

UP DILIMAN COVID-19 TASK FORCE

Updated Guidelines for Returning-to-Work Employees (5 January 2022)

In recent weeks, UP Diliman has seen a general decline in the number of COVID-19 positive cases and an increasing number of vaccinated personnel in our community. However, the number of cases is fast rising again due to the presence of the Omicron variant in the country. Due to this, Alert Level 3 has been declared in NCR for the current period.

The UP Diliman COVID-19 Task Force amends and updates the University's Guidelines released on 31 December 2021 (Memo No. FRN 21-174) to reflect this concerning development and the raised alert level.

Please note that changes and additions to the earlier guidelines are italicized.

Principles

These Guidelines adhere to the following principles (adapted from the UP System Guidelines for the Gradual Reopening of Campuses).

- *Public safety is paramount, trumping individual preferences. The rights of an individual end where the rights of another begin. Where individual preferences undermine public safety, the greater good shall always prevail.*
- *Health, safety, and progress (is a) shared responsibility. Each constituent is answerable to oneself, to one's family, and his or her wider community. Meticulous adherence to protocols and consistent self-regulation among UP's constituents will enable the University to open its workplace, even to a limited extent.*

1. *Submission of Return-To-Work Forms*

All University personnel returning to work after the holiday break (*regardless of whether they travelled outside NCR or not*) shall report to their respective heads of unit, administrative officers, Post-ECQ Teams, and/or health liaison officers (HeLOs).

They shall accomplish two forms: a) Return-to-Work Form detailing their travel activities and social interactions and b) the Risk Assessment Form and submit these to their Health Liaison Officer, Post-ECQ Team, administrative officer or to the unit head. (Please see Appendices A and B for the forms.)

Employees may ask their HeLOs, administrative officers or Post-ECQ Teams for assistance in accomplishing the forms, especially in cases where personnel have internet and technology issues.

After reviewing the individual forms of personnel, HeLOs, administrative officers or PETs shall use the Scoring System & Recommendations Form for recommended actions for each employee. (See Appendix C for the form.)

They may also submit a consolidated or summary of risk assessment scores using the attached Excel sheet as optional template (and may also add other information, if necessary). (See Appendix D: Summary of Risk Assessment Scores).

The unit shall submit the accomplished forms to the UP Health Service-Public Health Unit in one email or in batches at email address: uphspublichealth.upd@up.edu.ph. Use the following subject line: RTW FORMS FOR ASSESSMENT (Name of Unit). *Please do not send the forms individually as they might be overlooked.*

Final assessment will be done by the UPHS-Public Health Unit. Assessment of the information provided by personnel will determine which action/s will be deemed advisable: quarantine, an RT-PCR or return to work. In this case, quarantine shall constitute a work-from-home arrangement.

In the event that an employee develops any symptoms, the employee shall consult the UP Health Service – either via telemedicine or face-to-face consultation - for proper assessment, management and clearance.

Telemedicine appointments can be booked through the site: uphs.appointlet.com. For face-to-face appointments, employees may go directly to the UPHS Emergency Room (ER).

2. Assessment of Risk for Vaccinated and Unvaccinated Personnel Returning from Holiday Break

As a preventive measure, personnel (regardless of whether they travelled or not during the holiday break) shall work from home while waiting for the result of their risk assessment before reporting physically for work.

The decision to place an employee in quarantine is based on an employee's risk of exposure to Covid-19 and their potential to spread the virus.

Employees who are fully vaccinated (completed two doses of Covid-19 vaccines or two does and a booster) are at lower risk of becoming ill with COVID-19 but

still are at some risk for becoming infected and then potentially spreading the virus to others even if they have no symptoms.

Employees who are not fully vaccinated are still at risk of becoming seriously ill with COVID-19 and spreading the virus to others.

If the employee went out of town between December 19, 2021 and January 2, 2022, assessment of the risk of exposure to Covid-19 is based on the activity done and the adherence to standard health protocols.

The number of quarantine days will depend on the risk scoring assessment that will be filled out prior to reporting for work. (Please see Appendix B for the Risk Scoring Assessment form.)

3. *Testing of Very High- and High-Risk Personnel*

Personnel who have been categorized as Very High or High Risk because of the nature of their work (especially in the case of those in essential offices) (after the risk assessment in late 2020 and early 2021) shall be advised to take an RT-PCR test before physically reporting for work.

Concerned personnel shall submit their Case Investigation Form (CIF) to the UPHS-Public Health Unit (PHU) for assessment and scheduling. Health Liaison Officers may coordinate with the UPHS-PHU to facilitate the scheduling of swab tests.

