SPH – SAFE ACTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES’ SAFE RETURN
(This document will continue to be updated as the pandemic situation evolves and as business needs change)

Guiding Principles

The policies and protocols of BUSPH vis-à-vis returning to the workplace in the era of COVID-19 aim to foster the safety and security of all our faculty, staff and students as well as other counterparts at BU. At SPH, we aim to protect and promote public health by supporting our faculty, staff and students in advancing the mission of the School in education, research, practice and administration. BUSPH return to the workplace plans will be in alignment and compliance with local orders and ordinances of the City of Boston and Suffolk County, as well as the State of Massachusetts Phased Reopening Model. Additionally, SPH plans will also be in alignment with the larger BU plans and will follow recommendations from the federal government (Opening Guidelines), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the MA Department of Public Health. It is worthy of note that our return to the workplace plans may evolve as the situation related to COVID-19 further evolves and any updates will be implemented as appropriate and necessary.

Workplace Expectations & Guidelines

All staff, faculty and students are expected to fully comply with the policies, protocols and guidelines outlined in this document as part of SPH’s Workplace Expectations and Guidelines. Failure to do so may result in corrective action.

Factors guiding the Return on Campus will be driven by:

• Congregation limitations & public health criteria and BU SPH’s ability to remain in compliance with city/state ordinances
• Campus based essential operations and activities
• Ability to control and manage specific work environments
• Necessity to access on-site resources
• Availability of PPE
• Testing and tracing capabilities and availability
• Symptom screening capabilities
• Attention to at-risk faculty and staff

A Phased Return

As the University’s COVID-19 response and recovery leadership team works on developing plans toward the restoration of research, teaching and student life, SPH is also working toward developing plans specific to our functions, in alignment with the larger BU leadership team. In an attempt to ensure a safe and thoughtful approach to increasing campus operations a phased return of employees on campus will be implemented, in preparation for the return of our students in the fall. Managers will be advised to allow for flexibility in adjusting personnel on campus, in accordance with operational needs of each department as well as position roles and
responsibilities. To that end, particularly in the early steps of returning to campus, the number of personnel on premises will be limited. The phased approach will be as follows:

- Personnel who have been working on campus since March 23, 2020, should continue to do so, based on their work assignment.
- Research and clinical activities have resumed and will continue incrementally in the coming months, consistent with public health and safety guidelines.
- Remote teaching and working will continue into the summer. Staff who can effectively work remotely, with their manager’s concurrence, are encouraged to continue to do so.

**Getting to Campus**

Considering that in addition to driving to campus, faculty and staff may also rely on public transportation, we encourage our community members to follow [City of Boston](#) and [Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#) recommendations, including wearing face coverings and maintaining physical distancing, when traveling through public spaces. The [MBTA website](#) offers details on changes to passenger protocols, in addition to schedule changes. The [Medical Campus Parking & Transportation website](#) is another resource that offers detailed information on the BU Shuttle, parking rates, and subsidized transit passes, in addition to personalized commuter assistance.

**Work Areas**

In order to minimize the chances of spreading the disease through incidental contact, SPH’s SAFER group has been working on developing a number of protocols. To that end:

**SPH common areas, open work environments and meeting rooms** have been assessed by Campus Planning and Operations as well as Environmental Health and Safety so as to allow for physical separation and distancing between coworkers, students, and visitors etc. This is accomplished by:

- **Placing visual cues** such as floor decals, colored tape, or signs to indicate e.g. where one should stand while waiting in line.
- **Placing one-way directional signage** for large open work spaces with multiple through-ways to increase distance between employees moving through the space.
- **Proper planning for employees who share an office** (unless the required 6 feet of distancing can be regularly preserved) to engage in alternative work schedules etc.
- **Enforcing masks/face coverings for all personnel** in a reception/receiving area. Masks/face coverings should be used when inside any BUSPH facility where others are present, including walking in narrow hallways where others travel and in break rooms, conference rooms and other meeting locations.
- **Regulating use of elevators** whereby no more than one person may enter an elevator at a time. Anyone using the elevator should wear a mask or face covering and avoid touching the elevator buttons with exposed hand/fingers, if possible. Prior to entering an elevator, one should use the hand sanitizer dispensers located near each elevator.

**Access** – All access to SPH buildings will be via swipe card access only. All employees and students should ensure they are in possession of their Boston University identification card at all
times, thus preventing unauthorized access to the spaces we all are working hard to keep healthy and safe. No piggybacking of anyone without a BU ID should be allowed.

