



## Coronavirus Update

Friday, 11 December 2020

Dear colleagues,

As 2020 comes to a close, so does the work of the COVID-19 Transition Control Group until January 2021.

Thank you to the hundreds of staff that have worked on HIRACs, completed COVID Safe inductions, led health and wellbeing activities and most importantly, supported our students to complete their studies despite truly challenging and unpredictable conditions throughout the year. It is excellent to see that we are entering the Festive break, with a "[COVID Safe Summer](#)" ahead and we certainly hope that it remains that way.

Today we have some important updates on TCG operations and university policies. One of the most significant changes is the leading role that your Deans and Directors will now take in the transition to campus process, as outlined below – but first some policy changes.

### **Face masks**

Good news coming into summer and for everyone working on campus, while you must carry a face mask with you at all times, you no longer need to wear your face mask on campus, if you can effectively physically distance yourself from others. This means if you cannot maintain 1.5 metres difference between yourself and others, you must wear a mask, otherwise the face mask can come off!

### **Travel – interstate and between campuses**

As the interstate borders come down across Australia, we are pleased to announce that you can travel interstate for university business if needed, following the usual approval and declaration processes. You must ensure that the pre-trip [Domestic Travel / Online Conference Application](#) has been completed, approved and attached in Concur before booking any flights and accommodation. Travel between campuses is also now allowed.

Overseas travel, including New Zealand, is still not allowed. While New Zealand is treated as a domestic booking in Concur, it will be treated as international until such time as the travel bubble is opened for all Australians travelling to New Zealand.

### **Dean and Director responsibility for COVIDSafe HIRACs**

We expect many of our staff will return to campus progressively from January to March 2021, and we will need to manage all health and safety aspects of this transition process in compliance with the university's recently updated [COVIDSafe Plan](#).

No one understands the requirements of your work and the available resources better than your Deans, Directors and yourselves – in terms of physical space, IT and other resources, and suitable flexible work arrangements.

For this reason, Deans and Directors now have the responsibility and the authority to approve new and amended COVIDSafe HIRACs for the activities within their Schools and Directorates. We have engaged with all of our Deans and Directors and provided them with a set of *Blended workforce principles* to help manage this process and develop local HIRACs for our transition to campus.

## **Blended Workforce Principles**

Federation University endeavours to provide a flexible and supportive work environment that encourages staff to live a balanced lifestyle combining work, family and community responsibilities, but it is also vital that our campuses return to being vibrant environments for students and staff alike.

The [Blended workforce principles](#) outline the process and principles for how we work with staff upon their return. This will help keep our campuses COVID safe, through a variety of work arrangements, and also ensure our campuses once again become vibrant places. It outlines:

- Flexible working arrangements – the different options available
- Requests for flexibility – how to formally apply for flexible work and what factors will be taken into consideration
- Position suitability – checklist of factors that may not make flexible work feasible
- Facilities and equipment – the equipment you need to work effectively on campus or at home (the university is not obliged to provide office and computer equipment for two locations)
- Space management provisions – desks and physical space requirements
- Approval processes and renewals – forms and checklists to apply and formalise your arrangements.

## **What happens next?**

Your Deans or Directors will work through the following, over this month and next:

- Will meet with Facilities Services on-site to determine how many people within your workgroup can be accommodated in the space and how to use the space to ensure physical distancing
- Looking at the role of each staff member in your team to determine the order of who is needed on campus
- Assess those with desktop computers and those with laptop computers, as that

will determine suitably for any proposed flexible arrangements such as blended work (office based and remote work)

- Review applications for flexible work arrangements, which will consider the needs of each School and Directorate to effectively deliver learning and teaching and all of the university's services and activities, as well as the requests of individual staff members
- Consider any high risk factors that may prevent staff from returning and consult with Human Resources
- Prepare a COVIDSafe HIRAC in consultation with HSRs and Risk, Health and Safety, which documents the ongoing arrangements for your staff and students on and off campus.

There are also some other key principles that the [Blended workforce principles](#) document outlines. For instance, all staff must have appropriate childcare in place even if working from home, to allow them to perform their duties to full capacity. Staff must not hold face-to-face meetings at home with other staff members and particularly not with students – these activities must occur online or on campus. Staff must not run a second business or take on a second job while working remotely for the university.

### **Pilot program**

This may be a lot to take in, as it is the first time the university has embarked on a blended workforce process such as this. There are many factors to consider.

For this reason, any flexible work arrangements will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and these will have an expiry date. As this is a pilot program, any arrangement can only apply for a maximum of six months. Ultimately, we hope that in six months' time, the COVID-19 pandemic will no longer affect every part of our lives.

Finally, as a university, our culture must be student-centric.

We owe our students fond memories of studying at university and TAFE, which really come from the experience of being on campus, meeting new people and engaging in a broad range of experiences. It is our responsibility to ensure that our students receive a positive and fulfilling experience in all their interactions with us and this includes having vibrant campus environments to return to.

Stay safe and enjoy the summer break. We look forward to seeing more people on campus as the new year progresses.

**On behalf of the COVID-19 Transition Control Group**

