

Covid-19: Increased Ventilation in Your Area: A Guide for Occupants

1. Introduction

Ventilation of outdoor air into buildings is more important than ever. Whilst the primary transmission of COVID-19 is via person to person contact through respiratory droplets generated by breathing, sneezing etc, there is growing evidence that smaller particles may stay in the air longer and spread via ventilation systems.

The University is therefore taking a risk based approach centred on industry / government best practice guidance to minimise any risk to returning staff. We will revise our guidance if and when government advice changes. The actions in this brief are designed to lower the risk of recirculating the virus.

Mechanical ventilation systems supply and remove air to a space via a series of supply and extract vents. Air conditioning systems are located inside a space and recirculate air, cooling or heating it depending on the time of year, they do not provide ventilation on their own.

2. Action Taken Before You Arrive

As part of the building re-opening checks, the EFCS Maintenance Team have already:

- Increased fan speeds in mechanical ventilation systems to the maximum wherever possible
- Stopped the recirculation of air in mechanical ventilation systems where physically possible
- Used windows to ventilate spaces that don't benefit from mechanical ventilation, clearing stuffy air before your return.
- Cleaned filters in line with the recommended maintenance protocols

3. Action You Need to Take

There are actions you can take every day to support good ventilation in your areas of work:

- **Take action** to open windows to increase the ventilation. This is only essential where there is no mechanical ventilation. Speak to your colleagues and work out responsibilities for this.
- **Be aware** that we are conducting CO₂ monitoring in the spaces and this is simply to ensure that the changes we have made continue to be effective as occupancy increases
- **Be aware** that air conditioning systems may not perform as they did previously and in some cases, if windows cannot be opened and there is no mechanical ventilation, these may be isolated.

4. Changes You May Notice

As a consequence of some of the changes we have made, areas may:

- Feel colder or warmer than usual based on the time of the year. Our systems are not designed to run in the way we are currently running them and industry / government guidance prioritises reducing the risk of virus spread over thermal comfort.

Please contact the Estate, Facilities and Commercial Services helpdesk with any further questions: efcshelpdesk@surrey.ac.uk