



WWU DEPARTMENT REOPENING GUIDELINES

Helping departments create safe and inclusive
working environments for their teams during
the COVID-19 pandemic



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INTRODUCTION

The goal of this resource is to provide Western departments with the guidance needed to make informed decisions for department areas and staff as it relates to working on or off site. There are three objectives to this set of guidelines:

- Ensure the health and safety of all individuals.
- Effectively address hybrid working (on and off-site) in a thoughtful and inclusive way.
- Ensure consistency and completeness with State, Federal and County Health requirements and recommendations.

Washington's Governor, in collaboration with the Washington State Department of Health, has developed a "Phased Approach to Recovery"¹ which is to be used as the main source for reopening and determining who should return on-site, how workspaces need to be modified to accommodate additional safety measures and when things should happen at various stages. Timelines are not static and may be extended by the State depending on a number of variables. There are four phases to the Governor's plan, displayed on Page 4. Each phase is approximately three weeks long and a number of criteria must be met before the next phase is approved to roll out. Phase 1 began on May 5, 2020; Phase 2 began in Whatcom County on June 5, 2020.

The university is currently analyzing the situation to determine when it is best for some staff to return to campus. What university leadership are considering is the availability of testing, contact tracing and, of course, overall staff safety. Even when staff can return to campus, physical distancing is mandated by the State. High-risk individuals, or any other person with an underlying health condition as defined by the CDC², would not return until the beginning of Phase 4 in the Governor's plan at the earliest and maintain physical distancing when they do. There are already approximately 600 people who are deemed 'critical on-site staff' and about 450 who have been working on-site on any given day or as needed during the Governor's initial order.

Each department desiring to return to campus must provide a plan that addresses the main subjects covered in this document.

These guidelines are intended to set some common understanding and best practices while providing prompts for where flexibility and creativity may need to come into play. Departments must submit their plans through the ReADY system. Departments including EHS, FM, Space Administration and HR will then advise you on anything you must include to help make sure your staff are safe.

The information surrounding COVID-19, including State and Federal requirements and recommendations, continues to evolve regularly. Therefore, there may be updates to these guidelines based on new information provided.

This document was created by Western's COVID-19 Incident Command Structure (ICS).

SOME CONSIDERATIONS

¹ [A Phased Approach to Recovery](#)

² [CDC People Who Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness](#)

Departments should think about how your office environment and staff needs might change as we could be in this phased approach for quite some time.

Symptom checking

Symptom checking by the individual is required before they come on site. [This Guidance for Daily COVID-19 Screening of Staff and Visitors document outlines what questions should be asked.](#)

If the answer is **yes** to any of the questions, the individual must stay home and not come to campus.

If symptomatic, an employee should report their condition to their Supervisor, who then reports to HR. HR will report this to the University's Medical Director, per section 2 of the [communicable disease policy](#).

Face coverings

Face coverings are required when on-site and must be worn if physical distancing of 6 feet is not possible for some of your work tasks³. Departments will provide cloth face masks for their employees; these can be procured through [Western Marketplace](#).

Testing and Contact Tracing

The university is working closely with the Whatcom County Health Department to determine appropriate surveillance testing and contact tracing of staff and students in accordance with state and federal guidelines.

Building Access

Buildings will continue to be locked until the university fully opens. If your staff needs to have a key or fob to gain access, please fill out a [ReADY](#) request. Do not ask UPD to gain access to spaces and remember it is against university policy to prop open doors ([POL-U57 10.01](#)). Classrooms will also be locked throughout the summer.

Building Preparation





Facilities Management and the ICS team will ensure that buildings are prepared for staff returns. Some changes that may stand out to you include new elevator protocols, additional signage, additional supplies and more waste receptacles. They will also ensure that bathrooms are managed in a way to facilitate social distancing.

Training

Additional training opportunities will be available to facilitate the various changes you and your staff may encounter. Western's [COVID-19 Prevention in the Workplace](#) is a required training for all employees to take prior to returning to campus.

