

INFECTION CONTROL MEASURES IN THE RENOVATED HIGH-RISE BUILDING AND ADJACENT AREAS

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM A WORKING GROUP

Working group:

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Assignment:

NHH's working environment committee has asked the management to assess the infection control situation in the renovated premises on campus. The Vice Rector for Faculty Affairs, the HR Office and the HR Director appointed a working group with the following remit:

To provide infection control recommendations for the renovated premises and propose measures that need to be implemented before the premises are taken into use.

The working group has held three meetings and conducted several inspections. The recommended measures are related to different types of premises.

In general

The aim is to protect staff, students and others on campus against infection during the pandemic. There may be good reasons for continuing some of the less invasive measures when the pandemic is over, among other things to prevent illness and sickness absence.

Particular attention must be given to the process of moving into the renovated premises. It is not possible for all staff in a unit to pack or unpack/get settled in their new offices at the same time. Each manager must organise a 'rota system' for the (un)packing to prevent situations in corridors and common rooms that entail a risk of infection.

As far as they are appropriate, the recommendations set out in this document will also apply to the student association when they move into their new premises.

NHH's infection control guide will be updated when the management has decided the recommendations that will apply.

Vestibule/service desk/reception/common area

The area just inside the entrance to the high-rise building (Entrance B) will be a large, open area, where there will be two reception desks with one and two work stations, respectively; the Service Centre and the IT support service for students.

The following has been assessed:

- **Plexiglass barriers.** To be installed in front of the workstations.

Plexiglass barriers will not be installed between persons working next to each other. A distance of at least one (1) metre is considered sufficient. Where there are two workstations, there is enough space to maintain a distance of two metres.

The barriers must be easy to install and remove without the need for extensive infrastructure modifications etc. A few extra barriers will be purchased and available to borrow as needed, for example in connection with face-to-face supervision.

- **Coronavirus capacity**

An assessment must be made of how many people can occupy the common areas inside Entrance B at one and the same time.¹

The (four) niches pertaining to this area and in the corridor by Auditorium A103, which are intended for interaction and discussion, are designed for four people, but they are fairly small. Because of their design, they can only be used by one (1) person at a time to prevent the risk of infection. An alternative would be to physically prevent access to the niches until further notice.

- **Stationary infection control officers**

Infection control officers will patrol the campus areas between 08.00 and 16.00. During periods when the area is occupied by many staff members, students and guests, stationary infection control officers need to be stationed in the common areas inside Entrance B and the adjoining area up the stairs. They must make sure that the number of people does not exceed the set capacity, and that everyone present maintains a safe distance.

- **Markings and other measures**

The areas must be appropriately marked so that users are made aware of the direction of walking / lanes and social distancing. Marking in the form of signs can be a good alternative to floor markings and will probably be gentler on the infrastructure.

Posters specifying the permitted number of occupants must also be installed by and inside lifts.

A sufficient number of hand sanitizer dispensers must be placed in clearly visible locations.

[Shared offices/office landscapes/activity-based workstations](#)

The shared office premises for the administration on the lower ground level (AU and BU) have workstations where distance requirements can be met. They are arranged so that there is one (1) metre (shoulder to shoulder) between people working next to each other, and they are physically separated by cabinets/bookcases. People sitting directly opposite of each other are approximately two metres apart, separated by a divider panel that they just about manage to see over when seated.

In the shared office premises for the departments' administrative staff, the desks are free-standing and can be placed so as to prevent staff members sitting face to face.

Staff in shared office premises must sit at their regular places.

¹ Also applies to the common areas pertaining to Entrance C (assembly hall) and in and around the 'hall of mirrors', but those areas are beyond the working group's remit.

The following has been assessed:

- **Space utilisation**

Although the requirements (coronavirus capacity) is met, there is reason to recommend reduced occupancy (recommended 50%) in these rooms for a period going forward (spring 2021 ->). Those present are likely to be defined as close contacts if one of them is infected, and will thereby need to quarantine. Many people will thereby be exposed to risk, and it may also affect NHH's operations.

The working group has considered whether plexiglass barriers between workstations can help in a potential situation of infection. The size of the room is a problem in itself, however, which means that many people may be infected or defined as close contacts in the case of infection. Reducing staff occupancy in the room to increase the distance between those present will therefore be the best measure to prevent infection.

