



Northern Ontario
School of Medicine
École de médecine
du Nord de l'Ontario
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COVID-19: RETURN TO CAMPUS PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Prepared by: NOSM Human Resources
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Introduction

As the Ontario Government begins to gradually allow businesses and organizations to return to limited operations and eases some restrictions that have been in place to address COVID-19, the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) has created this “planning framework” document to provide guidance and clarity on what activities and provisions need to be in place as NOSM eases ahead into a normalized operational environment.

The word “normal” may take on a different meaning in a post-COVID-19 world as, over the past several weeks, we have learned a lot about ourselves; our preparedness, resilience and ability to manoeuvre operations, while letting go of conventional methods and approaches, to do our part in helping combat a pandemic. This small glimpse into doing things differently has opened a lot of eyes and allowed us to consider things that we never thought we could or would.

This *Framework* document is designed, with this in mind; in that we have to look at our future in an unconventional way, including how we stage and structure a return to campus plan, while continuing to raise the bar on being leaders in medical and health sciences education and research.

The priority and primary goal of this plan is to ensure that it promotes a safe and healthy work and learning environment for our learners, staff and faculty. Job one is to support the wellness of the NOSM community including our families.

While much of how and when we bring people back to campus will be directed by the Government of Ontario, including our host universities (Lakehead and Laurentian), NOSM’s plan will be flexible and will take into consideration, the needs and circumstances of its learners, staff and faculty.

Guiding Principles and Key Elements

The *Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM) Return to Campus Planning Framework* will be guided by its values of Social Accountability, Innovation, Collaboration, Inclusiveness and Respect. Re-opening during COVID-19 will be accomplished in an environment that is supportive of staff, faculty and learner needs. Open communication, collaboration, and the health, safety and security of the NOSM constituency will be the guiding principles.

Subject to guidelines and directives of the Ontario Government, NOSM’s plan will include, but not be limited to:

- Reasonable and flexible: recognizing that some staff/faculty will not feel safe returning to a formal office/work environment with exposure to a larger number of people and prevailing risk of virus transmission. In the early stages of the “Return to Campus”, staff will

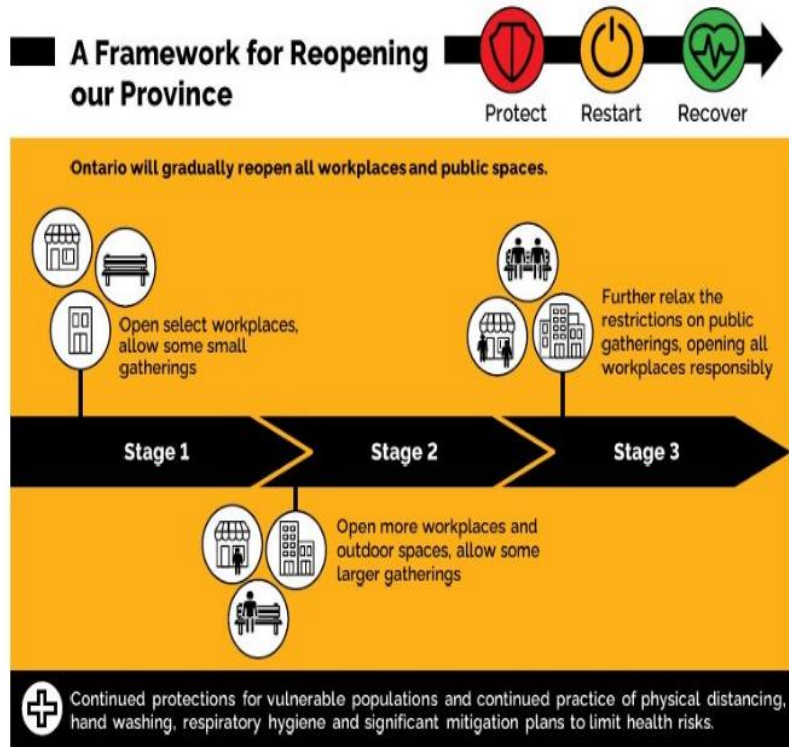
be given the choice of continuing to work from home or returning to the office environment. In some cases, staff will have ongoing family issues (e.g. childcare or elderly care needs) that require them to continue to work from home. For added clarity on a gradual approach, NOSM is looking at possibly July 1, 2020 as a date where employees will voluntarily return to campus, with September 1, 2020 as a possible date for all staff to return to campus. This is obviously subject to change and may be influenced by other factors beyond NOSM's control.