Guidelines for research operations [can be found on the Provost's website](#).

³ [CDC Use of Cloth Face Coverings to Help Slow the Spread of COVID-19](#)

<h1>WASHINGTON'S PHASED APPROACH</h1> <h2>Modifying Physical Distancing Measures as we Reopen the State</h2>				
	 Phase 1	 Phase 2	 Phase 3	 Phase 4
High-Risk Populations*	Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Continue to Stay Home, Stay Healthy	Resume public interactions, with physical distancing
Recreation	Some outdoor recreation (hunting, fishing, golf, boating, hiking)	Outdoor recreation involving 5 or fewer people outside your household (camping, beaches, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Outdoor group rec. sports activities (50 or fewer people) - Recreational facilities at <50% capacity (gyms, public pools, etc.) - Professional sports without audience participation (horseracing, baseball, etc.) 	Resume all recreational activity
Gatherings (social, spiritual)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None - Drive-in spiritual service with one household per vehicle 	Gather with no more than 5 people outside your household per week	Allow gatherings with no more than 50 people	Allow gatherings with >50 people
Travel	Essential travel and limited non-essential travel for Phase I permissible activities	Essential travel and limited non-essential travel for Phase I & II permissible activities	Resume non-essential travel	Continue non-essential travel
Business/ Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Essential businesses open - Existing construction that meets agreed upon criteria - Landscaping - Auto/RV/boat/ORV sales - Retail (curb-side pick-up orders only) - Car washes - Pet walkers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remaining manufacturing - Additional construction phases - In-home/domestic services (nannies, housecleaning, etc.) - Retail (in-store purchases allowed with restrictions) - Real estate - Professional services/office-based businesses (telework remains strongly encouraged) - Hair and nail salons/barbers - Pet grooming - Restaurants/taverns <50% capacity table size no larger than 5 (no bar-area seating) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restaurants/taverns <75% capacity/ table size no larger than 10 - Bar areas in restaurant/taverns at <25% capacity - Movie theaters at <50% capacity - Customer-facing government services (telework remains strongly encouraged) - Libraries - Museums - All other business activities not yet listed except for nightclubs and events with greater than 50 people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nightclubs - Concert venues - Large sporting events - Resume unrestricted staffing of worksites, but continue to practice physical distancing and good hygiene

* High-risk populations are currently defined by CDC as: persons 65 years of age and older; people of all ages with underlying medical conditions (particularly not well controlled), including people with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma, people who have serious heart conditions, people who are immunocompromised, people with severe obesity, people with diabetes, people with chronic kidney disease undergoing dialysis, and people with liver disease; people who live in a nursing home or long-term care facility.

PHASING STAFF RETURNS

Following the gradual approach the Governor is taking to slowly reopen businesses, and the strictness of the four phases, phasing employee returns will happen over a long time. You will need to ensure that all the elements of your plan are in place, including increased cleaning and disinfection, staff adhering to symptom attestation and physical distancing guidelines, among the many requirements.

The university's remote working directive is extended through Phase 2 and all staff and supervisors must respect this. The Executive Team is continuing to monitor the Governor's guidance for Phase 3 and will issue additional guidance as needed in coming weeks. The ICS recommends that departments follow this priority list in considering who returns to on-site working:

1. Critical on-site staff (already on campus)
2. Staff unable to perform all work remotely
3. Staff who can work remotely
4. Staff who prefer to work remotely
5. High risk individuals (may not return to campus until Phase 4)

In the sections below are guidelines on how to ensure physical distancing, particularly for those working in open plan offices. You also can be creative in working with your employees to develop a plan that uses a mix of working remotely and on-site and/or hybrid schedules (more detail provided on pg. 7).

In Phase 4, the restrictions are more relaxed although departments must still adhere to physical distancing measures and ensure workspaces are kept 6 feet apart. Employees must still wear a mask when in contact with others throughout all four phases.

