COVID-19 Taskforce
Return to business-as-usual – Gatherings & Events

In line with the NSW State Government’s ongoing easing of COVID-19 restrictions and requirements in accordance with the roadmaps for easing COVID-19 restrictions, it is time to review various activities that have been paused through the lockdown. In particular and addressed in this brief, gatherings and events.

1. Current status
When Greater Sydney entered lockdown mid-2021, gatherings and events for university business were paused. This has continued to date; however, with the easing of restrictions it is timely and appropriate to revise this guidance in order to enable the university community to recommence some activities in accordance with the Public Health Orders.

2. Advice to assist
This paper is to provide advice on what the State’s requirements are so that relevant business areas can make informed decisions about gatherings and events in accordance with the university’s Return to Campus Plan and their return to business-as-usual activities, while ensuring appropriate COVID Safe practices are complied with.

Responsibility for COVID Safe compliance, planning, preparation, risk mitigation, and approval of gatherings and events rests with relevant business area and Executive Group member.

The role of the COVIDSafe Team will be to provide advice on the Public Health Order requirements / Health & Safety considerations, as they pertain to gatherings and events. They will not be reviewing or approving all individual event proposals or associated COVID-19 Safety Plans.

3. Permitted gatherings and events
The COVID-19 Taskforce at its 1 November 2021 meeting agreed that the for the remainder of 2021, gatherings and events that are critical to the core mission of the university are permitted. Executive Group members are responsible for determining if a gathering or event meets this criterion. Gathering and event planning for 2022 is also permitted in accordance with this guidance.

4. Definitions
Broadly, the university will be grouping the assembly of persons for a particular purpose into two categories to simplify the COVID-19 safety planning requirements for each. These definitions will encompass (1) gatherings and (2) events, as defined below.

Gathering: A gathering is an assembly of people that is necessary for the normal operations of the premises. A gathering for the normal operations of the premises may involve staff and/or students but does not involve members of the community (visitors). A gathering is an assembly of people that is routine to the normal operations of the university i.e., it is associated with the core mission of the university for learning, teaching and research purposes, and for core administrative or operational functions. Examples of gatherings include but are not limited to; departmental meetings, internal forums, seminars, workshops, town halls, and staff/student only social gatherings.

Event: An event is an assembly of people that may involve staff and/or students and may also include members of the community (visitors). Events are an assembly of people that are not routine and may encompass social activities, hospitality related activities, may be held indoors or outdoors, and are organised, held or funded by the university.

Event Owner: Means the staff member(s) in charge of commissioning, planning, approving, and running the event.

Note: If the Events & Domestic Protocol Team are assisting with event planning, they are not by default the event owner. The staff member(s) they are supporting are the event owner and are responsible for ensuring the COVID-19 risk control strategies are adhered to. For Student Group led events, the ‘event owner’ is the student group executive (President) and the Executive Group member who approved it.
5. COVID-19 Safety Planning Requirements

Dependent upon the activity and persons attending, certain considerations must be given to COVID-19 Safety planning requirements that are relevant for the date of the event depending on the ‘NSW Stages’.

Gatherings: MQ’s COVIDSafe Plan and associated requirements relevant for the Stage must be adhered to.

Events: MQ’s COVIDSafe Plan and associated requirements relevant for the Stage must be adhered to and where relevant, a NSW Government COVID-19 Safety Plan must also be completed. There are specific NSW COVID-19 Safety Plans that must be completed dependent upon the type of event being held, these include:

- **Significant events and related businesses**
  - Example: Graduations.
- **Outdoor events**
  - Example: events held outdoors involving 1000 people or more.
- **Hospitality**
  - Example: Functions, corporate events, recruitment activities, conferences, workshops, fundraisers that include community members and/or involve serving refreshments or meals.

Click here to view the NSW Government Roadmap with full details for easing restrictions in NSW and what COVID-19 Safety measures will be in place for your event or gathering.

