**Reopening of RSU Secure Environment in Colby House for Researchers**

**Introduction**

The Research Support Unit (RSU) Secure Environment in Colby House closed on the 16 March 2020 due to the lockdown imposed due to Covid-19. The purpose of this document is to outline the return to Colby House for researchers. The document will include:

* Justification for researchers returning to Colby House
* Colby House Guidelines
* Researcher attendance at Colby House
* Guidelines for researchers in RSU Secure Environment
* Researcher seating arrangements
* Booking visits to the Secure Environment
* Personal responsibility
* Maintaining the opening of the Secure Environment
* Annex A: RSU Secure Environment Booking Request Form

An internal NISRA risk assessment has been completed, and we have identified ways in which to offer a safe but limited return to opening. Please note, universities and other organisations must carry out risk assessments before allowing staff to work off site – please contact your own HR department for further information on this. Prior to coming to Colby House, it is the researcher’s responsibility to have completed a risk assessment with their organisation.

**Justification for researchers returning to Colby House**

There are activities that cannot be performed while researchers are unable to access the RSU Secure environment. The continued closure of the Secure Environment has led to and will continue to lead to delays for NILS and ADR NI research projects for QUB and UU researchers. As such, researchers require access to the RSU Secure Environment to carry out analysis on NILS and ADR NI projects.

When accessing the Secure Environment, researchers will be able to carry out the following:

* Conduct analysis of new and existing projects;
* Create intermediate/final outputs; and
* Submit outputs for SDC checks.

**Colby House Guidelines**

The primary goal in managing Colby House during the current emergency is to minimise the risk of infection to all staff and researchers on site. All researchers returning to Colby House will be expected to adhere to all guidelines issued by the Facilities Management (FM) Team. As the response to the pandemic develops, on site protocols and procedures will be reviewed and revised in accordance with extant guidance at the time of any review.

RSU researchers are only allowed on site if they are deemed fit and well. In keeping with current guidance, if a researcher or any of their close contacts is suspected of having COVID-19, showing symptoms of COVID-19, awaiting COVID-19 test results or have recently tested positive for COVID-19, and are currently isolating under the ‘track and trace’ scheme; they will be asked to stay away from the workplace. Researchers must notify RSU if they have recently attended Colby and have tested positive.

Additionally persons in the following categories are also be asked to stay away from Colby House –

a person:

* who is aged over 70;
* a person who is in either vulnerable or extremely vulnerable people categories, and
* a person who is pregnant

If a researcher has travelled abroad in the last 14 days, they must notify RSU staff at the time of booking. They may be asked to stay away from Colby House for a time. As the situation can change quickly, RSU strongly recommend that researchers traveling from outside NI postpone booking in at this moment in time in case the booking is cancelled at short notice.

**Researcher attendance at Colby House**

Researchers must notarrive at Colby House without the prior authorisation of RSU.

Researchers must enter Colby House through the main front entrance and will be expected to wear a mask on entering the premises. Researchers will be provided a mask if they do not have one. Researchers must continue to wear masks for the whole duration of their visit in Colby House. If researchers are cycling they may use the cycle dock at the front of the building.

Upon arrival, researchers should report to and wait at the Reception desk where their attendance will be recorded for ‘Contact and Trace’ purposes. Researchers must sanitise their hands on entering the building.

When in Colby House, researchers must observe the restrictions on movement around the building and adhere to social distancing and hygiene protocols at all times.

Researchers must not use those facility areas or toilets that are taped off and temporarily closed and must restrict their movement around the building to an absolute minimum.

RSU staff will collect researchers from reception. Staff will also be either wearing a mask or face guard. Staff will escort researchers to the Secure Environment as follows:

* Staff and researchers to remain 2 metres apart when walking to the room;
* One person on the stairwell at a time/ one person in the lift;
* Use common sense when going through doors to ensure 2 metres are maintained;
* Researchers will be escorted out of the building in a similar manner;
* Researchers will not have flexibility of going in and out of Colby as they did before and if they leave for a break, staff will assume that their session is over.