Using the priority list above, along with what you know about your staff's home and work situation, how will you have your staff return to on-site work? You should consider a phased return of your employees to no more than 30% of your staff at a time, while also staggering additional cohorts every 2-4 weeks. Depending on the size and needs of your staff, the percentage may vary.

Below is an example of how to assess the priority level of each staff member that can be used to help you determine who should return on-site and when.

	Priority 1 <i>Critical on-site staff</i>	Priority 2 <i>Staff unable to perform all work remotely</i>	Priority 3 <i>Staff who can work remotely</i>	Priority 4 <i>Staff who prefer to work remotely</i>	Priority 5 <i>High risk individuals (earliest return in Phase 4)</i>
Staff 1	✓				
Staff 2			✓		
Staff 3		✓			
Staff 4					✓

In your Department Plan, please submit a spread sheet for returning staff that has the following information in this order: W#, First Name, Last Name, Priority level, Room(s) they will occupy, On-site work hours, Proposed first date of return. Western's Incident Command team (ICS) will review and approve all department reopening plans, applying the most relevant guidelines to the particular situation, e.g. state-issued guidance regarding childcare facilities.

RESOURCES

- [WWU's COVID-19 FAQ](#) Supervisors section
- [Supervisor's Guide to Remote Work](#)

BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

As we move back to on-site working carefully and gradually, we will all be striving to continue business operations and customer service efforts with as little disruption as possible.

In your plan, pay particular attention to tasks that are time-sensitive and create a plan that will adapt as the situation changes. With a mixture of on-site and remote working possibly continuing for some time, consider these questions as you focus on what is important:

- What are some of the new risks and roadblocks that we need to address immediately?
- Do we need to shift focus and adjust our priorities?
- Do we need to adjust, change, or add any goals or targets?
- What programs or services are impacted, and how can we adjust them for our service delivery and our stakeholders, customers, partners?

Consider holding a working session with your HR consultant to help refocus and align your team during this time. We recommend holding, at a minimum, weekly team meetings to address ongoing changes and adaptations.

You should ensure that there is a Department Emergency Plan completed and on-file with Emergency Management covering your area or department. These plans delineate contingencies if, for whatever reason, your area is unable to perform critical functions. See the [Department Emergency Plan – Continuity of Operations template](#) for the most recent version. Contact [Holly Woll-Salkeld](#) in Public Safety if you would like some assistance in completing this information.

AGILITY PLAN

There could be further spikes in COVID-19 cases until a vaccine is found. Departments need to have an agility plan in place that allows staff to easily move from on-site back to remote work with minimal interruptions to service or working. Consider what would need to be in place to do this with only a day or two notice.

- **Identify opportunities for improvement**, e.g. technology equipment such as docking stations, to support an agile environment. The university may provide internet support for teleworkers. If Western determines that an employee's worksite is at their residence and provides it in writing, an employee could receive tax benefits when purchasing needed equipment.
- **Review work duties** that may have changed because of the response to COVID-19.
- In conversations with staff, encourage them to think through **what new information was gained or new practices established** in response to the 'work from home' order. Are there opportunities to implement some of these in the workplace to make movement between remote work and on-site work easier to adapt to? For example, are work processes established during the work at home period adaptable to operations that are more normal?
- **Review what has been considered essential or critical** to be on-site for changes to emergency work plans.

- **Review redundancy plans** and what is needed in both normal and emergency operating modes.

ENGAGING EMPLOYEES

Bringing your staff into the conversation of moving back to on-site work is an important part of getting them involved. There has been major disruption across multiple areas of life for the majority of people and experiences will vary widely as will people's expectations, comfort and concerns with discussing working on-site again. Provide extra support to begin to counterbalance the uncertainty that COVID-19 has created. Remind employees that the [Employee Assistance Program](#) is available to them as a resource.

