

## COVID-19 FAQ

### Returning to Campus – General

INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION APPLIES TO U OF T, VIC AND SMC UNITS

**Why is the University bringing people back to on campus work and what is the union's position on this?**

Throughout the pandemic, USW has had some workers on campus and we have been advocating for their safety as well as for a safe plan for on-campus work when the time was right. We've also been working together with UTFA and CUPE on COVID health and safety issues throughout the pandemic.

Once Ontario entered Step Three of the Reopening Ontario plan, the University started planning to bring more staff back for in person work. They announced this in a [June 24 memo](#) and have sent out several updates since then with more details. A number of our members have returned to on-campus work and others have been told that they will be returning later this term or in January.

With the release of the Alternative Work Arrangement Guidelines, most of our members who are returning to campus are in hybrid work arrangements.

Throughout the summer, we continued to work with UTFA and CUPE to keep pressure on the employer to ensure a safe return to campus. We have also repeatedly raised our position with senior management that the University should not bring back people who are non-student facing to ensure a slow, steady and safe return to campus.

In addition to stressing that point, in coalition with CUPE and UTFA, we have shared a [health and safety checklist](#) developed by professors with health and safety expertise, engaged in media work and co-hosted an expert panel titled "Is it safe enough to return to campus? What do public health scientists say?" You can view the video [here](#).

Unfortunately, despite these efforts, the University has doubled down on bringing people back to in-person work and in-person classes. In fact, in a very cynical move, they lobbied the provincial government to waive physical distancing requirements for classrooms. This has a bigger impact on students, CUPE and UTFA members than it does on our members, but it is indicative of their insistence that U of T is a "bricks and mortar" University.

We are continuing to keep pressure on with a joint petition on safe return to campus which you can sign [here](#).

While we keep pushing on the more political issue of whether or not people should be coming back, we also need to make sure that we are equipping our members with the information they need to return as safely as possible.

<p><b>What health and safety information should I have before I come back?</b></p>	<p>Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, you have the right to know about hazards in the workplace. Each workplace needs to be assessed on an individual basis, as they're all different. Our members work in labs, offices, kitchens, classrooms, public areas, libraries, open offices with lots of staff and small offices where they meet with students. There will have to be arrangements in place in each of these types of spaces to ensure safety.</p> <p>If you are coming back to campus for the first time, <u>you should be asking for the health and safety plan for your area, referred to as the General Assessment Tool (GAT). This has detailed information on the arrangements for health and safety in your work area: physical distancing, Personal Protective Equipment, etc, before you return to campus.</u> <u>The Local has developed a checklist</u> to help navigate a safe return to work.</p>
<p><b>What do I do if I have concerns about the health and safety measures in my workspace?</b></p>	<p>First, bring your concerns to you supervisor/manager. If your concerns are not addressed in a timely manner, you can approach a worker member of the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC) that services your area and/or contact the Local's H&amp;S Officer. <a href="mailto:mark.austin@usw1998.ca">mark.austin@usw1998.ca</a>. A listing of JHSC's can be found here: <a href="https://ehs.utoronto.ca/jhsc/jhsc-listing-resources/">https://ehs.utoronto.ca/jhsc/jhsc-listing-resources/</a>.</p>
<p><b>If I can work effectively at home, why do I have to come to campus?</b></p>	<p>While many people have been showing that they can do their jobs quite well from home and prefer to work there, your employer does have the right to require staff to come into campus. The drive for on-campus work is coming from U of T senior administration, so we have seen department heads who have approved full time work from home be overruled by their higher ups.</p> <p>We do have language in the staff-appointed contract regarding flex time and work from home however, there is nothing in our contract which gives a member the <u>right</u> to work from home if your manager does not approve it. We will be trying to strengthen this language in the upcoming round of bargaining.</p> <p>With the Alternative Work Arrangement Guidelines, we are seeing many departments move to hybrid work arrangements. Managers do have an obligation to behave reasonably, so we would expect them to be open to these requests. If your request for an Alternative Work Arrangement is being denied, you can contact the union to discuss your options.</p>

## Return to Campus – Symptoms and Confirmed Cases

INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION APPLIES TO U of T, VIC and SMC UNITS

