



# Leader Decision Guide Planning for Fall 2021 Work Arrangements

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## Introduction

It is expected that Fall 2021 will be a time of continued transition for students, staff and faculty. Within a strong health and safety framework including Provincial and Regional Public Health requirements, McMaster is committed to providing safe on-campus staff, faculty and student experiences aligned with the University's mission, and to support continued empathy, patience and flexibility when reviewing staff work arrangements.

This guideline is intended to support leaders in some areas that have been largely remote during the pandemic begin to consider a safe and gradual return to campus, with a key focus on those areas connected directly to the student experience. Leaders are encouraged to reflect on what has worked well for their teams during the pandemic and retain those learnings in planning for fall and beyond. COVID-19 has forever changed how we work, and we will need more flexibility, connectivity, and inclusion through new optimized work arrangements. This is a time to begin to consider what the 'next normal' may be for the work of our teams, and to continue to be agile in response to evolving public health direction.

In recognition of the diversity of McMaster's workforce and the wide range of important responsibilities delivered by University staff and faculty, the following guidelines and associated resources are provided to leaders in support of their planning for the Fall 2021 term.

## Ontario Roadmap to Re-Open

The University continues to take its direction from regional and provincial public health leads, as well as benefiting from internal research and academic experts as part of the McMaster community. The University will continue to follow the [Ontario Roadmap to Re-Open](#) to guide key next steps for planning within the University.

As of the date of this Guide, trends are optimistic in support of Step 1 beginning June 11, 2021. It is important to note that the province has set a threshold of 21 days in each Step (at minimum) before moving to the next Step and easing further restrictions. Provincial health leads and published information confirms physical distancing of 2 metres will remain in place, in most sectors, through all Steps and therefore leaders should factor physical distancing requirements into planning.



### Permit with restrictions

Outdoors first with limited, well-managed crowding and permitting restricted retail

- Larger outdoor gatherings for up to 10 people
- Outdoor dining for up to 4 people per table
- Essential retail capacity at 25%
- Non-essential retail at 15%
- Outdoor religious services, rites and ceremonies with capacity limited to permit physical distancing of 2 metres
- Outdoor sports, fitness and personal training up to 10 people
- Day camps
- Campsites and campgrounds
- Overnight camping at Ontario Parks
- Outdoor horse racing and motor speedways
- Outdoor pools and wading pools

+21 days before next stage →

### Permit with restrictions

Open indoors with small numbers and face coverings and expand outdoors

- Larger outdoor gatherings for up to 25 people
- Small indoor gatherings for up to 5 people
- Outdoor dining for up to 6 people per table
- Essential retail at 50% capacity
- Non-essential retail capacity at 25%
- Personal care services where face coverings can be worn at all times
- Outdoor meeting and event spaces
- Outdoor amusement and water parks
- Outdoor boat tour operators
- Outdoor county fairs and rural exhibitions
- Outdoor sports leagues and events
- Outdoor cinemas, performing arts, live music events and attractions

+21 days before next stage →

### Permit with restrictions

Expand indoors where face coverings can't always be worn

- Larger indoor and outdoor gatherings
- Indoor dining
- Essential and non-essential retail open with limited capacity
- Larger indoor religious services, rites, and ceremony gatherings
- Indoor meeting and event spaces
- Indoor sports and recreational facilities
- Indoor seated events
- Indoor attractions and cultural amenities
- Casino and bingo halls
- Other outdoor activities from Step 2 permitted to operate indoors

### **A: Review University Staffing Guidance – Fall 2021**

With the above provincial framework in mind, the below guidelines with respect to staffing plans are designed to provide leaders with broad direction for priorities for on-campus activity and resulting staffing decisions. For many areas of the University, existing work arrangements will continue, in support of allowing student access and student focussed roles on campus as the priority, and to ensure appropriate physical distancing can be maintained.