**Visitors** - All visitors will be required to engage with SPH personnel remotely, to the extent possible. For visitors who must be on premises, they should contact their host at SPH prior to arrival on premises, coordinating the time of arrival for expeditious entry on premise, avoiding congestion and congregation in common areas. Any SPH employees expecting visitors must share their contact information with the visitor they are expecting, in order to ensure a smooth visit on premises, in accordance with SPH protocols.

**Deliveries** – A sign is posted outside of main entries to SPH areas with instructions for delivery personnel, as well as contact information of the SPH Facilities and Building Operations Director. In order to minimize excessive foot traffic, all deliveries will be left with the front-desk personnel. Subsequently, the latter will reach out to each director of administration/unit manager to set up a time for each to come in and retrieve any deliveries belonging to their department/unit. Upon discussion with all directors of administration, it was unanimously decided that all FedEx/UPS/DHL/Amazon deliveries for all buildings (Fuller, Talbot and Crosstown) shall be delivered at Talbot. Each director of administration will then be responsible for coordinating such mail/delivery retrieval for their respective units. Meanwhile BU mail will continue to be delivered as usual considering that BU mail personnel have swipe access and will deliver mail to the pre-defined location.

**Signage and visual cues throughout SPH Buildings** – In collaboration with BU Campus Planning and Operations, Environmental Health and Safety as well as Medical Campus Facilities personnel, SPH buildings have been fully outfitted with appropriate signage throughout all areas providing guidance vis-à-vis traffic flow, occupancy requirements for common areas such elevators, offices, conference rooms, kitchens, bathrooms etc. **Building coordinators** for each department have been identified. They will partner with Campus Planning and Operations to identify any spaces in need of partitioning, additional signage and visual cues in an attempt to ensure proper physical distancing is fully observed. A complete sign manual can be found [here](#).

**Conducting meetings**

To the extent possible, all meetings should be conducted using remote-meeting technology. Should there be a business necessity where a meeting must take place in person, the number of attendees should be such that it allows for appropriate physical distancing of a minimum of six feet apart, whereby all participants are wearing facial coverings.

**Kitchen and breakroom areas**

Each kitchen and breakroom area in SPH buildings has been outfitted with proper signage vis-à-vis occupancy. Everyone is required to observe the signage displayed accordingly. While employees may continue to store food in the common kitchen fridge, only one employee at a time must access the kitchen area, unless there is room for maintaining 6 feet of distance between each employee accessing such common premises. There should be no communal food sharing, thus reducing the potential to spread illness. Everyone is expected to practice good hygiene by washing hands as well as cleaning and sanitizing food preparation surfaces and high
touch areas by using the provided cleaning materials after use. No personal dishes or utensils should be left in the kitchen or breakout rooms. Everyone is expected to wear a face covering when entering dining areas, kitchens and break-rooms. Please use hand-sanitizer stations provided throughout SPH buildings or carry one with you if possible.

**Staffing options to avoid congestion**

In order to ensure proper physical distancing, the School of Public Health will implement phased staffing, which entails that staff’s return shall be phased in, over a period of time.

Mission-critical operations, the need to access on-site resources in order to meet business needs as well as the ability to regulate and manage certain work environments will be key to deciding the extent to which expanded staffing on premises will be necessary. Each department has been asked to articulate and develop basic, necessary staffing needs in order to ensure support for critical on-site operations. Further coordination will be necessary when expanded staffing is expected to take place.

**De-Densifying through multi-modality of work arrangements**

The Associate Dean for Administration and Finance will work closely with all managers, supervisors and employees to ensure flexibility and a range of available opportunities as we jointly engage in planning ahead. Managers in close collaboration with Human Resources and the Associate Dean for Administration and Finance will work to approve arrangements allowing for successful implementation and clear expectations. Some options to consider are as follows:

- **Remote Work**
  - These arrangements should be approved by immediate supervisors and can include full days, partial days or week schedules as conducive to business operations.
  - To maintain reduced density, thereby reducing risk of transmission of COVID-19, supervisors may determine that faculty and staff who can effectively work remotely may continue to do so.
  - In order to reduce the number of employees on premises, supervisors should consider assessing which job roles may continue remotely, allowing incumbents to fulfill some or all of their work responsibilities by working remotely. All such arrangements must be documented and approved by the immediate supervisor and may ascribe to a full or partial day/week schedule as necessary to fulfill business needs and support operations.