**Guidelines for researchers in RSU Secure Environment**

When in the Secure Environment, researchers will be expected to comply with the following:

* Wear masks for the duration of their visit. If researchers have health reasons for not wearing a mask, they must consult with RSU in the first instance;
* Enter and leave the Secure Environment using the first door opposite the kitchen entrance;
* Only sit in the designated workspace that they have been allocated;
* Limit the amount of talking in the Secure Environment and around Colby House;
* Lockers will not be in use. As there are only 2 researchers in at a time, researchers can leave their bags beside the lockers and they will be in their sight at all times;
* No moving of chairs, keyboards, mice, stationery between desks/workspaces;
* Researchers cannot use the breakout areas in Colby and the seating area at the bottom of the Secure room will be cordoned off;
* Researchers can use the facilities on the ground floor and need to comply with the building rules when using them (only one person at a time and wipe clean after use etc.) This includes use of the toilet and kitchen;
* As there are restrictions on the sharing of stationery, researchers will be asked to bring in their own pens during this time. Paper can be provided and will be stored in the researcher’s folders between visits;
* Researchers will not be allowed to bring any paper, manuals, or other documents into the Secure Environment. Researchers can email in any documents in advance and once cleared by RSU, they will be transferred into the relevant project folders on the network;
* RSU will only be clearing electronic outputs from researchers;
* Researchers should not walk from their allocated desk to other researchers or staff in the room. If they have a question or wish to leave, they should stand and get staff attention from a safe distance;
* Windows will be open, weather permitting; and
* The usual rules governing the use of the RSU Secure Environment will continue to apply.
* RSU have purchased some equipment to manage the risk in the secure room:
* Washable mice and keyboards. Researchers should wipe these down before and after use;
* Sneeze screens will be in place in the room to separate staff and researchers.

Once tasks have been completed, RSU researchers should exit the building immediately via the most direct route to the main entrance.

**Researcher Seating Arrangements**

Researchers will be allocated workspaces as outlined in the diagram below which will ensure 2 metres between each researcher. A rota will be drawn up with two hour slots available with no more than two researchers in the Secure Environment at any one time. The rota allows approximately 48 hours between visits when each desk is used.



Please note that this is the start of easements in restrictions and over time, the length of visits and the number of researchers will increase.

 **Booking visits to the Secure Environment**

Researchers will be asked to request access to the Secure Environment via email to the RSU mailbox by the Wednesday of each week using the form in Annex A. Researchers will be informed on Thursday if a slot has been allocated to them. Researchers can make requests for specific slots although there is no guarantee that they will get them. Slots will be allocated fairly amongst researchers. We understand that a number of researchers are working against deadlines and are keen to resume work and we will do our best to ensure everyone has fair and equal access.

One of our main priorities will be to reduce the amount of time staff are in the building. For example, if three researchers request to come in over three different days, it will require 6 staff to come into Colby. By moving all three researchers into one day, this will reduce the number of staff having to come in.

The Booking Request Form also allows researchers to specify if they need their password reset as IT will not always be on the premises to do resets on the day. Researchers are encouraged to prepare in advance and write as much code as possible at home to reduce their time spent in Colby House. The Booking Request Form also allows researchers to request for code or other documents to be cleared and left in their project folders.

Researchers should only come in to do the necessary work and should leave as soon as it is finished.

If researchers wish to cancel a session, please give as much notice as possible (minimum of 1 working day) so someone else can take the slot. If cancellations are repeatedly made within 1 day of the booking, or if researchers are consistently late / do not show up for bookings, then booking privileges may be revoked until normal service resumes. Given the limited availability of access, and that staff are coming in voluntarily to provide supervision, it is unfair to everyone if the booking system is abused.

**Personal responsibility**

There is extra cleaning of shared surfaces routinely carried out by FM throughout Colby House as part of the existing protocol. However, as more staff return to Colby, staff and researchers are asked to take personal responsibility for cleaning after themselves. This includes wiping surfaces they have touched including desks, IT peripherals, search room door handles, toilets, kitchen worktops and appliances and printer key pads etc.