Below are a few reminders to think about while engaging with your team:

- Communicate transparently about what is known and what is unknown now. Let them know if you anticipate more information will be available at a future date.
- **Ask employees to contribute to the plan.** What are their suggestions and preferences? Where do they see opportunities or gaps? Share with employees the overarching objectives when developing a plan:
 - Ensure the health and safety of all individuals.
 - Effectively address the new hybrid working (on and off-site) in a thoughtful and inclusive way.
 - Ensure consistency and completeness with State, Federal and County Health requirements and recommendations.
 - Recognize that employees may feel differently about returning on-site given their personal circumstances.
 - If a position's responsibilities require the work to be performed on-site but the employee does not feel comfortable returning due to personal circumstances (e.g. childcare, eldercare, and/or being in a high-risk category), let the employee know Human Resources is available to consult regarding options, which may include protected leave or accommodation.

HYBRID ON-SITE/REMOTE SCHEDULES

The Governor's plan continues to **strongly encourage remote work**. Looking to a hybrid on-site/remote schedule can be a good option to allow for some flexibility and creativity while still supporting your staff and helping keep as many people as safe as possible.

Look to introducing a hybrid schedule in the following situations:

- To best support your staff's specific home situation and work preference.
- When certain work tasks are more efficient to do on-site but not the whole scope of the individual's work duties.
- To promote a safer office space environment that reduces the total number of people in a shared office space.

Here are three examples of what an alternative schedule could potentially look like:

Example 1: Staff are working on-site on different days with no overlap.
(On-site days are highlighted in green, other days the employee would continue to work remotely.)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Staff 1	8am – 5pm				
Staff 2		8am – 5pm			
Staff 3			8am – 5pm		
Staff 4				8am – 5pm	

Example 2: Staff are working on-site on the same days, but their on-site work times are staggered so there is no overlap in the office.
(On-site times are highlighted in green, the other times the employee would work remotely)

	8am	9am	10am	11am	12pm	1pm	2pm	3pm	4pm	5pm
Staff 1	X	X								
Staff 2			X	X						
Staff 3					X	X				
Staff 4							X	X		

Example 3: There is some overlap for staff, but it is minimized for workspace requirements and staff preferences.
(On-site times are highlighted in green, the other times the employee would work remotely)

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Staff 1	8am – 5pm	8am – 5pm		8am – 5pm	12pm – 3pm
Staff 2		12pm – 5pm			
Staff 3			8am – 5pm		8am – 5pm
Staff 4	10am – 12pm			10am – 12pm	

You can also consider alternative work schedules such as four 10-hour days or split shifts if requested by the employee. Work with your HR Consultant if you are considering a schedule change for classified staff to ensure the applicable collective bargaining agreement requirements are met.

WORKSPACE

Workspaces are going to look and feel different from before because of physical distancing requirements and minimizing touchpoints. Distance between people and workspaces must be kept **6 feet apart** at a minimum. While developing your workspace plan, please remember that safety and fire codes still apply. The executive team is determining how reopening supplies and services are funded.

COVID-19 Site Supervisor

A site-specific COVID-19 Supervisor shall be designated by the program at every location to monitor the health of employees and enforce the COVID-19 location safety plan. They must keep the plan current with changes to COVID-19

guidelines. A designated COVID-19 Supervisor must be available at all times during work and class activities. There can be more than one Site Supervisor designated for your area so long as they are all familiar with the procedures.

Visual Inventory

Taking an inventory of your space is a good first step. You can find all [floor plans](#) on Western's website. If you must visit the campus in person to inventory your space, make sure you have the [proper authorization](#). Pay particular attention to areas where people tend to gather (e.g. open workspaces, public interaction areas like reception desks, etc.) and think through how you might implement these guidelines for a safe workspace.