- Prior to returning to campus, Staff and Faculty will be asked to use the Government of Ontario's pre-screening tool and asked to self-declare that they are able to return to work. This is to ensure employees have not had recent exposure to COVID-19 and are not currently ill with COVID-19. The questionnaire would include a checklist (to ensure safety for all) and would ask if employees prefer to work at home between July 1/20 and Sept. 1/20 or a combination of on-site and at-home. Those self-identified as "high risk" population (immunocompromised) will not be allowed or required to be on site.
- Due to operational needs and/or academic and learner support, some employee functions will require attendance on campus. Again, flexibility and reasonableness will prevail to support staff personal needs and requirements.
- Ongoing requirements for physical distancing will result in reduced availability of space for employees and learners. Occupancy standards and space assignments will be established to ensure safety of employees on site at one time. This may require scheduling of employees (rotations or staggered work hours) or requiring a mix of employees working at home or on-site.
- Seating and common areas will need to be taped off as appropriate, to ensure people remain at a distance of 2 meters.
- PPE (non-medical masks, gloves, hand sanitizer) must be available for all learners, faculty, staff and clients as well as training in their proper use.
- New standards in housekeeping/janitorial cleaning will be required to minimize virus transmission. As the host universities (Lakehead and Laurentian) own the physical buildings on campus and are responsible for this service, NOSM will be work with both universities to ensure this in place before employees and learners return to campus.





Context and Application

The NOSM Planning Framework document will also follow the Ontario Government's [roadmap](#) to reopening the province and the Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health criteria to for a phased re-entry. The following is an excerpt from the Government's framework for reopening Ontario:

Figure 1: Framework for Reopening our Province; Chief Medical Officer of Health criteria



Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health will consider the following criteria to advise when the province can begin to ease public health measures:

 Virus spread and containment	 Health system capacity	 Public health system capacity	 Incidence tracking capacity
Ensures loosening of measures is appropriately timed with the progression of the epidemic in Ontario.	Ensures there is an effective response to any potential case resurgence.	Ensures there is an effective public health response to any potential case resurgence.	Ensures that any potential resurgence in cases can be identified promptly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A consistent two-to-four week decrease in the number of new daily COVID-19 cases. A decrease in the rate of cases that cannot be traced to a source. A decrease in the number of new COVID-19 cases in hospitals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient acute and critical care capacity, including access to ventilators, to effectively respond to potential surges. Ongoing availability of personal protective equipment (PPE) based on provincial directives and guidelines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 90 per cent of new COVID-19 contacts are being reached by local public health officials within one day, with guidance and direction to contain community spread. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing testing of suspected COVID-19 cases, especially of vulnerable populations, to detect new outbreaks quickly. A shift to new and other ways of testing and contact tracing to promote widespread tracking of cases.

Objective

The objective of this document is to provide a general framework for planning and decision making for re-opening NOSM during COVID - 19. The information that follows is intended to be a checklist of activities and guidelines to consider in gradually bringing staff, faculty, and learners back to campus. When using this document, including the attached planning template, please consider the specific requirements of your unit or portfolio for a phased re-entry. What immediate activities need to occur in your unit (on campus) and what are the risks/challenges and implications of restoring on-site operations?

As a general rule of thumb, if an activity or duty can continue to be performed safely and efficiently off site (i.e. working from home) then NOSM, at this stage of the pandemic, should not be hastily rushing to return people to campus.