<p><b>Are any checks being done to staff, faculty and students before they return to campus?</b></p>	<p>Based on the University’s Vaccination Policy and provincial regulations, all faculty members, librarians, staff and students are required to be fully vaccinated and must upload proof vaccination via <a href="#">UCheck</a> before attending campus. Using UCheck is the <b>only</b> means accepted by the University to provide proof of vaccination. If necessary, you can download your proof of vaccination from the provincial government’s <a href="#">Vaccination Portal</a>.</p> <p>The UCheck weblink can be accessed on your phone, tablet or computer. It is not an app which needs to be downloaded to your device.</p> <p>In addition, you must complete the COVID-19 self-assessment using <a href="#">UCheck</a> every day before coming to campus. UCheck will not allow you to complete the daily self-assessment until you have uploaded proof of vaccination.</p> <p>If you are unable to access the UCheck online self-assessment web portal, or choose not to use UCheck, please inform your manager. In these instances, you can instead use a <a href="#">paper-based or offline self-assessment log</a> to document the outcome after you complete your daily self-assessment. If you are unable to download the assessment log, please ask your manager or supervisor for a paper copy. Please retain the self-assessment documents in your records for a minimum of 30 days.</p> <p>You must contact your manager if you receive a red status after completing the UCheck self-assessment. You do not have to reveal the reason for the red status or any personal health information to your manager.</p> <p>If you have symptoms of COVID-19, in addition to reporting that on your self-assessment, you must also contact the <a href="#">Occupational Health Nurse</a>. The Occupational Health Nurse will conduct an assessment and will provide you with guidance on next steps.</p> <p>More information and FAQs on Ucheck can be found here: <a href="https://www.utoronto.ca/utogether2020/ucheck">https://www.utoronto.ca/utogether2020/ucheck</a></p> <p>In addition, the province’s self-assessment tool can be found here <a href="https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/">https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/</a></p>
<p><b>What should I do if I have tested positive for COVID-19 or suspect a symptomatic case?</b></p>	<p>If you test positive for COVID-19 you must report to the Occupational Health and Safety Nurse: <a href="mailto:ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca">ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca</a></p> <p>The full procedure to be used in the event of a confirmed and/or symptomatic COVID-19 case can be found here: <a href="https://ehs.utoronto.ca/covid-19-information/ProceduresIllness/">https://ehs.utoronto.ca/covid-19-information/ProceduresIllness/</a></p>
<p><b>Will I be told if someone I work with is experiencing symptoms and staying home?</b></p>	<p>The employer needs to balance privacy issues and the need to disclose information on COVID-19 risk. If someone does the UCheck assessment and stays home due to symptoms, travel or other health issues like being immunocompromised, co-workers will not be informed of this.</p>

<p><b>How will the University inform employees if there are confirmed positive COVID-19 cases, specifically within individual units?</b></p>	<p>If someone tests positive, they will be referred to the Occupational Health Nurse who will conduct contact tracing and reported to Toronto or Peel Public Health. People who may have been affected will be contacted and advised of the necessary steps to be taken. You would not be told the name of the person who has tested positive, due to the University's privacy obligations.</p>
<p><b>How does the University determine who is in close contact?</b></p>	<p>The University will contact people who have been working in the same area as the person who has tested positive. In the case of cafeterias and libraries, they can use records of scanned T-cards to see who was in the area. One of the concerns that USW and the other unions have with this is that it does not capture people who may have to move between buildings for their work or classes. There may not be a record of them being in a particular building on the same day that a person that has tested positive was working there. We are raising this issue with the University to encourage a daily building sign in log to ensure that they have a record of everyone who enters a U of T building.</p>
<p><b>Is there any information about confirmed cases on campus?</b></p>	<p>The University has created a <a href="#">dashboard</a> that tracks positive COVID-19 cases of community members that may or may not have been on one of the three campuses. It also includes information on what to do if you have tested positive for COVID-19.</p> <p>We are raising with the University that this would be a more effective tool if it indicated which buildings on campus had positive cases. Then people would have the information they need to double check if they have been in that area.</p>

## Returning to Campus – Immunocompromised

INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION APPLIES TO U OF T, VIC AND SMC UNITS

<p><b>If a staff member has a pre-existing condition and are immuno-compromised, what measures might be in place to protect them onsite?</b></p>	<p>If you have a medical condition which puts you at increased risk of COVID-19, contact the University's Health and Well-Being department at (416) 946-0537 or <a href="mailto:hwb@utoronto.ca">hwb@utoronto.ca</a> to assist in developing a medical accommodation. Medical documentation may be required. Accommodations will vary based on the type of medical issue and the type of work and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Members have the right to union representation throughout the accommodation process. Please contact the union for assistance.</p>
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<p><b>Would they be given an opportunity to work from home if they are able to?</b></p> <p><b>Will they need medical documentation?</b></p>	<p>Accommodations will vary based on the type of medical issue and the type of work and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. To learn about who may be at increased risk, visit Canada's vulnerable populations and COVID-19 page found here: <a href="https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/people-high-risk-for-severe-illness-covid-19.html">https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/people-high-risk-for-severe-illness-covid-19.html</a></p> <p>Medical documentation may be required.</p>
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## Returning to Campus – Immunocompromised Family Members

INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION APPLIES TO U OF T, VIC AND SMC UNITS

**Is there an accommodation for parents with immunocompromised children who cannot go to school or daycare?**

If the family member is a child and is not able to return to school or daycare, this can be dealt with by discussing flexible work arrangements with your manager or as an accommodation based on family status as the staff person needs to stay home with the child. You may have to provide medical documentation confirming your child's illness. A request for an accommodation or [Alternative Work Arrangement](#) can be made with the assistance of the [Family Care Office](#).

The University has prepared the following suggestions when making flexible work arrangements between yourself and your manager for caregiving responsibilities during COVID-19. <https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/memos/flexible-work-arrangements-to-accommodate-caregiving-responsibilities-during-covid-19/>

These may include focusing on deliverables instead of hours of work, adjusted hours of work, establishing core duties and hours of work, etc. If you are having difficulty working out an accommodation with your manager, please reach out to the Union.

If you need additional support, you can also visit the Family Care Office and the Child Care Resources page here: <https://familycare.utoronto.ca/resources/covid-19-child-care-resources/>

## Returning to Campus – Personal Protective Equipment

INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION APPLIES TO ALL UNITS

**Will the University be supplying protective gear, such as, face masks and face shields to all employees?**

The employer has a duty to ensure safe workplaces. What that looks like will vary depending on the circumstances. People in Health and Wellness will have different PPE from people in a private office with no one coming in from the public.

As staff come back, they have the right to know what protections will be in the workplace and can work with their Joint Health and Safety Committee and the Union to ensure that they have the appropriate PPE and/or appropriate distancing for the space and the job.

## Returning to Campus – Public Transit

INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION APPLIES TO ALL UNITS

<p><b>I am concerned about the second wave of COVID-19 and public transit.</b></p>	<p>Public transit is a big concern for a lot of members. There is no easy answer here. An employer has a legal responsibility to ensure a safe workplace. There is no obligation related to someone's commute.</p> <p>Information on travelling on the Local transit during the COVID-19 pandemic can be found here:</p> <p><a href="https://www.ttc.ca/Riding_the_TTC/Safety_and_Security/Riding_the_TTC_during_the_COVID-19_pandemic.jsp">https://www.ttc.ca/Riding_the_TTC/Safety_and_Security/Riding_the_TTC_during_the_COVID-19_pandemic.jsp</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.mississauga.ca/miway-transit/travelling-with-us/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-information/">https://www.mississauga.ca/miway-transit/travelling-with-us/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-information/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.gotransit.com/en/travelling-with-us/safety-and-security/go-transit-covid-safety?gclid=CjwKCAjw8MD7BRArEiwAGZsrBe8W7NURFwIW1ABh3ffkZlaSyG2-Fd1U9Zdbyz3UNhU_6PXIkRrBRoCM-MQAvD_BwE">https://www.gotransit.com/en/travelling-with-us/safety-and-security/go-transit-covid-safety?gclid=CjwKCAjw8MD7BRArEiwAGZsrBe8W7NURFwIW1ABh3ffkZlaSyG2-Fd1U9Zdbyz3UNhU_6PXIkRrBRoCM-MQAvD_BwE</a></p>
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## Working With Kids

INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION APPLIES TO U OF T, VIC, AND SMC UNITS

<p><b>What are my rights in juggling work and family responsibilities?</b></p>	<p>Based on the Human Rights Code of Ontario, the employer must accommodate an employee's care-giving responsibilities to the point of undue hardship.</p> <p><a href="http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/covid-19-and-ontario%E2%80%99s-human-rights-code-%E2%80%93-questions-and-answers">http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/news_centre/covid-19-and-ontario%E2%80%99s-human-rights-code-%E2%80%93-questions-and-answers</a> There is not a one-size-fits-all answer, and these are dealt with on a case by case basis. If you need assistance working on an accommodation, please contact the Union.</p>
<p><b>Will the University provide flexible work options (working from home) for employees with kids?</b></p>	<p>You may wish to request an accommodation to fulfill child caregiving needs. Flexible work arrangements should first be discussed with your manager or supervisor. A request for an <a href="#">Alternative Work Arrangement</a> can be made with the assistance of the <a href="#">Family Care Office</a>.</p> <p>The University has prepared the following suggestions when making flexible work arrangements between yourself and your manager for caregiving responsibilities during COVID-19. <a href="https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/memos/flexible-work-arrangements-to-accommodate-caregiving-responsibilities-during-covid-19/">https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/memos/flexible-work-arrangements-to-accommodate-caregiving-responsibilities-during-covid-19/</a></p> <p>These may include focusing on deliverables instead of hours of work, adjusted hours of work, establishing core duties and hours of work, etc. If you are having difficulty working out an accommodation with your manager, please reach out to the Union.</p>

