Return-to-campus toolkit

For employees with supervisory responsibilities
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A checklist for managers and supervisors of staff returning to work on campus

While following provincial and university health guidelines are an important step toward welcoming staff back to work on campus, as a manager/supervisor, you will need to provide additional ways to support employees in this uniquely challenging environment.

Here are some recommended steps for you to follow to assist in supporting your employees return to campus.

Before you return to campus

Checklist

- Know the specific COVID 19 Safety Plan for your workplace
- Complete all mandatory UBC online COVID-19 courses
- Speak to your employees
  - As applicable, discuss with team members what their desired way of working will be, and address any questions and concerns they have.
  - Let them know what you will be discussing so that they can prepare.
  - They will likely be asking about the safety plan, so be sure you are up to date on this information.
  - Use your discretion and department’s guidance when deciding upon the best approach for each employee.
  - Be sure to schedule regular check-ins during the first couple of weeks.

Guidance for your discussions

Understand what concerns the individual might be having

- I want to help make your transition back to work as smooth as possible. I am wondering about what kind of concerns you have as you have been thinking about returning to work?
- Are there any practical or specific things that I can do to make this easier?
- Is there any information you would like me to share with the team (other staff members)?
- Are there any changes in how you will get to work?
- Are there any changes in your current situation at home that could make it difficult to return to work? (e.g. child care, sick family members)
- Do you have any safety concerns (e.g. risk of infection, social distancing) about returning to work?
Prepare staff by sharing updates/changes to the work environment

- Do you have any questions about what you are expected to do when you return?
- Share any changes to the physical work environment
- Share any new safety practices related to PPE, physical distancing, etc.
- Share any changes in duties, work assignments, work flow or processes
- Share with staff the available workplace wellness resources

Understand what support staff may need when they return to work

- I am really happy that you are returning to work and I also appreciate that it may take some time to adjust
- How would you like me to check-in with you when you come back to work (e.g. how often and the best way to do this – by phone, in person)
- If you are experiencing any difficulties that we haven’t thought about, I would like to hear about them as soon as possible so we can find solutions. What would be the best way for you to let me know?

Learn about change

One certainty about this pandemic is the constant change that many have experienced and witnessed in such a short amount of time.

Leading through times of change requires flexibility, clear communication, and a focused “why” behind the change. Helping employees who may be reluctant to return to work will require additional patience and motivation. Finding the “why” and the potential benefits of returning to the worksite i.e. satisfying social connecting and innovation through in-person collaboration, will be central to supporting employees through change.

- Take the Navigating Extraordinary Times Micro-course to learn more strategies to support your employees.
- Attend Leadership & Caring For Others Webinar
- Work with a UBC Coach to support your leadership
- Access this resource on how to boost team morale during COVID-19
- Access this resource on how to manage a team during COVID-19

Once you’re back on campus

- Know what to say/do with an employee
  The mandatory UBC COVID-19 online course states that as a supervisor, you are
responsible for ensuring that those who report to you are working in a safe work environment.

When staff come forward with concerns related to COVID-19 in the workplace:

- Explore the details and underlying root of the concerns by asking open-ended questions
- Approach the concerns in a supportive way to facilitate open dialogue
- Review any issue to determine appropriate next steps. This review will involve looking at the workspace and re-evaluating the controls in your safety plan.
  
  Ask if your safety plan has:
  - Gaps that create confusion. Address them and communicate any changes to staff
  - Been misinterpreted and needs clarification
  - Unintended consequences that need to be addressed
- Share your initial assessment with the employee who raised the concern
- If the concerns raised are related to non-compliant behaviour of a colleague, try to determine why the non-compliant employee is not following the safety rules (if needed, contact your HR Manager for guidance)
- For more information please refer to the UBC HR COVID-19 FAQ’s

- **Create a safe and welcoming environment**
  Employees may have different levels of comfort with returning to their worksite. There may be concerns about their own health and the health of others both at home and at work.

  Engagement with staff should be more than just sharing facts and new procedures; it should also include expressing empathy and concern for their health and wellbeing.
  
  - Clear public health measures posted and explained
  - Monitoring cleaning and social distancing measures
  - Shifting to a culture of wellbeing - An effort to understand the new situations of employees is important. This will include understanding individual circumstances, comfort levels, health issues and dependent care.

- **Offer mental health resources**
  Now more than ever, understanding what resources are available and how best to direct staff to the most appropriate resources available will be important.
  
  - **Be proactive** - learn about the health and wellbeing resources available to yourself and your staff. Building Mental Health for staff and faculty is a great place to start.
  - **Know when to intervene** - learn the signs and symptoms of when staff might be in distress and how to have a supportive conversation with them. The Orange Folder is a great resource that can aid in supportive conversations.
- **Guide them to access the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP).**
  UBC's EFAP provider is Morneau Shepell. Staff can access the Care Access Centre 24 hours, seven days a week at 1-800-387-4765

- **Manage Expectations**
  Just as there was an increase in emotional and cognitive challenges when many moved to remote work, we may continue to see these challenges as staff return to the workplace. These challenges may impact productivity. Difficulty concentrating, low motivation and a state of distraction may occur. Adapting to this new way of work will take time.
  - **Productivity:** Making efforts to change productivity expectations to allow more frequent cleaning of work equipment, breaks for hand-washing or other safety protocols is important. As well as, balancing this with increased productivity expectations to meet the changes and demands that have occurred due to the pandemic.
  - **Individual circumstances may impact productivity:** Ask about individual employee situations (i.e. transportation to and from worksite, dependent care and the health and wellbeing of family members.)
  - **Engagement:** Regular communication and connection are vital in supporting staff engagement. Look for opportunities to enable teamwork, collaboration and social connections.

- **Prioritize your wellbeing**
  We have all heard the “oxygen mask rule,” where we must place the oxygen mask on ourselves before helping others with theirs. This is true for leading and managing others, especially during a pandemic. In order to best support our staff health and wellbeing, we must first take care of our own.
  - **Self-care:** We don’t always take the time to care for and nurture ourselves and we sometimes require support in integrating relaxation and our personal needs into daily life. This session focuses on increasing mental health literacy through self-care for individuals.
  - **Self-compassion:** having compassion for oneself is really no different than having compassion for others. According to Kristen Neff, Associate Professor Human Development and Culture at U of Texas, self-compassion involves acting the same way towards yourself when you are having a difficult time, fail, or notice something you don’t like about yourself. Practice self-compassion exercises here
  - **Role modelling:** allow yourself to talk about the importance of self-care and self-compassion with your staff. Take time for lunch breaks away from your
desk. Go for a socially distanced walk with colleagues. Spend time connecting with colleagues about non-work-related activities.

- **Workplace wellbeing activities**: incorporate wellbeing activities into your daily routine at your worksite.
  - Send wellbeing tips via email
  - Host department wellbeing walks throughout the week
  - Create a wellbeing wall at your worksite where staff can share how they practice self-care
  - Apply for [Healthy Workplace Initiative](#) funding
  - Sign up yourself or support a staff member to become a [Workplace Wellbeing Ambassador](#)