Take inventory of your workspace:

- For employees to maintain proper physical distancing, it is a minimum of 28 square-foot (i.e. a circular area with a 3-foot radius surrounding each person) allotment per person. Take your square footage and divide by 28. The answer is the maximum amount of people you can safely accommodate. Here's an example:

$$280 \text{ sq. ft. of office space} \div 28 = \text{No more than 10 people in the space at once, distanced}$$

- How many offices do you have?
- How many "open work areas" (i.e. shared tables with workstations) do you have?
- What options do you have for creating isolated workstations? This could mean repurposing a conference room with work stations distanced 6 feet apart.

Physical Distancing

To support a 6 feet apart office environment (*Note: each office setup is unique so filter this with what will apply to your area*).

- Fill out a [Transport Services e-form](#) to get help moving workstations 6 feet apart.
- Eliminate any work areas where employees sit face-to-face, or put a barrier between them.
- If partitions are needed, fill out a [ReADY](#) request, as it will involve having an interior design plan made.
- Designate every other workstation as an active workstation and mark others as "do not use".
- Mark "do not use" on extra chairs and tables. This includes spaces like lobbies or waiting areas.
- Consider adding traffic flow arrows or 6 feet apart markers on the floor to help physical distancing in areas like hallways and commonly used equipment, e.g. copiers.
- Consider adding a reminder at office entry points to maintain physical distance of 6 feet apart.

Conference Rooms

- Conference rooms could be repurposed as workspaces if 6 feet between them can be maintained. First, identify the unit managing the conference room and plan accordingly based on that information.
- In-person meetings should be avoided. Conference rooms should only be used for meetings when necessary and if 6 feet of distance can be maintained between all meeting participants. Follow the same rule for the use of office space, and allow for movement: On average, a 4 – 6 person conference room will be reduced by 50% to 2 – 3 people in order to comply with physical distancing.

- Remove all loose objects such as markers, pens and erasers. Put a container of disinfectant wipes in the room to wipe down remote controls.
- Furniture in conference rooms should be rearranged to meet the 6 feet apart requirement, removed, or marked “do not use”.

Break Rooms, Small Kitchens and Vending Machines

- Furniture in break rooms should be rearranged, removed or marked “do not use” to meet the 6 feet apart requirement.
- Small kitchens and food preparation areas should be evaluated to eliminate or minimize the sharing of tools and equipment.
- Food should not be shared between co-workers or left out/open for public consumption, i.e. no potlucks; no unpackaged goodies left out for people to take.
- The Custodial staff regularly disinfect vending machines. However, it is highly recommended that you use the surface of a tool like a pencil or pen to push buttons while using the vending machine.

Workspace Cleaning

Western’s custodial teams clean public spaces regularly. Individual workspaces are not regularly cleaned or disinfected by custodial staff. Employees are encouraged to regularly clean/disinfect their own work areas.

- Obtain cleaning products through the [Western Marketplace](#). Please note that basic cleaners will kill COVID-19 on hard surfaces.
- Sanitize public or frequently used touchpoints, e.g. credit card machines and kiosks regularly.
- Wipe down and disinfect surfaces used at the end of every day.
- Sanitize equipment that passes through hands (e.g. department checkout keys, staplers).
- Remove items from the office such as magazines and common pens.
- Designate a Department Supply Coordinator to act as a point of contact for understanding current workspace cleaning recommendations, receiving and distributing supplies received from Facilities Management, and making requests for further supplies, considering supplies are limited.

Office Equipment

If there is office equipment that your staff uses on a regular basis, you will want to factor in how to use it while also practicing physical distancing and proper disinfecting protocol.

- Check in with employees who are working remotely to ensure they have appropriate equipment for their workspace.
- Equipment should fit into the “6 feet apart” workspace guideline.
- If the equipment is not fixed or secured and can safely be moved to promote better physical distancing, that should be done.
- Eliminate, as much as possible, shared use of equipment or work tools, e.g. headphones, phones, computers, laptops, or mechanical tools.
- Equipment that must be shared should have their touch surfaces sanitized after each use.