<p><b>What if my kid has to self-isolate, or their school is closed due to COVID?</b></p>	<p>Speak with your manager and attempt to make a flexible work arrangement or receive an accommodation.</p> <p>If an accommodation of flexible work plan is not possible, employees are able to take a job protected leave to care for their children under reason five of the Infectious Disease Emergency Leave. Which states “Infectious disease emergency leave absences do not have to be taken consecutively. Employees can take the leave in part days, full days or periods of more than one day.” The leave is available until December 31, 2021. More information about the Infectious Disease Emergency Leave can be found here: <a href="https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/infectious-disease-emergency-leave">https://www.ontario.ca/document/your-guide-employment-standards-act-0/infectious-disease-emergency-leave</a>. Other options include the use of vacation days, personal days or lieu time.</p>
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**Stress and Support**  
 INFORMATION IN THIS SECTION APPLIES TO ALL UNITS

<p><b>Are there tools and resources to help me with all the anxiety I am experiencing?</b></p>	<p><a href="https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/employees/efap/">https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/employees/efap/</a></p> <p><a href="https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Managing-Anxiety-Around-Returning-to-Campus.pdf">https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Managing-Anxiety-Around-Returning-to-Campus.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.vicu.utoronto.ca/about-victoria/human-resources/covid-19-employee-tools-and-resources/">https://www.vicu.utoronto.ca/about-victoria/human-resources/covid-19-employee-tools-and-resources/</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.usw1998.ca/services/lifeline/">https://www.usw1998.ca/services/lifeline/</a></p> <p><a href="http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/resources_ontarians_experiencing_mha.pdf">http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/resources_ontarians_experiencing_mha.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/faq-and-resources">https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-health-and-covid-19/faq-and-resources</a></p> <p><a href="https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-mental-health-resources/">https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/covid-19-protect-yourself-others/covid-19-mental-health-resources/</a></p> <p><a href="https://ca.portal.gs/">https://ca.portal.gs/</a></p> <p><a href="https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/covid-19/wellness-and-work-from-home-toolkit/">https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/covid-19/wellness-and-work-from-home-toolkit/</a></p>
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## Return to Campus CHECKLIST

### So you've been asked to return to work on campus. Now what?

While many people have been showing that they can do their jobs quite well from home, there may be operational reasons why a department wants to bring staff back onsite. The University does have a right to require workers to come to work on campus.

Managers can approve work from home arrangements unilaterally or consider a request to work from home through the University's [Alternative Work Arrangement Guideline](#). With the campuses reopening, some members are coming back in hybrid work arrangements. This is varying by department. Managers do have an obligation to act reasonably, so we would expect them to be open to these requests, especially with evidence that staff can get the work done from home, especially if they are not in a front facing position. If you have an issue with your Alternative Work Arrangement not being approved, please get in touch with the union and we can advise.

- If the request from your manager to return to campus was made verbally or during a meeting, email your manager requesting the following information in writing:
  - ✓ First day back
  - ✓ Shift times
  - ✓ Work tasks & responsibilities you are expected to perform while on campus
  - ✓ Changes to the work environment to be aware of

### The General Assessment Tool (GAT)

Before managers and department heads can bring anyone back to work on campus, they must prepare a re-entry plan that is vetted by the University's Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) Office. This plan is referred to as the GAT. Within it, managers and department heads are asked to adapt the workplace in line with Public Health safety mandates, to assess the work that needs to be completed, its operational urgency, and whether the work can be completed off site.

- Request to see a copy of the GAT for your workspace (Please notify the union if you are being denied access to the GAT)

Remember: Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, you have the right to know about hazards in the workplace. Make sure that you have detailed information on the arrangements for health and safety in your work area before you return to campus, and as public health requirements change physical distancing, Personal Protective Equipment, etc.



## Personal Protective Equipment

The University has implemented a Policy requiring non-medical masks or face coverings. Masks or face coverings are to be worn indoors in common-use spaces, including classrooms and common areas in residences on University property. Please ensure you have a non-medical mask or face-covering ready when working on-campus to meet the policy's requirements.

EHS will determine whether employees and students should be provided with the appropriate medical masks (N95 masks, surgical masks etc.) when working in specific environments such as some research labs and health care settings. For all other work conducted at the University, the general use of face covering is required.