- **Alternating Days**
  - Individual units or department administrators may schedule partial staffing on alternating days. Doing so will help enable physical distancing, especially in areas with common workspaces. Available/unoccupied/vacant office space may be utilized at the discretion of each department administrator to ensure proper de-densifying, particularly given situations where several staff share a common office.
• **Staggered Reporting and Departing**
  - Since the beginning or end of a workday typically creates situations where many people are brought together in common entry/exit areas of buildings, planning for staggered reporting and departure times may prove helpful in adhering to physical distancing requirements. To that end, unit and departmental administrators should work jointly with department chairs in establishing staggered reporting and departure times, preferably 30 minutes apart, which will reduce the number of people gathered in common areas.
  - Staggered hours within a fixed schedule: Managers may establish starting and ending times that differ from the department’s norm, but keep the same schedule each day (e.g., Monday-Friday, (9:30-6 or 7-3:30 etc.)

• **On-site Half Shifts**
  - Employees may be scheduled to work 50% of their shifts on site and 50% remotely so as to allow for additional physical distancing and optimize use of office space for necessary on site work.

• **Flexible Work Schedule (Evening Hours, Weekends)**
  - Variable day: Managers may establish a consistent schedule of a different number of hours each day as long as they achieve the expected number of hours within the week (e.g., Monday, Wednesday ten hours; Tuesday, Friday eight hours; Thursday six and a half hours).

We anticipate that there will be a continued need for physical distancing in order to remain compliant with governmental issued guidance vis-à-vis such standards. This entails that there will likely be a continued need for a reduced number of personnel on campus, alongside specific restrictions on larger gatherings.

As staffing on-site increases and operations expand, officials will closely monitor and assess the potential spread of the virus, as well as existing policies and procedures to mitigate it. Testing will be a critical part of assessing the impact of increased staffing. If localized outbreaks emerge, tighter restrictions and reduced staffing may need to be implemented again.

**RESEARCH RECOVERY TOOLKIT**

As highlighted by [BU’s Back to On-Campus Work](#), research and clinical activities will resume incrementally in the coming months—consistent with public health and safety guidelines—recognizing the urgency of continuity to any ongoing studies. The health and safety of those who work in a clinical setting is of paramount importance to us. The Office of Research has created a [Research Recovery Toolkit](#) that all research and clinical personnel should familiarize themselves with before returning to the workplace.
Symptom Monitoring Requirement

Personnel who have been instructed to return to the workplace must conduct symptom monitoring daily prior to reporting to work. Each employee must be free of ANY symptoms potentially related to COVID-19 or have had evaluation and clearance by Occupational Health in order to be eligible to report to work. At this time, these symptoms include one or more of the following in the ensuring list (which is NOT comprehensive):

- Fever above 100°F, or feeling unusually hot (if no thermometer is available), accompanied by shivering/chills
- Sore throat
- Cough
- Runny nose or new nasal congestion
- Difficulty breathing/shortness of breath
- Diarrhea, with or without respiratory symptoms
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Headache
- Generally feeling unwell, fatigue, and/or muscle aches
- New loss of taste or smell
- New foot sores

If an employee is experiencing any such symptoms, they SHOULD NOT report to work. Rather, they should contact their primary care provider, notify their respective supervisor, and call the BU COVID-19 hotline (please call 617-358-4990), which is available to students, faculty, staff, and visiting scholars Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm. The BUOHC offers helpful guidance at this link: https://www.bu.edu/buohc/covid-19/

Any employee who has been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, who is being tested for COVID-19, or who has concerning symptoms, should stay home. If an employee feels such symptoms arise while they’re on campus, the employee should leave and call their primary care provider, notify their respective supervisor, then call the BU COVID-19 hotline at 617-358-4990, Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm. Employees who may have been exposed to the virus at work will be contacted by the Occupational Health Center if they are identified as a close contact. Facilities has a specific protocol to properly clean areas suspected of infection with COVID-19 and will enact this as needed.

Additionally, please note that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Boston University has introduced the supplemental paid leave program for staff, providing up to ten (10) additional days of COVID-19 paid absence leave. Staff may use this paid leave time if unable to work because of their own COVID-19 related illness or disruptions that require caring for an immediate family member. Additional details on this policy may be found on the HR site at: http://www.bu.edu/hr/lifebu/time-off-leaves-of-absence/covid-19-paid-absence/
**Higher-Risk Groups**

According to the CDC, individuals with certain conditions may have a higher risk for COVID-19 infection. Those conditions may include:

- Older adults (aged 65 years and older)
- People with HIV
- Asthma (moderate-to-severe)
- Chronic lung disease
- Diabetes
- Serious heart conditions
- Chronic kidney disease being treated with dialysis
- Severe obesity
- Immunocompromised
- Liver disease
- People whose medical provider deems them at higher risk

The Provost’s Office recently announced a process for faculty to apply for workplace adjustments, starting with submitting a form. The deadline for such applications is **Thursday, June 25, 2020**. A similar process for staff is being worked on by Human Resources and should be available in the next few weeks. Updates will be further reflected in this document as such updates become available.