Summary table of considerations for gatherings and events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Stage 2 (18 Oct – 15 Dec or 95% fully vaccinated target is reached*)</th>
<th>Stage 3 (from 15 Dec or 95% fully vaccinated target is reached *)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gathering</td>
<td>In accordance with MQ’s COVIDSafe Plan and Return to Campus Plan.</td>
<td>In accordance with MQ’s COVIDSafe Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>In accordance with the <a href="#">NSW Govt reopening roadmap from 8 November</a></td>
<td>In accordance with the relevant NSW Govt COVID-19 Safety Plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masks, QR Codes and vaccination status</td>
<td>Masks required for all staff and customers in all indoor settings. Masks are not required in office buildings but are in spaces that involve retail, hospitality or recreation)</td>
<td>Masks required for hospitality staff in indoor settings (but not outdoor settings)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(for both gatherings and events)</td>
<td>Masks not required for participants in outdoor settings (except for front-of-house hospitality staff)</td>
<td>QR code check-in to the building is required (unless the NSW roadmap clearly states no longer required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QR code check-in to the building is required</td>
<td>Proof of being fully vaccinated is no longer required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proof of being fully vaccinated is required (except for staff and students who have been pre-vetted and already approved to be on campus).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Subject to change by the NSW Government.

Mask Rules (PHO) – for more details on mask rules under the Public Health Orders [click here](#).
6. Gatherings involving internal attendees (staff and enrolled students)

Gatherings for learning, teaching, research, and other core university activities

The University is exempt from the one person per 2 and 4 square metre rules when engaged in activities for learning, teaching, research, and other core activities. The University remains committed to SafeWork Australia guidelines regarding 1.5m physical distancing where practical and possible. Where we hold gatherings or events that are exempt from the one person per 2 and 4 square metre rules, community members are not allowed to attend.

The requirements for both indoor and outdoor gatherings are:

- Staff and students attendance only (this may include contractors where they are engaged as a part of the University workforce, e.g. security guards)
- Gatherings must be conducted in accordance with the University’s COVIDSafe Plan.

Gatherings of a purely social nature

Non-essential social gatherings, morning and afternoon teas, farewells, etc. that involve only staff/students may be permitted with Executive Group member approval (as noted in section 4) and are subject to the same requirements as outlined above in this section.

7. Events involving external attendees (community members)

In accordance with the NSW Public Health (COVID-19 General) Order 2021 (dated 3 October 2021) (schedule 3) a school, university or other educational institution or childcare facility is exempt from the 1:2 and 1:4 squared-metre-rules, but that exemption does not include activities or events that involve members of the community. It also does not involve settings that are subject to specific NSW Government COVID Safety Plan requirements such as in retail, hospitality, recreation facilities, or the library, museum or art gallery.

Where community members are involved in our events, events must be organised according to NSW Public Health Orders and any relevant COVID-19 Safety Plan, which must be in place for each event and reflect the circumstances of and management for that particular event. The COVID-19 Safety Plan must be completed using the NSW Government approved online templates and are specific to event types / settings.

It is the event owner’s responsibility to ensure the appropriate COVID-19 Safety Plan is in place at their event, and for ensuring that the risk mitigations outlined in the COVID-19 Safety Plan are implemented and adhered to.

The event owner must keep a copy of the COVID-19 Safety Plan and have it available on the premises where the event is taking place while the event is being held and make it available for inspection by an authorised officer or a police officer as requested (printed and electronically).

8. Risk Assessment

Each Faculty/Portfolio is required to consider the level of risk involved in holding gatherings or events, even where these events are part of their normal business.

As well as following these Events Guidelines, additional measures should be adopted as appropriate. For example, a Faculty / Department may decide to impose stricter controls on an event because it involves higher risk activities, such as sharing equipment or involving vulnerable people. Mitigation measures might include reducing the size of the event, or introducing additional controls such as pre and post cleaning arrangements.

An event risk assessment is required for all events and it is the responsibility of the event owner to complete. MQ Work Health & Safety Advisors can be consulted regarding risks and mitigation strategies, however responsibility for completing the risk assessment and implementing controls cannot be delegated or transferred to WHS; it rests with the event owner.

Click here to view the events toolkit with useful forms and templates to plan your event.

9. Electronic record keeping

For all gatherings and events, keep an electronic check-in record of check-in time; full name and a contact number for all staff, attendees and contractors for a period of at least 28 days. These records must be stored confidentially and securely in accordance with NSW Government guidance on electronic check-in guidance and QR codes.
This is particularly relevant for people without a smart phone who cannot use a QR Code (see the next section) where a manual alternative is required to be kept for compliance with NSW government requirements (e.g. ensure swipe access is used, or by using a paper form on a clipboard).