- Support purchase of equipment that will allow continued virtual meetings. Webcams allowing you to see the other people in a meeting provides a greater social connection that many people rely on in the workplace.

Visual aids/Posters

Additional signage will be provided to you for posting in your department areas to remind people about the important safety measures and precautions being taken.

Supplies

Procurement and Facilities Management have developed a checklist (Appendix A) for departments to determine which products they may require upon return to campus. Please purchase any supplies through the [Western Marketplace](#) using the COVID-19 Catalog.

During COVID-19 certain products are often delayed or unavailable. Procurement is working hard to secure supply of essential products using a centralized approach to ensure security of supply and control of price.

Additional notes

- If the area has windows that open, consider opening them when weather permits.
- Natural light is considered beneficial as it has a negative effect on the virus, so open blinds if possible⁴.
- As a supervisor, you may face questions about why these changes have been implemented. Discuss these changes openly with your staff and encourage them to be actively involved in the process to maintain a safe workspace. You may also need to remind your staff about the importance of not changing things like the layout of workstations, signage, etc.

RESOURCES

- [WWU floorplans](#)
- [Social distancing room space calculator](#)
- [ReADY](#) (for requesting keys and ordering cleaning supplies)
- [Transport Services e-form](#) (for help moving furniture)
- [Western Marketplace](#)

Please continue to encourage frequent hand washing and ask your staff to follow [these practices](#)

SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT PLANS

Western's ICS team hopes that these guidelines help you create a department plan that helps bring back your staff safely to on-site working.

⁴ [COVID-19 and the built environment](#)



Department plans

You will create your plan through the [ReADY request system](#), under the “**Department Plans**” request icon (image to the left).

Once you submit the plan, it will **be automatically routed to five areas for approval**: Human Resources, Environmental Health and Safety, Space Administration and Facilities Management. The COVID-19 Planning unit will also review the plans for compliance with the Governor’s directive.

If changes are necessary, the plan will be routed back to you for further edits. The final sign-off is from your divisional VP or the Provost or designee, as appropriate.

Once your plan is finalized, you can begin taking the steps to see it through completion. Follow up will be conducted to support departments in carrying out their plans and to ensure the safety measures outlined in these guidelines are being followed.

Congratulations! Thank you for prioritizing workplace safety and staff needs in light of all the changes we are experiencing. Please contact COVID19Planning@wwu.edu with any questions about developing your plan.

APPENDIX A: COVID-19 SUPPLY CHECKLIST

COVID-19 Supply Checklist for Departments: **Please order from [the Western Marketplace](#)**

Item	Size	Quantity	RECOMMENDATIONS
<u>MASKS</u>			
Non-N-95 Masks			Critical Staff Only/ Staff with interaction and can't maintain 6ft distance
<u>PPE</u>			
Safety Face shields			COVID-19 Response Only
Nitrile Gloves	small		For Cleaning using wipes or Spray
Nitrile Gloves	medium		
Nitrile Gloves	large		
<u>DISINFECTANTS</u>			
Disinfectant Wipes (Tub)			Departmental Offices only (Backup)
Alpha HP - Disinfectant Spray Bottle			Departmental/Personal Offices only (Primary) with microfiber towels
<u>HAND SANITIZER</u>			
Hand sanitizer - Small Bottles			Personal offices where restrooms or departmental bottle is not readily available
Hand sanitizer - Large Bottles			Departmental offices where restrooms are not readily available
Hand sanitizer - Wall Mounted			Hallways and High Volume Entrances (Stocking Issues)
<u>CLEANERS</u>			
Perdiem Cleaner - Spray Bottle			Departmental/Personal Offices only (Primary) with microfiber towels
<u>MIROFIBER TOWELS</u>			
Microfiber Towels - Green			Associated with spray bottles (disinfection & cleaning)
Microfiber Towels - Blue			Associated with spray bottles (disinfection & cleaning)
Microfiber Towels - Yellow			Associated with spray bottles (disinfection & cleaning)