Faculty and staff who have questions about the process may contact the COVID-19 employee support line at 617-358-4990. The support line is staffed Monday through Friday, 9 AM - 5 PM.

**Ways to limit the spread of germs**

We can all do our part to help our community stay safe and decrease the spread of COVID-19. Here are some ways to limit the spread of germs:

1. Stay home if you are sick or experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms.
2. Wear a cloth face covering or mask in shared spaces at all times while on campus.
3. Keep six feet away from others when you must go into a shared space (physical distancing).
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
5. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces including your keyboard, phone, and other items.
6. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your inner elbow.
7. Throw out used tissues immediately and wash your hands.
8. Engage in frequent and proper handwashing – Wash your hands using soap and water for at least 20 seconds when visibly soiled, prior to eating and after using the restroom. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with greater than 60% ethanol, or 70% isopropanol in healthcare settings, or when soap and water are not available.
**Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

All employees will be required to wear facial coverings or masks depending on the type of work they perform. While everyone is expected to bring their own mask or face covering for normal, day-to-day activity, the School of Public Health will also have available masks, free of charge, for anyone unable to bring their own mask while on SPH premises. When sitting in their own office or an enclosed private workspace alone, employees will not need to wear a mask or face covering. Employees are reminded to avoid touching their eye, nose, or mouth when removing the mask. Employees should remember to wash their hands immediately before or after removal of the face covering/mask.

The following are various types of face coverings/masks that may be worn on SPH premises:

- **CLOTH FACE COVERING:** Worn by the campus community, including faculty and staff, in shared, non-healthcare settings to reduce the wearer's ability to spread infection via respiratory droplets. These inexpensive face coverings can be made at home or purchased. Change and launder your face coverings daily. Store them in a clean paper bag when not in use.

- **DISPOSABLE MASK:** Also worn by the campus community, including faculty and staff, in shared, non-healthcare settings to contain the wearer's respiratory droplets. These masks should be discarded daily.

- **SURGICAL MASK:** Reserved for healthcare workers providing patient care. These masks reduce the wearer's spread of respiratory droplets and shield the wearer from large droplets emitted by others.

- **N-95 RESPIRATOR:** Reserved for persons at high risk of COVID-19 exposure, including healthcare workers, first responders, and clinical staff performing aerosolizing or procedures with high potential for viral transmission, or staff cleaning known COVID-19 contaminated spaces. These contain the wearer's respiratory droplets and protect the wearer from the finer respiratory droplet emissions of others.

**Gloves, Goggles, and Face Shields**

While most SPH employees will not need to wear gloves during their everyday duties, they may choose to do so. Employees are reminded that wearing gloves does not replace the need to wash handles often. Employees required to wear protective goggles or face shields in the workplace will be properly notified by their respective supervisors and will be provided with such equipment by their department where it’s a requirement.

**HVAC**

The University Campus Planning and Operations is putting together an extensive FAQ site, which will be reviewed by Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) and the Medical Advisory...
Group, answering many HVAC questions in specifics. In the meantime, here is an overview of the University HVAC strategy:

1. **Inspect Systems**  
   FMO is inspecting the systems and their components to ensure that all are operating as designed. This is particularly important with older systems to ensure they are operating as robustly as they possibly can. This would include inspection of motors, belts, filters, inlet and outlet dampers, automation systems (where they are installed), and manual controls.

2. **Verify Filtration**  
   When inspections are completed, and FMO knows that systems are operating as designed, each system will be examined and the filtration level will be verified. A determination will then be made as to whether or not the system can accommodate enhanced filtration without affecting the airflow and number of air changes as designed into the system.

3. **Evaluate Increase in Outside Air Volume**  
   Through the use of controls, both automatic and manual, determine if the amount of outside air volume can be increased while still maintaining the integrity of the system and the environment it serves.