10. QR code check-in - Gatherings

All university gatherings must ensure staff / students have checked-in using the Service NSW QR code for that building. These codes have been placed at the entrances to every building on campus. The COVIDSafe team can provide additional copies of these codes.

11. QR code check-in - Events

All university events must use a Service NSW QR code to electronically check-in attendees.

For events taking place within a University building all participants are required to check-in using the Service NSW QR code for that building

Where an event is not held within a University building, the event owner will need to ensure that a QR code is established for the event. Registering your event for a Service NSW QR code is the simplest and most effective method for contactless check-in.

Process:

1. Click here to register your event
2. Ensure you accurately enter the name of your event under ‘business name’
3. Ensure you detail the event location under ‘business address’
4. Ensure the event owners details are registered against the event. If contact tracing is required, NSW Health will contact the staff member registered
5. Ensure you have completed the relevant COVID-19 Safety Plan for your event (as outlined in section 7 of this guide)

NB: MQ's COVIDSafe Plan and COVIDSafe business registration provides the registration for the University overall. Where a separate Plan and registration is required for events, do not register Macquarie University as an entity when completing the form, only your event.

12. Event Capacity Restrictions and Other Considerations

Generally, for events involving community members, the maximum limit is based off the 2 or 4 square metre rule and capacity for the space being used. For the latest capacity rules and restrictions check the relevant NSW Government COVID Safe Plan (as outlined in section 7 of this guide). For spaces within the University capacity can be determined using the MQ Room Capacity Reference Tool.

13. Campus tours

Campus tours are permitted and it is recommended that there are no more than 20 visitors per group persons due to space constraints in certain campus buildings, to avoid overcrowding, and to ensure adherence to 1.5m physical distancing.

For all campus tours, participants should register and the tour organise keep an electronic check-in record of: full name and a contact number for all staff, attendees and contractors for a period of at least 28 days. These records must be stored confidentially and securely in accordance with NSW Government guidance on electronic check-in guidance and QR codes. This is to enable the University to initiate contact tracing if it necessary.

All participants on tours will also be required to check in and out of buildings visited during the tour for as long as the Public Health Orders require QR code use.

14. Location

If a gathering or event is to be held outside the Macquarie Park or City Campuses, it must be held in accordance with Public Health Orders that apply to those organisations. The event must be conducted according to rules for the appropriate setting and COVID-19 Safety Plan.

When arranging a gathering or event at an external venue, staff must ensure that venue has a NSW COVID-19 Safety Plan in place. This applies to all businesses and organisations listed on the NSW Government COVID-19 Safety Plan.
19 Safety Plan website. If a business or organisation cannot provide a COVID-19 Safety Plan the event cannot be held at that venue or that provider cannot be engaged to provide services.

This also applies to Student Group led Events at external venues. The student group must obtain and share copies of the external venues COVID-19 Safety Plan with the Student Engagement Team.

15. Events in Other Organisations

In the same way external attendees are included in events as part of the normal business of the University, staff, students and volunteers can participate in the activities of other organisations which have their own COVIDSafe Plans for events, meetings, etc (for example, events in other universities, government departments, or businesses). However, appropriate caution should be exercised, and staff must only attend if the event is for essential university business.

16. Student Group Led Events

All requests, planning and approval for Student Group led events are to be directed to the Student Engagement team: studentengagement@mq.edu.au

Student Group led events must adhere to these guidelines and the additional requirements as defined by Student Engagement.

Students must abide by these guidelines and the University’s COVIDSafe practices at all times while participating in Student Group led events and or activities.

17. Events on Campus Hosted by Other Organisations

As a general rule, the University is not currently accepting requests by other organisations to hold events on the Macquarie Park or City Campuses. Any exceptions to this guidance must be carefully considered in current circumstances and requests should be forwarded to the Events and Domestic Protocol team—Leanne Hunter (Leanne.hunter@mq.edu.au).

18. Food and beverages

Food and beverage service is permitted in accordance with the relevant NSW Government COVID-19 Safety Plan and restrictions. It is the event owner’s responsibility to ensure the latest advice and restrictions are adhered to at their gathering or event.