	<b>Medium Level On-Site Staffing (Provincial Re-opening - Step 3)</b>	<b>Low Level On-Site Staffing (Provincial Re-Opening - Step 1 &amp; 2)</b>
	<p>Focus on in person teaching, learning and student life experiences. Associated on-site student-facing, direct service and student support roles to increase on-campus presence to address readiness for student needs.</p> <p>Greater flexibility to increase on-site staffing levels, based on service standards and student needs and where physical distancing can be maintained in accordance with public health guidelines. Supervisors are encouraged to continue to leverage remote work and hybrid models of work and service delivery.</p>	<p>Focus on meaningful in person teaching and learning experiences for students. Associated on-site student-facing staffing increased safely and minimally, as necessary, where physical distancing can be maintained in accordance with public health guidelines.</p> <p>Staffing is limited to minimum requirements to meet student needs, with continued alignment to public health guidelines for physical distancing. Continue virtual student support, where able, as alternate service option.</p>
	<p>Non-student facing roles permitted to begin a gradual increase, based on service standards and operational needs.</p> <p>Continued focus on student facing and essential roles as priority for the fall. Supervisors are encouraged to continue to leverage remote work and hybrid models of work and service delivery.</p>	<p>Non-student facing roles will continue remotely in most cases, in line with University health and safety protocols.</p>
	<p>Clinical roles and those that support medical practices, procedures and research – gradual increase in on-site staffing as defined by public health, FHS and Hospital Guidelines and based on service levels and requirements, aligned for these roles and workplaces.</p>	<p>Clinical roles and those that support medical practices, procedures and research – functions that can be carried out remotely to continue remotely. Public health, FHS, and Hospital Guidelines to inform on-site service levels and requirements for these roles and workplaces.</p>
	<p>Research roles – gradual expansion of directives beyond those defined in <a href="#">Phase 2</a> of the <a href="#">Phased Return to Increased Research Activity</a> and aligned with public health guidelines.</p>	<p>Research roles – functions that can be carried out remotely to continue remotely. Return to <a href="#">Phase 1</a> (if in Grey Zone) or continuation of <a href="#">Phase 2</a> (if in Red Zone) of the <a href="#">Phased Return to Increased Research Activity</a>, aligned with physical distancing and public health guidelines.</p>

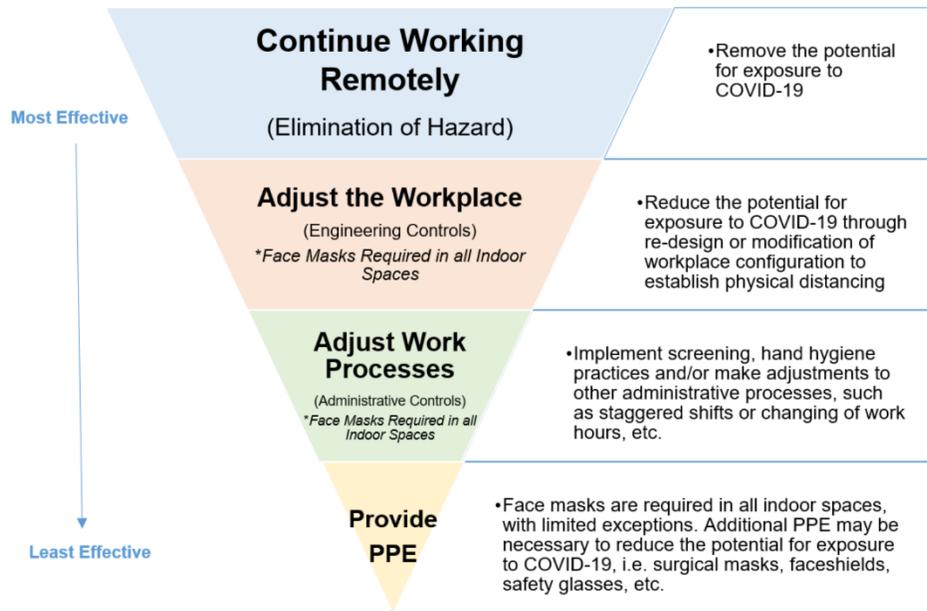
	<p>Essential work (work that cannot be done remotely) will continue on site - may see additional spaces open in support of this work with continued alignment to revised public health guidelines.</p>	<p>Essential work (work that cannot be done remotely) will continue on site at current levels and in compliance with public health guidelines.</p>
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**B: Leader Review of Service Levels and Potential Work Arrangements**