4. **Validate with Third-party Consultant**  
   Engage an outside consultant (Environmental Health & Engineering) to assess BU’s enhanced protocols and are communicating with them on a weekly basis. In addition, as part of regular maintenance of our HVAC systems, FMO has reached out to vendors to ensure they are working in compliance with COVID-19 protocols.

5. **Review of Systems 24/7 under COVID-19 Protocols**  
   Implement an integrated team of specialized group FMO’s Engineering & Building Systems engineering staff, HVAC technicians, COVID-19 compliant vendors, and building area managers, Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) to assess spaces, systems, improvements to air quality on a daily basis. To ensure we have optimal functioning.

6. **Maintain Inspection Inventory**  
   FMO will maintain inventory of inspections and ensure robust standards are continually met.

As additional progress is made vis-a-vis HVAC systems, the SPH SAFER group will continue to keep the community apprised.

**Workspace disinfecting**  
BUSPH will work closely with Facilities to ensure our work areas are regularly cleaned and disinfected, pursuant to CDC guidelines. Additionally, all employees are required to do their own part in wiping down personal work surfaces and commonly touched areas. Each department/unit at SPH will be in possession of disinfecting supplies necessary to allow employees to wipe down workspaces at the start and end of every work shift. It is important that we all clean and disinfect objects touched by multiple people such as:

- Tables
- Doorknobs
- Light switches
- Countertops
- Handles
- Touch screens
- Printers/copiers
- Coffee makers etc.

All employees should regularly engage in such practices to reduce the risk of virus exposure. Common areas should be wiped down after each use and office spaces should be wiped down daily.

Bathrooms in BU buildings have continuously running exhaust ventilation to the outdoors as required by Massachusetts and International building code. Additionally, Facilities personnel are responsible for cleaning and disinfection of bathrooms and will be amplifying their efforts by increasing the number of bathroom cleaning/disinfection throughout the day.

**Employee Wellness**

In addition to our SPH Wellness Program Coordinator, Ilana Schlesinger (ilanasc@bu.edu, (617) 358-3269), the Faculty and Staff Assistance Office (FSAO) remains available to provide emotional and well-being support during this challenging and stressful time. Telephonic and video counseling are available. You may contact the FSAO via telephone at (617) 353-5381 as well as via e-mail at fsao@bu.edu. Additionally, their website at http://www.bu.edu/fsao/ offers helpful guidance vis-à-vis services to our faculty and staff. Further, the Employee Wellness has created a COVID-19 page, which continues to evolve and provide resources and information, alongside virtual programming to help all employees cope with this challenging time.

**Additional Resources for our Employees:**

1) **FACULTY & STAFF ASSISTANCE OFFICE (FSAO)** provides free and confidential counseling to Boston University faculty, staff and your immediate family members. Virtual appointments are available through a HIPAA-compliant Zoom platform. Schedule an appointment online or by phone at 617-353-5381.

2) **BU COVID-19 INFORMATION WEBSITE** -
   https://www.bu.edu/covid-19-information/

3) **COVID-19 hotline** 617-358-4990 (Monday through Friday, 9 am to 5 pm)

4) **CAMPUS PLANNING & OPERATIONS** – http://www.bu.edu/cpo/
   - FACILITIES MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS
     http://www.bu.edu/cpo/who-we-are/operations-services/
   - CUSTODIAL SERVICES
     http://www.bu.edu/cpo/who-we-are/operations-services/custodial-operations/

5) **OPERATIONS SERVICE CENTERS - MEDICAL CAMPUS** • 617-358-4144
6) ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY

7) EQUAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICE –
   http://www.bu.edu/eoo/reasonable-accommodations
   email:eoo@bu.edu  617-358-1796

8) HUMAN RESOURCES:
   http://www.bu.edu/hr/lifebu/time-off-leaves-of-absence/covid-19-related-absences

9) OFFICE OF THE OMBUDS - http://www.bu.edu/ombuds  email:ombuds@bu.edu
   617-358-5960

10) PARKING AND TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
    ● Medical Campus - https://www.bumc.bu.edu/parking  617-358-3506

11) RESEARCH RECOVERY TOOLKIT:
    http://www.bu.edu/researchsupport/tools-services/research-recovery-toolkit/recovery-guidance/

CITY, STATE, AND GOVERNMENT INFORMATION ON COVID-19

   ● CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION COVID-19
     cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov
   ● CITY OF BOSTON
   ● COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
   ● MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
     Mass.gov/2019coronavirus
   ● MBTA — MASSACHUSETTS BAY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY
     mbta.com