For more information regarding the University's policy, please consult the Policy on [Non-Medical Masks or Face Coverings](#) and the accompanying Joint Provostial and Human Resources Guideline on Non-Medical Masks.

- If this is your first time back on campus since March of 2020, ensure that you have a non-medical mask and inquire whether a medical mask is required for your work and confirm if the department will

## Voice your Concerns

We understand that there are many uncertainties at this time. Any concerns you might have about your health and safety in the workplace are valid. You should raise these concerns to your manager or supervisor. If needed, you can also reach out to your [JHSC Rep](#) or [Mark Austin](#), the USW1998 Health and Safety Officer.

- If you still have questions or concerns about returning to work on campus, talk to your manager, a JHSC Rep, or the Union.

## Requesting Accommodations for medical or caregiving

If you have a medical condition which puts you at increased risk of COVID-19, contact the University's Health and Well-Being department at (416) 946-0537 or [hw@utoronto.ca](mailto:hw@utoronto.ca) to assist in developing a medical accommodation. Medical documentation may be required. Accommodations will vary based on the type of medical issue and the type of work and will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Members have the right to union representation throughout the accommodation process. Please contact the union for assistance.

You may wish to request an accommodation to fulfill child or elderly caregiving needs. Flexible work arrangements should first be discussed with your manager or supervisor. A request for an [Alternative Work Arrangement](#) can be made with the assistance of the [Family Care Office](#). The University has prepared the following suggestions when making [flexible work arrangements](#) between yourself and your manager for caregiving responsibilities during COVID-19.

These may include focusing on deliverables instead of hours of work, adjusted hours of work, establishing core duties and hours of work, etc. If you are having difficulty working out an accommodation with your manager, please reach out to the union. There is not a one-size-fits-all answer and these are dealt with on a case by case basis. If you need assistance working on an accommodation, please contact the Union.

- Contact [Health and Well-being](#) for accommodations if you are immunocompromised.
- Talk to your manager about accommodations around flexible work arrangements for caregiver requirements.
- For assistance creating a plan, please contact the union.

## Proof of Vaccination and Daily UCheck Screening

As per the University's vaccination policy, all workers going into work on campus must provide proof of their [vaccination status](#) via [UCheck](#) or have an approved medical or human rights based exemption, prior to continuing the daily self assessment checks.

All faculty members, librarians, staff, and students must use [UCheck](#) every day before coming to campus. By following this link, you will be prompted to log in with your UTORid. If you have been previously doing paper UCheck forms, you can continue to do so and maintain the records.

Workers who are sick or experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 should stay at home until cleared to return to work. Refer to COVID-19 HR guidelines.

- ✓ Submit proof of vaccination or medical or human rights-based exemption before coming to campus, via [UCheck](#).
- ✓ complete the [UCheck](#) screening tool daily before coming to campus.

If you have any questions, contact the Occupational Health Nurse at [ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca](mailto:ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca)

## Confirmed or Symptomatic Cases

The employer needs to balance privacy issues and the need to disclose information on COVID risk. If someone does the UCheck assessment and stays home due to symptoms, travel or other health issues, co-workers will not be informed of this. The full procedure to be used in the event of a confirmed and/or symptomatic COVID-19 case can be found here: <https://ehs.utoronto.ca/covid-19-information/ProceduresIllness/>

- Follow the UCheck recommendations.

In the event of a confirmed case contact [ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca](mailto:ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca)



## Return to Campus CHECKLIST

- Receive written request from manager or supervisor which includes the following information:
  - First day back
  - Shift times
  - Work tasks & responsibilities you are expected to perform while on campus
  - Changes to the work environment to be aware of
  
- Request to see a copy of the GAT for your workspace.
  
- If this is your first time back on campus since March of 2020, ensure that you have a non-medical mask and inquire whether a medical mask is required for your work and confirm if the department will supply these.
  
- If you still have questions or concerns about returning to work on campus, talk to your manager, a JHSC Rep, or the Union.
  
- Talk to your manager about accommodations if you are immunocompromised or flexible work arrangements for caregiver requirements. For assistance creating any of these plans, please contact the union.
  
- Submit proof of vaccination or, medical or human rights-based exemption before coming to campus.
  
- Complete the [UCheck](#) screening tool daily before coming to campus.
  
- Follow the UCheck recommendations.
  - In the event of a confirmed case contact [ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca](mailto:ehs.occhealth@utoronto.ca)
  - For the full procedure of confirmed and symptomatic cases visit the EHS website <https://ehs.utoronto.ca/covid-19-information/ProceduresIllness/>