

*Update your Unit Safety Statement Policy and all other Risk Assessments accordingly to address COVID-19 controls.*

## COVID-19 and Risk Assessments

(June 2020)

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COVID-19 is a serious public health virus that may impact a person's health.

The safety of any person in the workplace is not impacted by the COVID-19 virus per se, unless measures deployed in response to managing physical distancing, access controls or lone working impact on existing safety precautions, safe egress in an emergency, emergency response, etc.

As part of the Government's [Return to Work Safely Protocol](#) the Health and Safety Authority have produced a series of [checklists and guidance](#) that NUI Galway, its managers and staff must comply with. COVID-19 has also been addressed in the NUI Galway Safety Statement. The focus on COVID-19 measures must be in the context that this is part of the safety and health responsibilities enshrined in the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. This requires that those with employer responsibilities i.e. Heads of Units and Principal Investigators primarily, to ensure that during COVID-19 there is no increase in the risks in our workplace or a reduction in the collective or individual risk controls which could impair existing safety standards.

Risk assessments are part of NUI Galway's COVID-19 Return to Work Processes (see Links and Resources below). To put them in context of the employees returning to work, generally at least 3 days before the return date each NUI Galway employee must complete the following:-

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Return to Work Form	
<a href="#">NUI Galway COVID-19 Induction Training (SharePoint)</a>	
Unit COVID-19 Induction Training	
<b>Review all relevant Unit COVID-19 Risk Assessments &amp; Updates</b>	

Within the NUI Galway's safety management system the COVID-19 risk will be incorporated into the relevant risk assessments as follows:

1. Each Head of Unit must update their [Unit Safety Statement Policy](#) to include their area's COVID-19 Risk assessment to take account of the key criteria bulleted below.
2. Each Head of Unit/Principal Investigator must update [ALL relevant Unit, Project and other Risks Assessments](#) to account for changed circumstances, where necessary/as appropriate again taking account of the criteria listed below. In some cases a risk assessment or project is not effected by COVID-19. In that case it is recommended that the Head of Unit/PI confirm, date and sign-off that "I have fully reviewed this risk assessment and confirm that it is not changed by COVID-19 and therefore does not need to be amended at this time". These risk assessments need to be completed and communicated to the relevant employees **before staff return to work**.
3. Each Head of Unit/Principal Investigator must identify and **risk assess any new risks** arising from the introduction of COVID-19 control measures including potential lone working, home computer workstations, etc.



1. Unit Safety Statement Policy Updated for COVID 19

2. Unit/Project/Individual Risk Assessments - Head/PI

3. Risks arising from C-19 controls

**COVID-19 main criteria to be considered in the Risk Assessments (non-exhaustive list):-**

- physical distancing requirements and
- impact on the work environment, including limited or reduced occupancy or
- any working alone now arising in high risk activities or where team work is now being discontinued – where it may have been a specified safety control measure e.g. manual handling team lifting;
- changed work configurations, rosters, etc;
- impact on health due to shared use of personal equipment such as air hoods, gloves, coveralls, aprons or boots;
- impact due to forced air movement systems, in particular those that recirculate air toward persons and not away or which are designed to protect a product from contamination e.g. air curtains at entrances to buildings or to high sterile environments e.g. clean rooms;
- impact on occupational health or safety arising from measures taken in response to COVID-19 including from increased use of PPE and/or face coverings or face masks;
- ability to deal with an incident/emergency, including absence of First Aid Responders or Fire Marshals or Chemical Spill Responders, etc.

**Changes in occupational first aid practices** – e.g. avoidance of contact with aerosols in CPR etc. Updated advice from HSE for OFAs is available [here](#) and PHECC. This has been brought to the attention of current NUI Galway First Aid Responders by email as of May 2020.

**Other Links and Resources:**

[NUI Galway Health & Safety Office Updates](#)

[Guidance Document for Returning to Research Activities in NUI Galway \(SharePoint\)](#)