Each unit and portfolio at NOSM is required to develop individual departmental “return to campus” plans. Ultimately, a final Whole School “return to campus” plan, will, in essence, collate a collection of several mini-plans, developed by each unit/portfolio, that are aligned and complementary to each other. Following an appropriate vetting process with EG, JHSCs and Unions, Individual unit/portfolio draft plans, are to be submitted to HR@nosm.ca to be consolidated in the final “whole school” plan. If you have any questions on this Framework Document or require assistance in developing your plan, please contact Lyne Aubrey-Yates at laubryyates@nosm.ca

Plan Development and Approval Process

Each Portfolio is required to designate a “Return to Campus” (RTC) Planning Lead. This person must be a member of Management Group (i.e. Associate Dean, Director or Manager). The “lead” will be responsible for developing/coordinating individual unit/portfolio plans within their portfolio and will participate, occasionally, on meetings with other RTC Planning leads (as needed). Portfolios, through the Associate Dean, are to designate these individuals by May 19, 2020. The following process and milestones will apply:

Activity	Timeline
1. Designate RTC Planning Leads	May 19, 2020
2. Dean, COO, VDA and HR Director meet with RTC Leads to discuss/clarify process/expectations	May 22, 2020
3. RTC Planning Leads work with their staff/faculty, as needed, to develop individual Unit plans	May 22 nd – Jun. 5 th

Activity	Timeline
4. Unit/Portfolio Draft plans submitted to Emergency Response Team (ERT) (via HR Director and Dean)	June 5, 2020
5. Dialogue between ERT and RTC Planning Leads/Portfolio Associate Dean (as necessary)	June 5, 2020
6. HR Director/HR Consultants to meet with JHSCs and OPSEU (1 and 2) as needed or required by CA	W/O June 8 th
7. ERT to work with HR Director/COO to consolidate individual plans into one whole school plan	Jun. 8 th – Jun. 15 th
8. Dean, COO, VDA, HR Director meet with RTC Leads to calibrate/align plan (where required)	W/O June 15 th
9. Dean to communicate plan to Lakehead and Laurentian Universities (Presidents)	June 19, 2020
10. Dean (ERT) approve final RTC Plan – Communication to Whole School	June 19, 2020
11. Implementation of Plan	Jun 22 nd and beyond
12. Discussion at Management Group Webinar	June 24, 2020

All individual Unit/Portfolio Plans and the final “whole school” RTC Plan must be approved by the Dean, President and CEO (or delegate). Individual Units or Portfolios are not permitted to execute or communicate a plan without obtaining prior written approval from the Dean.

If there are situations that require immediate action to proceed (outside of the RTC Planning Process), these must be approved by the Dean prior to implementation.

Gradual Staging Scenarios for Planning Consideration

Stage	Possible Scenario	Date Range
1	Target 30% of staff/faculty working on-site (partial operations)	July/August 2020
2	Target 50% of staff/faculty working on-site	September/October 2020
3	Target 75% of staff/faculty working on site	November/December 2020
4	Target 100% of staff/faculty working on-site (return to full-operations)	January/February 2021

Events that may affect planning timelines, as follows:

- a) Return to partial operations and 2nd wave of COVID virus returns (Fall 2020)
- b) Ongoing mini-waves of the virus require periodic increases in measures (i.e. distancing and working from home)
- c) Localized outbreaks in communities across Northern Ontario requiring adaptation in a given community

It is anticipated, that due to physical distancing requirements, NOSM will need to create workspaces that enable appropriate distancing (2 Meters) which will require scheduling (shift work) of staff and faculty as current space configurations of offices and common areas will not allow large numbers of individuals to be on campus at one time.

It is envisioned that a return to campus plan will feature the creation of two work teams (i.e. Team A and Team B). In each of the stages noted above, staff/faculty will be assigned to either Team A or B which would see them working one week on campus and one week off from campus. This rotational approach would require Team A to work from home when Team B is on-site and vice-versa. In between shifts, NOSM will arrange for enhanced building cleaning/sanitization prior to the new team arriving on Mondays.