The Secure Environment will be cleaned to the same frequency as prior to lockdown. As with the rest of the building there will be increased cleaning of high usage touch points e.g. door handles. Researchers will have to wipe down surfaces or shared equipment including the keyboard, mice, desk and washable surfaces of the chair they have been allocated.

Wipes, sanitizer, gloves and blue roll will be provided in the RSU Secure Environment as well as a bin which will be emptied by the cleaning staff. Researchers must wipe surfaces after use with the wipes and use sanitiser/wash hands as appropriate. It is also recommended that researchers wipe surfaces before use too and hand sanitiser should be used after entering the room and after touching shared surfaces.

Any staff or researcher not complying with this protocol will be asked to leave the building and not permitted to return until pandemic restrictions have been significantly relaxed.

**Maintaining the opening of the Secure Environment**

Clearly this approach will only work if all staff and researchers recognise the limitations that social distancing places on us all, comply with onsite protocols no matter how tedious they may seem and discharge their individual Health & Safety responsibilities to safeguard their own health and wellbeing and that of their colleagues and members of the public.

RSU will endeavour to keep the room open for researchers. However, local outbreaks, staff absences and changes in policy at an Executive level may result in the room closing again.

 **Annex A: RSU Secure Environment Researcher Booking Request Form**

In order to access the RSU Secure Environment a researcher must complete and submit this form to NISRA RSU. The guidance ‘Reopening of RSU Secure Environment in Colby House for Researchers’ should be read in advance of completing this form.

**Researcher Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Project Number: ­­­­­­­ ­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Please confirm the following:

|  |
| --- |
| *I, or any of my close contacts, are not suspected of having COVID-19, showing symptoms of COVID-19, awaiting COVID-19 test results, currently isolating under the ‘track and trace’ scheme or have recently tested positive for COVID-19.*  |[ ]
| *I am not in one of the following categories:** *aged over 70;*
* *in either vulnerable or extremely vulnerable people categories;*
* *pregnant*
 |[ ]
| *I have not travelled abroad in the last 14 days.* |[ ]
| *I am content to wear a face mask for the duration of my visit in Colby House.**(If you have any health reasons that prevent you from wearing a mask please state on line below)***\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** |[ ]

How many sessions do you wish to book for the coming week? **­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

Please indicate in the table below the session(s) you wish to book in the coming week. Mark the session(s) in your order of preference with a 1, 2, 3 etc. If you do not have any preferred sessions please tick all sessions for which you are available.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Date****(DD/MM/YY)** | **Morning Session****(10am – 12pm)** | **Afternoon Session****(2pm-4pm)** |
| **Monday** |  |  |  |
| **Tuesday** |  |  |  |
| **Wednesday** |  |  |  |
| **Thursday** |  |  |  |
| **Friday** |  |  |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Do you require your password to be reset in advance of attending the RSU Secure Environment? | YES [ ]  | NO [ ]  |
| Please provide details of any code or other files that you wish to be added to your project folder in advance of your visit to the RSU Secure Environment.  |  |
| Please provide the name of the software you intend to use while in the RSU Secure Environment. |  |
| Please provide any additional information for NISRA RSU. |  |

**Notes**

* Please submit this form to rsu@nisra.gov.uk by the Wednesday of the week prior to that in which you wish to attend. You will be informed by the end of that same week if you have been allocated a time slot to attend.
* Please note that RSU will endeavour to accommodate your preferences of time slots and number of sessions however this may not always be possible.
* If you need to cancel a booking, please email rsu@nisra.gov.uk with as much notice as possible (1 working day minimum) so that your session can be reallocated.
* **Please note, if you or anyone in your household develops symptoms associated with COVID-19, or you can no longer consent to the health statements above, DO NOT attend your session.** Please notify NISRA RSU at your earliest convenience.

Please type or sign your name below to complete your booking request. In doing so you are confirming that you have read, understood and will adhere to the guidance associated with accessing the RSU Secure Environment and are content to access Colby House at your own risk.

**Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**