Based on the above University Staffing Guidance, leaders will assess on-campus, hybrid or remote work arrangements for their teams for Fall 2021. For many areas, temporary remote working will continue, or essential on campus work will continue, as per current arrangements through the fall term. For those areas that do need to consider hybrid work arrangements (aligned with above focus areas), it is recommended that leadership teams within a unit or department assess their service level requirements together by role, prior to considering individual employee arrangements. Plans should continue to address flexibility, support and accessibility considerations.

Questions that may support leaders’ analysis:

<p><b><i>SAFETY &amp; SUPPORT: What is the impact of public health guidelines on our work?</i></b></p>	
✓	<p>Consider the workspace configuration and measures required to ensure the workspace is safe for students, staff and faculty. Physical distancing of 2 metres (or 6 feet) is expected to continue in the fall. How does this impact how our services are delivered?</p>
✓	<p>What are the known family care or accommodation needs on my team that will likely need to continue in some way into the fall? (Resource: <a href="#">Workplace Accommodation Procedures</a>)</p>
✓	<p>Are infrastructure changes necessary to safely address on campus service delivery needs? <i>Fall 2021 focus will be on critical infrastructure needs (i.e. plexiglass etc.) to address health and safety for students and student-facing roles.</i></p>
✓	<p>What health and safety measures are required for the different work arrangements being considered? Review the <a href="#">Workplace Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19</a>, including available information regarding standard operating procedures, checklists, guidelines and current public health direction regarding masks, screening and PPE. Continue to consider the University’s approach to hazard control, as outlined below.</p>
	<p>Consider how we will continue to share how employees will be protected – be specific about all of the steps we will take, equipment we will provide, and how we will educate and support coworkers and clients to align with University health and safety protocols.</p>



Updated June 10, 2021

<b>SERVICE: What on-site aspects of the role are critical for student, staff, and faculty success and engagement?</b>	
✓	What are the service and student experience expectations for our work? How are these best met? Consider feedback received from service delivery surveys and other information from students or those who receive services / supports from our unit.
✓	What job responsibilities must be completed on-site to meet service expectations? Acknowledge that for some jobs, productivity may be reduced initially while employees learn new processes including the use of personal protective equipment.
✓	How many staff deliver this work? Can a rotational approach to on-site duties or work hours amongst a group of staff meet service level needs?
✓	What are the peak periods for this work? Are there critical times of year or times of day when work requirements are heaviest?
✓	How are other areas on campus, with similar business needs and positions, meeting service expectations?
<b>OUTCOMES: What on-site aspects of the role are required to address productivity and outcomes?</b>	
✓	Is on-site presence required for multiple staff simultaneously in support of necessary collaborative outcomes? How can this be best facilitated safely?
✓	What is the impact on other employees or the broader work unit / department of adjusting a work arrangement to on-campus, hybrid or remote?
✓	Are there resources (documents, tools, systems) needed to perform the role that are better available on-site?
✓	Are there specific measures that need to be in place to secure confidential University information?

**C: Discussions with Employees**

When supervisors have made decisions with respect to their service levels, they are encouraged to engage in supportive discussions with their employees to review and assess on-site service levels, opportunities and challenges for on-site, hybrid or remote work arrangements, and staff needs and interests. It is an unusual situation with much uncertainty, which can naturally lead us to worry and feel anxious. Strong communication plans will build trust, respect and encourage positive team behaviours.