RT-PCR tests for units shall be organized by UPHS-PHU starting in the first week of January 2022 and shall be covered by UP Diliman.

4. *Testing of Low- or Moderate-Risk Personnel*

Personnel who have been categorized as Low or Moderate Risk because of the nature of their work (after the risk assessment in late 2020 and early 2021) but who were assessed as high risk because of their travel and other social activities may opt to either undergo the required quarantine or get tested for COVID-19.

If employees have symptoms or are close contacts of a confirmed positive case, the test can be done through the UPHS-PHU and the cost will be covered by PhilHealth. However, if they are asymptomatic, the test will have to be taken elsewhere and the cost shall be shouldered by the employee.

5. *Testing of Security Guards, Utility Workers and other Agency-Hired Personnel*

As a rule, Covid-related and other health tests of security guards, utility workers and other agency-hired personnel are done through the agencies. UP Diliman, however, will provide free rapid antigen tests to these workers. Priority shall be given to those who travelled during the holiday break.

HeLOs, administrative officers and PETS shall also submit Appendices A-D for these personnel to Dr. Oliva Basuel at osbasuel@up.edu.ph for assessment and scheduling.

A confirmatory RT-PCR shall be scheduled for personnel whose rapid antigen test turned positive. In this case, the cost of RT-PCR shall be covered by PhilHealth.

6. *Vaccination and Booster Shots*

To make the workplace safe for everyone, personnel are highly encouraged to get vaccinated or get their booster shots immediately. A limited number of booster shots will be administered on 4 January 2022 at the UP Health Service. Other vaccination schedules will be announced at a later time.

Employees are encouraged to go to their LGU vaccination sites to get their primary series and/or booster shots.

7. *Work-From-Home Arrangements and Skeleton Workforce*

Once the risk assessment process has been completed, offices and units shall operate on a mixed arrangement of Work-From-Home (WFH) and skeleton workforce (SW). Physically reporting staff shall be reduced to 30-50 percent at any given time.

For offices and units performing essential functions, they shall determine the appropriate size and schedule of their SW based on their respective workload while adjusting for additional safety restrictions in the workplace.

Office capacity shall consider physical space, ventilation, and other pandemic-related safety restrictions.

8. *Research-related Travel*

Research and fieldwork may be conducted by University staff subject to unit guidelines and supervision.

Any faculty, REPS, or staff travelling outside of NCR for research must secure a Travel Order from their unit. A travel order is issued by the Head of Unit or Project Leader and approved by the Chancellor, subject to health and safety requirements.

Research staff must undergo RT-PCR and have a Negative result prior to travel. Cost of Covid-related tests for research staff may be covered by project funds.

Upon return from travel, research staff shall submit to their unit or office the Return-To-Work Forms detailing their travel activities and social interactions together with Forms B and C. (Please see Appendices A-C.) They must also undergo a mandatory quarantine and seek medical clearance from the UP Health Service (UPHS) before reporting for work. Quarantine in this case shall constitute a WFH arrangement.

9. Strict Adherence to Health and Safety Protocols in the Workplace

The same health and safety protocols apply in the current Covid-19 situation, even with the presence of the highly transmissible Omicron variant. What is critical is the compliance with these protocols.

Heads of units must ensure that these protocols and conditions for compliance are in place and monitored. All staff must observe the following:

- a) Submit health checklist and take temperature before entering office premises.*
- b) Wear face mask (preferably, surgical mask) and face shield properly at all times.*
- c) Practice physical distancing of at least two meters.*
- d) Practice frequent hand hygiene.*
- e) Ensure office has proper ventilation. Open windows and use electric fans to generate air circulation.*
- f) Do not report for work if you feel any symptom (cough, fever, headache, diarrhea, body malaise, etc.).*
- g) Do not eat meals together.*
- h) Inform the office if you are living with or caring for a COVID-19-positive, acutely or chronically ill individual at home. Secure a medical clearance from UP Health Service before reporting for work.*
- i) While waiting for your COVID-19 test result, you must immediately self-isolate. Once the result is received, follow the doctor's instructions regarding quarantine.*
- j) Secure a medical clearance from the UP Health Service after taking a leave of absence (especially after a sick leave).*

For any questions, please contact the UPHS-Public Health Unit at UP trunkline loc. 2719 or at 0947-4279281.

Appendix A: Return-to-Work Form

Appendix B: Risk Scoring Matrix *

Appendix C: Recommendations**

Appendix D: Suggested Template: Summary of Assessment Scores

*Adapted from OSH-OVCSA

**Modified scoring from OSH-OVCSA