



Requirements to Install Perspex Screens

Purpose

To provide the University information that will assist in determining WSU's position on the installation of Perspex Screen across the University

1. Background

WHS & Wellbeing and OEC have received requests from Unit Heads and Deans, who are planning to install Perspex screens in various locations including:

- Front facing student service counters.
- Computer Labs.
- Office environments

2. Discussion

• 2.1 Perspex Screens and Regulatory Advice:

According to Safe Work Australia and current Australian Government advice is that it is *not* necessary to install a screen between workers and the public (customers) as the interaction time between them is shorter. (https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/covid-19-information-workplaces/industry-information/office/ppe#heading-5-tab-toc-do_i_need_to_install_screens_in_the_workplace?)

Perspex screens (also known as sneeze guards) *can* be considered at workplaces where workers are in close proximity to each other for long periods. For example, a Perspex screen *could be* considered where two workers work side by side or back to back for a shift.

• 2.2 Latest Scientific Advice

This advice was received via Distinguished Professor Annemarie Hennessy AM, relates to Scientific Brief: SARS-CoV-2 and Potential Airborne Transmission.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-sars-cov-2.html>

- **Prevention of COVID-19 by airborne transmission**

*Existing interventions to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2 appear sufficient to address transmission both through close contact and under the special circumstances favorable to potential airborne transmission. Among these interventions, which include social distancing, use of masks in the community, hand hygiene, and surface cleaning and disinfection, **ventilation** and **avoidance of crowded indoor spaces** are especially relevant for enclosed spaces, where circumstances can increase the concentration of suspended small droplets and particles carrying infectious virus. At this time, there is no indication of a general community need to use special engineering controls, such as those required to protect against airborne transmission of infections, like measles or tuberculosis, in the healthcare setting.*

- **The epidemiology of SARS-CoV-2 indicates that most infections are spread through close contact, not airborne transmission.**

Diseases that are spread efficiently through airborne transmission tend to have high attack rates because they can quickly reach and infect many people in a short period of time. We know that a significant proportion of SARS-CoV-2 infections (estimated 40-45%) occur without symptoms and that infection can be spread by people showing no symptoms. Thus, were SARS-CoV-2 spread primarily through airborne transmission like measles, experts would expect to have observed considerably more rapid global spread of infection in early 2020 and higher percentages of prior infection measured by serosurveys. Available data indicate that SARS-CoV-2 has spread more like most other common respiratory viruses, primarily through respiratory droplet transmission within a short range (e.g., less than six feet). There is no evidence of efficient spread (i.e., routine, rapid spread) to people far away or who enter a space hours after an infectious person was there.



- **2.3 Current Controls in place:**

The University will maintain the following Controls to minimise the risk of transmission of COVID-19 at Western:

- Do not attend Campus if you are ill,
- Maintain 1.5m distance and calculate maximum occupancy to promote physical distancing.
- Activated buildings cleaning regime;
- Promoting personal hygiene, frequent washing of hand, hand sanitiser and proper cough sneeze etiquette.
- Wearing face masks where 1.5meter distance cannot be maintained,
- Gloves where staff may be handling communal items.

- **2.4 Steps to follow if Perspex screens are to be installed:**

If the University chooses to install Perspex screens the following actions will be required:

- Completing a risk assessment will assist you in deciding what type of screen is best for the workplace.
- Be aware that installing a perspex screen may result in other Work, Health and Safety risks that will need to consider.
- Safe Work Australia asks you to consult with workers about installing perspex screens, and provide appropriate training and instructions to workers who will use them, if you decide to install them.
- Perspex screens should be cleaned in the same manner as other frequently handled objects or surfaces.

- **2.5 Locations and review:**

- **2.5.1 Front facing student counters:**

Many departments and teams across campus offer student/staff facing services
Within these areas, appropriate queuing arrangements should be clearly laid out, and student/staff must adhere to the systems in place;

- floor markings will be in place to indicate where to stand. At high traffic times, the entry to areas with service desks may be regulated, and customers should be asked to wait outdoors until there is space available inside for them to queue.
- To ensure good practice, high contact surfaces such as service desks and communal computer equipment should be wiped down frequently. Frequency of cleaning should increase with increased usage individual users should be given tools to facilitate cleaning before and after use.
- For those working counters and subject to unavoidable face to face contact, the university can provide appropriate shielding. Cost, sizes and shapes will vary greatly for the various points across campus.
- When measuring the dimensions for a Perspex screen the minimum width of the screen should be no less than 1m across per user positioned behind the screen, and the top of the screen should be no less than 2m from the ground.

- **2.5.2 Computer labs:**

Requests from schools to review the need for Perspex screens in front and to the side of each student, may not be practical. Consideration must be given to space between students to enable the demonstrator to move between rows if necessary. It is likely that if a demonstrator needs to look at a student's computer screen then the student will need to step away and maintain 1.5 m+ distance.

- Wearing of masks is required.
- The use of remote access of computers is the safer option. The demonstrator could maintain 1.5m distance and remote access into the student's computer.
- Alcohol wipes will be needed for students to clean the IT equipment before and after
- Have a clear plan of the flow of students within the room and mark up or map out to help visualise this for the demonstrators but also students.

- **2.5.3 Open plan/communal offices**

Many staff and researchers work in open offices which may make social distancing difficult to implement under normal practice. In many cases, desks are large enough to allow more than one worker to sit at a bank of desks whilst maintaining 1.5 physical distancing.



- If distances between people is at least 1.5m, workers may sit diagonally from one another or side by side.
- If 1.5m physical distancing cannot be maintained then the wearing of masks is recommended.

Recommendations:

- There is no regulatory requirement to install perspex screens.
- RMT requires a risk assessment to be conducted for high traffic Student Services areas for example walk up service counters that cannot avoid face to face engagements. The Unit Head would be required to request and approve a risk assessment to be facilitated by WHS&Wellbeing Unit.
- Users will be responsible for cleaning the perspex screens and will be provided training.
- Managers will be required to provide the necessary tools including PPE to carry out this cleaning.
- Any installation of approved Perspex screens should be managed through OEC.

Endorsed by: Recovery Management Team

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