### Conversation Guide for Staff Discussions



- Validate the range of emotions employees are likely to experience. These will range from extreme anxiety over returning to a changed workplace to relief and excitement about moving out of isolation.
- Ask employees to share their fears and concerns around returning to work and address as many as you can before the return to eliminate or reduce some of the stress.
- Support your team members in staying physically and mentally healthy through the transition.
- Outline the scenarios used for planning and service needs.
- Individual or team discussions can be helpful when brainstorming approach to meeting service needs and identifying creative work arrangements.
- Individual discussions are required when addressing personal or accommodation needs.
- Consider how you can empower staff to contribute to the planning – this demonstrates trust and may support increased employee engagement.
- Remember a successful hybrid work arrangement can provide both employee flexibility and exceptional service delivery!
- Remind staff that plans continue to be transitional and as a result, all work arrangements continue to be temporary through the Fall 2021 term.
- Review and understand the University workplace health and safety guidelines for working on-site in order to help reassure staff that they are well protected through all reasonable precautions.
- Be kind to yourself – link in with other leaders, your supervisor, or Human Resources for support.
- Encourage patience! These work arrangements are new and should adapt over time.

### **McMaster Guiding Framework for Planning Decisions:**

1. For the 2021/22 academic year, we will continue to deliver on the academic and research mission of the University, while prioritizing the health, safety and well-being of all members of our community.
2. In doing so, we will remain focused on supporting and enabling the success of our students, delivering a high-quality learning environment and overall student experience.
3. Our goal is to welcome new and returning students back to campus as soon as this can be done safely and in accordance with Public Health guidance and government protocols. Priority will be given to those programs where physical access is necessary in order to complete academic requirements and enable students to complete their courses and graduate.
4. We will maintain our focus on research excellence and on supporting the work of our researchers across all disciplines, as well as enabling and advancing our long history of creativity and innovation.
5. We will continue to uphold our core University values, principles and policies, including our focus on inclusivity, accommodation and respect for one another, and our collegial decision-making processes. Any revisions or updating of policies will continue to be developed through the University's pre-existing governance processes.
6. We will continue to make fiscally prudent decisions that support our ongoing stability and success as an institution, balancing risk with opportunity.

7. We will continue to work together as a community to support our students, faculty and staff across the University and will ensure that information, plans and decisions are communicated clearly and promptly.

**Considering Hybrid Work Arrangements**

A hybrid team includes flexible work structures that allow employees to work remotely at points in time, as well as work at a University or Hospital work location at other times. The University is supports leaders to consider what hybrid work arrangements or other flexible work arrangements are possible for their teams, ensuring health and safety and balancing operational requirements. It is also recognized that these types of arrangements are not appropriate for all types of positions at the University.

To inform leader decision making, workplace flexibility is a key driver for employee engagement and retention. Some studies reveal that more than 80% of employees want to continue working remotely at least one day per week and that productivity has been higher (4x) with employees working remotely than pre-pandemic.<sup>1</sup> These trends have been accelerated through the pandemic where it has been demonstrated that remote working is possible, productive and sustainable. Organizations must adapt to these trends or risk losing (or being unable to recruit) high performing talent.

Post-Pandemic Work Preferences

	Office	Hybrid (Remote & Office)	Remote
<b>Gartner<sup>2</sup></b>	13%	62%	25%
<b>McMaster 2020<sup>3</sup></b>	17%	48%	35%

At McMaster, we know that many essential on-campus, or fully remote work arrangements will continue in their current form temporarily through the fall. For areas that need to consider increasing on-campus presence, piloting hybrid and flexible work arrangements is a way for leaders to begin to test creative and alternative forms of service delivery, while supporting staff interests in flexibility. The below example hybrid work arrangement are provided to help generate ideas for leaders and teams. Hybrid work arrangements must be considered with fairness, equity and accessibility in mind, and should be implemented on a temporary basis (3-6 months) to review effectiveness for both the University and employees.

**Example 1: Individual Daily Rotation**

In this example, the employee and the supervisor work together to set specific days where the employee will be on campus and these are scheduled to ensure appropriate coverage of service needs, and to minimize concurrent overlap of team members on site.

- Employee A: Attend Campus Monday and Wednesday from 8:30am – 4:30pm
- Employee B: Attend Campus Tuesday and Thursday from 8:30am – 4:30pm
- Employee A & B: Rotate biweekly who attends on Friday, 8:30am – 4:30pm

*Considerations:* In-person service is addressed for the full week. May be combined with virtual service options on remote working days (service levels are retained). Provides employee flexibility for on-campus and remote work options during the week.