- **Rota system**

A rota system for staff in shared offices should be drawn up to prevent all workstations being used at the same time. One way of doing this is to divide the staff into teams (cohorts) that alternate between working in the office and working from home.

A rota system (continuity plan) that addresses the needs of staff, infection control, duties and maintains satisfactory operations is considered necessary given that we have to expect the infection rate to fluctuate going forward. The administrative managers must draw up suitable plans for their units.

- **Need for office equipment at home**

A rota system means that staff will have to frequently alternate between workplaces. They need good, functional workstations at home, with the right equipment (office furniture and technical tools). They must not be required to move monitors, PCs and other equipment back and forth every time they change workplaces. The administrative managers must gain an overview of what equipment each staff member needs.

When we move out of the Merino building, there will be a lot of left-over office furniture and technical equipment, because many of the new offices are already fully equipped. Employees can borrow this equipment for their home office workstations. We will know by mid-January how much equipment will be available to borrow. If the overview of staff needs is available, redistribution and procurement can take place swiftly.

- **Alternative utilisation of space**

Conversations and meetings with other staff members in the same unit (shared offices) or staff from other units must take place outside the shared offices.

It will be possible for several people to have digital meetings with many different participants at the same time, and these meetings cannot take place in shared offices. Supervision offices near the shared offices on the ground floor can be used for digital meetings when not used for digital or physical supervision sessions (see below). No one must use these premises as permanent offices.

The same applies to quiet rooms, which are also a resource for staff in shared offices who need

to retreat to a quiet place for a while to carry out certain tasks. They must also not be used as permanent offices.

Small rooms in the meeting room wing on the ground floor can be used as relief offices for up to two members of staff (see meetings rooms below).

- **PhD candidates**

PhD candidates are a vulnerable group when it comes to workstation facilities at home, in addition to the fact that the workplace is their most important social arena. A rota system involving PhD candidates should include individual offices or other common areas on campus, so that they do not have to sit at home. Suitable options should preferably be available in the individual departments.

Supervision offices

The offices dedicated to student supervision are small (4–6 square metres). Although only digital student supervision is planned for the spring semester, there may be a need for face-to-face sessions in certain cases. For one-on-one supervision, the smallest offices can be used with plexiglass barriers as protection. When more people are present (3–5), a bigger office must be used.

Meeting rooms

Digital meetings will be the norm in the next semester as well. Any physical meetings that need to take place must be held in the biggest meetings rooms, where a safe distance can be maintained between the participants.

There are seven small and two large meeting rooms in the meeting room wing on the ground floor (former home to the Office of Student and Academic Affairs). As long as we need to keep a distance of one to two metres, they will be better suited as relief offices for up to two members of staff. These meetings rooms can be used as temporary offices (spring 2021) for units that need to reduce staff occupancy in shared premises on the ground floor.

Social rooms

It must be specified how many members of staff can occupy social rooms at the same time. Several of these rooms are adjacent to the coffee maker / kitchenette, and it will be natural for staff to have coffee in the social rooms. The required distance in sofas, seats that must not be used etc. must be marked.

Auditoriums/teaching rooms/student workspaces

Teaching starts on 18 January. The teaching schedule for the spring semester is published around 18 December. The capacity of the new auditoriums, teaching rooms and student workstations will be apparent from drawings that also show furniture.

The following has been assessed:

- **Coronavirus capacity**

An estimated coronavirus capacity of about 50% can be more or less correct for many of the rooms. A few of the untraditionally designed auditoriums and several teaching rooms/student workstations allow for flexible utilisation of space.

An inspection must be carried out of all the premises mentioned above to calculate the coronavirus capacity once furniture and equipment are in place. For most of the rooms, this will be in the first week of January.

- **Overview of places / seat numbers**

The most effective measure will be to carry out one or two inspections that cover all the things that need to be done: define the coronavirus capacity, mark the places that cannot be used and assign a unique number to all places that can be used.

Afterwards, an overview must be drawn up of all the rooms and their furnishings, which shows the numbered places. This is an important tool for the purpose of efficient infection tracing.²

Those conducting the inspection must have the authority to decide the capacity, carry out marking and numbering, and take responsibility for follow-up work. Since the auditoriums are more or less ready for use, it would be an advantage to conduct the inspection before Christmas.

² A similar overview should also be drawn up for the other auditoriums and reading rooms (in the new building and the service building).