrant environments for students and staff alike.

The [Blended workforce principles](#) outline the process and principles for how we work when we return. This will help keep our campuses COVID safe, through a variety of work arrangements, and also ensure our campuses once again become vibrant spaces. It outlines:

- Flexible working arrangements – the different options available
- Requests for flexibility – how to formally apply for flexible work and what factors will be taken into consideration
- Position suitability – checklist of factors that may not make flexible work feasible
- Facilities and equipment – the equipment you need to work effectively on campus or at home (the university is not obliged to provide office and computer equipment for two locations)

- Space management provisions – desks and physical space requirements
- Approval processes and renewals – forms and checklists to apply and formalise your arrangements.

What happens next?

Your Deans or Directors will work through the following:

- Meet with Facilities Services on-site to determine how many people within your workgroup can be accommodated in the space and how to use the space to ensure physical distancing
- Look at the role of each staff member in your team to determine the order of who is needed on campus and when
- Assess those with desktop computers and those with laptop computers, as that will determine suitability for any proposed flexible arrangements such as blended work (office based and remote work)
- Review applications for flexible work arrangements, which will consider the needs of each School and Directorate to effectively deliver learning and teaching and all of the university's services and activities, as well as the requests of individual staff members
- Consider any high risk factors that may prevent staff from returning and consult with Human Resources
- Prepare a COVIDSafe HIRAC in consultation with HSRs and Risk, Health and Safety, which documents the ongoing arrangements for staff and students on and off campus.

There are also some other key principles outlined in the [Blended workforce principles](#) document. For instance, all staff must have appropriate childcare in place even if working from home, to allow them to perform their duties to full capacity. Staff must not hold face-to-face meetings at home with other staff members and particularly not with students – these activities must occur online or on-campus. Staff must not run a second business or take on a second job while working remotely for the university.

This is the first time the university has embarked on a blended workforce process such as this, so there are many factors to consider.

For this reason, any flexible work arrangements will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and these will have an expiry date of up to six months. Ultimately, we hope that in six months' time, the COVID-19 pandemic will no longer have such a major impact on how we live and work.

Our students

From February and March, we will start to see students return for small group classes and practical work and we owe our students fond memories of studying at university and TAFE, which will come from an energetic campus life.

We look forward to seeing that vibrancy return to our campuses in 2021.

On behalf of the COVID-19 Transition Control Group

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