<sup>1</sup> EAB.(2021) What Higher Ed Leaders Need to Know about Remote Work Post COVID: Strategies to support remote operations now and post-pandemic

<sup>2</sup> Preparing for the Workplace of the Future, Presentation by Suzanne Adnams, Gartner, 2021

<sup>3</sup> Covid-19 and its Effects on Work Arrangements and Employee Outcomes at McMaster University, Samani & O’Brady, March 23, 2021

### Example 2: Staggered Schedule

In this example, operational needs may require employees onsite on the same day, so work hours may be temporarily changed to minimize concurrent overlap of team members.

Employee A: Attend Campus from 7:00am– 2:00pm

Employee B: Attend Campus from 11:00am – 6:00pm

*Considerations:* Employees who prefer to work different hours may request this type of model in support of personal flexibility. This may also enable extended service hours for clients / students and address peak service needs during the overlapping period. This option should be discussed with employees well in advance of implementation and will require formal notice of this temporary change under certain collective agreements.

### Example 3: Cohort Schedule - Team A / B Rotation

In this example, employee teams work certain days or weeks together on a regular basis, which is scheduled to address service delivery or collaboration needs.

Week 1: Team A onsite Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Team B onsite Thursday and Friday

Week 2: Team B onsite Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Team A onsite Thursday and Friday

*Considerations:* Where the majority of the team has some on-site needs, but not every day, and not concurrently with other team members, a Team A / B schedule may address service needs, and continue to address employee health and safety through reduced overall presence on campus, as well as flexibility for staff.

### Additional Tips for Hybrid Success:

- **Meetings and Appointments as Virtual First:** Team meetings should continue to be held virtually in the fall, wherever possible. Addressing employee schedules and appropriate technology supports will enable full participation and continue to support valuable opportunities for larger team connections.
  - *For example:* Select a date and time where service needs may be lowest (e.g., Thursday afternoon). Some areas have also shifted service hours to allow for dedicated staff connection time. Consider the maximum number of staff that may be able to work remotely during this time, or a longer period to also allow focussed work time around the meeting time. For those employees onsite, utilize available space (offices, boardrooms) and laptop computers to allow for physical distancing. Engage with leader peers who have adjoining space, to negotiate use of space, as needed. Ensure that staff rotate onsite presence (as needed) for these days to ensure fairness.
- **Leader Work Arrangements:** It is important that leaders model the type of schedules and work arrangements that they want to enable with their teams. If a leader is onsite every day, employees may begin to gravitate toward this as well or begin to feel excluded in key discussions or activities. Leaders should consider their work arrangements, and team connection points, with staff engagement, inclusive excellence and support in mind.
- **Seek Feedback Along the Way:** Seek feedback from employees, leadership, peers, clients / students, as the pilot arrangements are tested. Is service delivery working in the new formats? Are staff feeling engaged and productive? Are processes for communication and team connection intuitive and occurring? Are

employees able to meet their needs at home (childcare, dependent care, etc.)? Use feedback to adjust further or enable different approaches that may work more effectively and supportively for all.



Any on-site work arrangements should address health and safety and have specific [Standard Operating Procedures](#), again approved to the Dean or AVP level. Other resources including training to support the health and safety of employees are available through the [Workplace Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19](#).

If you are considering changes to employee work hours, or start and end times, please consult with Human Resources on appropriate notice requirements for the change, and additional tools for supportive discussions with staff.

### **Your Supports:**

Please reach out to your [Human Resources contacts](#) as needed as you consider your plans for Fall 2021. This material is a resource for your planning process as you determine what is best for your own unit or team, in consultation with your Dean and AVP. Additional materials are under development in support of longer-term University planning, staying closely aligned to public health guidance.



**Short Term:** Working Sessions will be scheduled in June with People Leaders in further support of opportunities for collaboration with your peers and HR supports during your planning. Additional support materials are also being developed – stay tuned!

**Medium Term:** The University continues to encourage Flexible Work arrangements. A policy on Flexible Work arrangements will be created. This work will continue through the summer and fall and will be advanced as post-pandemic conditions are known. Consultation and input opportunities will be established as this work proceeds.