The above scenarios are intended to be guidelines only and are subject to nuances and what is possible for individual unit/program areas.

General Checklist in Designing a Return to Campus Plan

Principles	Consideration
Open Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue with communications that involves and keeps all staff, faculty, and students informed of the planning process • Communications to include timeline of phased re-entry with establish points of contact for individual units / portfolio leads and for staff, faculty and students • Ensure communication with OPSEU bargaining unit members as part of planning and prior to announcing whole school announcements
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider which units/portfolios require increased support or resources to assist in re-opening. Examples of resources to consider (Do Supervisor's require additional support in dealing with staff concerns during re-entry? Or, does work need to be reorganized/reassigned to address workforce availability?)
Health, Safety and Security Campus / Office Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider cleaning protocols and sanitization schedules to incorporate more diligent cleaning of high touch areas. • Enhanced training to cleaning staff may need to be provided. Enhance your environmental cleaning procedures and protocols with a special attention to high-touch surfaces and object (e.g., phones, elevator buttons, computers, desks, lunch tables, kitchens, washrooms. • Preparation of reminder signs for messaging (wash hands, don't touch face, stay at home if you are sick etc.) • Ensure appropriate supply of PPE (hand sanitizer, masks if required).
Health, Safety and Security Employee Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide options to the medically at-risk staff or staff members who are vulnerable due to family status concerns. Family status concerns could include caring for compromised family members or homeschooling/daycare children as an example. • Reduce social/physical contacts at work • Adjust policies/procedures to allow flexible work arrangements, • Scheduling of work to ensure safe physical distancing • Assess the need for business travel based on the risks and benefits, and consider alternative approaches such as use of WebEx, etc. • Will need to manage Occupational Health and Safety services on site. How will symptomatic individuals in the workplace/business setting be handled? How will contacts be handled?

Returning Staff and Faculty	Consideration
Staff and Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine which critical functions must be performed on campus? • Create a category of essential functions for a phased-back approach, as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Category 1: Staff who perform mission-critical / time-sensitive functions and must work on-site 2. Category 2: Personnel who perform mission-critical / time-sensitive functions and can work remotely 3. Category 3: Personnel who do not perform mission-critical/time-sensitive functions but could work remotely 4. Category 4: Personnel who do not perform mission-critical/time-sensitive functions and cannot work remotely (e.g. Due to low bandwidth)

Returning to On-site Class Instruction	Consideration
Returning students and residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine which critical classes must be performed on campus? • Create a category of critical classes for a phased back approach. Including, but not limited to: workshops, small group sessions, exams, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Category 1: Critical activities must be delivered on campus * Category 2: Critical activities can be delivered remotely online * Category 3: Non-critical activities must be delivered on campus * Category 4: Non-critical activities can be delivered remotely online <p>Determine how to manage classes that must be onsite (labs). Consider how greater spacing could be provided to students.</p> <p>Consider how to address unique student needs?</p> <p>Consider learner placements/communities capacity/ability to take students?</p>

Guidance Document /Resources / Reference Documents

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/>

<https://www.cpha.ca/sudbury-and-district-health-unit>

<https://www.tbdhu.com/>

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents/risk-informed-decision-making-workplaces-businesses-covid-19-pandemic.html>

WHO. Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19. Feb 27, 2020. Available at: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>

WHO. Non-pharmaceutical public health measures for mitigating the risk and impact of epidemic and pandemic influenza. March 6, 2020. Available at: https://www.who.int/influenza/publications/public_health_measures/publication/en/

US CDC. Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). February 2020. Available at: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>

Guide for health and safety committees and representatives, available at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/guide-health-and-safety-committees-and-representatives>

Collective Agreements: Units 1 and 2, OPSEU 677 available at <https://www.nosm.ca/about/administrative-offices/human-resources/labour-relations/>

PARO: <https://myparo.ca/your-contract/>