

INFORMATION SHEET

HSE: COVID-19 Risk Assessment and Reporting Advice

You may or may not be aware that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has updated the Reporting of Injuries Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) to include COVID-19. The guidance is changing regularly and is open to interpretation but it does impact on us as a University; the following now applies;

- Unintended exposure to COVID-19 has been added as a dangerous occurrence to RIDDOR. This could mean the loss of containment in a lab or a failure of a safeguard, such as PPE or failure of a decontamination process, etc.
- Diagnosis of COVID-19 likely to be attributable to exposure at work has been added as a reportable disease under RIDDOR. This could be difficult to prove either way but if we have people working in health care settings or are in work, particularly where we are unable to achieve social distancing, we are increasing the risk.
- If anyone dies as a result of the disease (attributed to exposure at work) then this must be reported immediately to HSE as a death due to exposure to a biological agent.

All reports made to the HSE under RIDDOR will be carried out by the University Health & Safety (H&S) Team and investigations will be carried out in accordance with the University Adverse Event System.

In addition, the HSE website now references social distancing in line with the Public Health England (PHE) guidelines and states: Where necessary, the HSE will consider taking a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks. These actions include the provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices to help secure improvements with the PHE guidance.

More information can be found at: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/news/social-distancing-coronavirus.htm>

What do we need to do as a University?

As a University we need to ensure we have the following in place;

Risk Assessment: It is crucial the University is risk assessing activity, including putting measures in place to protect against COVID-19 exposure and assessing the suitability of individuals to attend work – taking into account advice from PHE and the University Occupational Health department, as well as the University process for authorising key worker travel: <https://staff.swansea.ac.uk/professional-services/strategic-communications/notices/coronavirus/key-worker-travel-authorisation/>

The H&S Team is able to support with the completion and review of risk assessments. Please contact your H&S Business Lead or see our intranet pages for contact details: <https://staff.swansea.ac.uk/healthsafety/>

Reporting Arrangements: Robust arrangements must be in place to immediately report the following;

- Dangerous occurrences: any scenario whereby someone is unintentionally exposed to COVID-19. Examples of this could be; accidental release/ loss of containment in a lab, or a failure in a safeguard such as PPE or a process designed to control the risk.
- Reportable diseases: any person who is diagnosed with COVID-19 which is likely to be as a result of exposure at work. This could be difficult to prove either way but by capturing the information for staff that are in work or working on behalf of the University (not those working solely at home), the H&S Team can investigate and make an informed decision on whether to report or not.
- Death as a result of COVID: likely to be as a result of exposure at work.

Reporting applies to staff working at or on behalf of the University, staff affected by COVID-19 but working solely at home do not need to be reported to the H&S Team.

The University also needs to capture this information for staff and students volunteering as whilst we may not be the reporting organisation, we should record the information and be involved in any subsequent investigation as required.

All reports should be made to the Line Manager and H&S Team as soon as is possible and followed up on the University Report it Adverse Event System: <https://staff.swansea.ac.uk/healthsafety/report-it/>

Staff working in the Professional Service Units diagnosed with COVID-19 will also be picked up by colleague attendance and the H&S Team will work closely with HR to manage this going forward.

The H&S Team is available to support with the development of risk assessment and the implementation of appropriate controls. The H&S Team will make the relevant reports to the HSE as required. If you are in any doubt as to what needs to be reported then please get in touch.