

A Provisional Blueprint for an Exit Strategy - UGLE

We have been thinking on how to exit suspension to ensure the least disruption to the activities of Freemasonry as possible. A few of our Districts abroad, notably Hong Kong, are now allowing meetings, and we have studied and learnt from their experiences.

1. As soon as government guidance changes to allow groups of ten or more people from different households to meet indoors, it is expected that a lifting of the suspension of Masonic activity will be announced. The resumption of meetings will take place fourteen days after the announcement or on the date, if later, on which the government guidance becomes effective.
2. Lodges and Chapters will be permitted to meet with no more present than the government's prescribed maximum.
3. It is likely that shielding policies for vulnerable members will remain in force, and such members are strongly advised to follow the advice of their doctors and not attend until it is felt safe for them to do so.
4. Summonses should be issued in the normal manner, but care should be taken at Lodge and Chapter level to ensure that no more than the prescribed number of members physically attend.
5. The quorum for a Lodge meeting is five, excluding the Tyler (and any candidate), of whom two must be members of the Lodge and one an Installed Master (who, in the Craft, need not be a member of the Lodge).
6. The quorum required to open a Chapter is five, of whom two must be members of the Chapter and three must be qualified to occupy the respective Principals' Chairs. For more details see the Royal Arch Section of *Information for the Guidance of Members of the Craft*.
7. Flexibility will be required to ensure that the required offices are filled, either by the actual Lodge or Chapter officer, or a stand in.
8. It is likely that social distancing will be required to be maintained throughout the early meetings – this will be mandatory if the prevailing government guidance requires it.
9. It may be that masks will be required to be worn throughout meetings – this will be mandatory if the prevailing government guidance requires it.
10. No part of a 'called on', tyled meeting may be transmitted in any form. If ALL members physically present agree, however, the Lodge or Chapter, having been opened, may be 'called off' and transmitted, subject to password protection, to members unable to be present, for the discussion of administrative business. Only those physically present may, however, vote on that business once the transmission has ended and the Lodge or Chapter has been called on again (but having regard to the views expressed by those not physically present). The agreement to transmit the discussion must be recorded in the Minutes.
11. Dining arrangements afterwards will be at the discretion of the Lodge or Chapter but must, at all times, follow government guidance. (Some Districts have been able to dine multiple tables of ten within the same venue with great success.)
12. Consultation is currently taking place and further guidance will be issued about any modified procedures required for the opening and closing of Lodges and Chapters. It will also address what, if any, ceremonies may be able to take place while maintaining social distancing, and whether suitable adjustments may be made to facilitate this.