

To: All UK UG, PGT and PGR students
Date: Friday 5 February
Subject: COVID-19 update #19: Teaching in the spring term

Dear students,

This message is being sent urgently to all students and we recognise that this may include some who have recently completed their studies, as well as our postgraduate research students. Please ignore this message if you are not a current Foundation, undergraduate or taught postgraduate (Master's) student.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to keep our safety measures on campus under review. The health and safety of students and colleagues remains our top priority, and this is particularly significant as the new, more transmissible variant of the virus is now widespread in the UK.

It remains very important that we all stick to the existing safety measures we have in place on campus, and last Thursday we also told you about our [new face covering guidance and the extension of testing in the SportsPark](#).

We have recently been reviewing our plans for the rest of the spring term, to continue to protect our community. In this email, we would like to explain a bit more detail about our decisions on face-to-face teaching for the remainder of the spring term.

Teaching for the rest of the spring term

We wrote to you in December explaining our plans for teaching in the spring and summer terms. In that email we also confirmed that if we needed to make any further changes to your programme as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we would write to you and let you know as soon as possible.

Since December there have been a number of changes to government policy, including the announcement from the government on 27 January that the current lockdown restrictions are extended and that universities cannot expand face-to-face teaching beyond the courses the government had already identified until at least 8 March 2021.

The new more transmissible strain of the virus has also emerged, meaning we have introduced some additional safety measures, such as **extending distancing in all teaching spaces to 2 metres for at least the rest of this term**. This significantly reduces the capacity of our teaching rooms.

These developments since December mean that we need to make some further changes to how we deliver teaching for the rest of the spring term.

Teaching for: Education (Initial Teacher Training), Physician Associates, Pharmacy and Speech & Language Therapy

We will continue our blended teaching approach, including providing some face-to-face teaching, for students taking courses at Reading that the government has already identified as being permitted to return to campus. These are **Education - Initial Teacher Training, Physician Associates, Pharmacy, and Speech & Language Therapy**. This means that for students on these programmes no changes are being made from your current teaching provision.

Teaching for all other programmes

In line with government direction, until **at least 8 March 2021**, all other teaching provision will be online only.

When we wrote to you in December, we told some of you that you needed to be back on campus at the start of the spring terms if your programme is one with **placement, practical or studio activities** that cannot easily be replicated online. As soon as possible **after 8 March 2021**, we will prioritise some appropriate face-to-face provision of these activities for students on these programmes, if the government permits it and it is safe for us to do so.

If you are a student on one of these programmes, your School will write to you by early next week with further information, as well as advice if you are unable to attend these sessions on campus if they do go ahead.

For all other students, **all remaining scheduled teaching sessions will continue to be delivered online only for the rest of the spring term**. This will also help reduce the risk for our community, by minimising the number of people on campus and the number of students needing to return to Reading.

We want to assure you that, subject to the information contained in this email and any other notified changes, we are committed to delivering your programme to you in accordance with the terms and conditions you have received from us when you started your course with us and other changes we have already notified to you. Although the way in which some of your teaching is provided continues to be different than expected, to protect your health and safety or otherwise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are working hard to deliver a high quality learning experience.

If we need to make further changes, including for the reasons explained in our letter in December, we will let you know as soon as we can and will use all reasonable endeavours to minimise any disruption to you.

If you need more information or to discuss your options, please contact your Support Centre (or Henley Helpdesk or ISLI Admin Office). You may make a complaint about the changes set out in this section, by following the [Complaints Procedure](#).

Halls licence fee waiver extended

For those students for whom all teaching will remain online this term and who have not returned to Reading, we would encourage you to stay at your current address if you can. Please only return if it is absolutely necessary, for example:

- international students who cannot amend their travel plans;
- if you do not have facilities to study effectively online at your current address;
- for health and safety reasons;
- to continue to access specialist medical or mental health services.

As we have moved most teaching online for the rest of the spring term (see above) the [current licence fee waiver](#) for those who are not staying in their UPP halls accommodation will be extended until Friday 16 April, or until you return to your accommodation if that is sooner. If you have already applied for a fee waiver, you do not need to take any further action, although you must let us know

if you return to your room before 16 April. If you have not yet applied for the waiver, you must do so using our [online form](#) by 11 February 2021.

If you are not living in your UPP halls accommodation and have not yet paid your licence fee for the spring term, you do not need to do so, but you must have submitted the online form by the date above. If you have already paid your licence fee for the spring term, we will credit your account with this balance. This can be used for your summer term licence fee, tuition fees or any other payment owing to the University. Alternatively, you can request that this credit is refunded by contacting our [Student Fees team](#).

Your assessment support package for 2020/21

We understand some students may be concerned about how continuing to study online may impact their academic performance. As outlined in [our email last week](#), we have developed a suite of measures this year to ensure your academic achievements are recognised, taking into consideration any individual circumstances that may affect your performance. We are continuing to adapt our teaching and assessments, as well as granting deadline extensions where appropriate. You can also use our enhanced Extenuating Circumstances process now if you feel the current circumstances are affecting your performance for a piece of assessed work, or later on in the year if you need to.

Your support network

Please remember [all of the support resources that are available](#) for you, both academically and in relation to your wellbeing and mental health.

If you have any questions or concerns about how this affects your modules, or your studies this year more generally, speak to your Module Convenor, Academic Tutor, or SDTL.

Visit our [student support webpage](#) for further information on our specialist support teams, including our Student Welfare Team, Counselling & Wellbeing, Disability Advisory Services, International Student Advisory Team, Student Financial Support, and Study Advice.

If you are ever unsure who to ask for advice, please speak to your Academic Tutor or Support Centre (or Henley Helpdesk or ISLI Admin Office) - we are all here to help.

Join our live online Q&A to ask your questions

We hope that the information in this email, combined with our recent announcements about online exams and assessment in the summer term, provides you with a greater sense of certainty about the coming weeks and months. Clearly, getting on top of the virus now will provide us with the best possible chance of restrictions being loosened for the summer term to allow more in-person interaction, both in social and educational settings.

On Thursday 11 February we are running a live Q&A for students from 4-5pm, to provide an overview of our current plans and for you to ask any questions you may have. Please [register your interest](#) and we will send you a link to access the session.

We understand that this will be disappointing to those who were looking forward to a return to face-to-face teaching, but we hope you will understand that the need to maintain safety measures now, and provide certainty for the weeks ahead, has to be our priority.

Lastly, please do take a few moments to read the updated important advice about COVID-19 symptoms and testing, outlined at the end of this email.

Thank you for your time and we look forward to seeing you at the Q&A.

Best wishes,
Elizabeth & Julian

Professor Elizabeth McCrum & Professor Julian Park
Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Education & Student Experience)

Symptoms to look out for – and what action you should take

If you have any of the [main symptoms of COVID-19](#), you must [self-isolate](#) and [get a PCR test](#) straight away. These are:

- a high temperature;
 - a new continuous cough;
- or
- loss or change to your sense of taste and smell.

Further research has shown that there are several less-common, ‘early symptoms’ of COVID-19. PHE have advised that these may include loss of appetite; diarrhoea; nausea/vomiting; extreme tiredness; headaches; joint pain; muscle ache; runny nose; sore throat; sneezing; altered consciousness; seizures.

You do not need to self-isolate or get a PCR test if you experience these without any of the [main three COVID-19 symptoms](#). However, given the prevalence of the virus, it is important to pay particular attention if you experience these ‘early symptoms’. Whilst in normal circumstances they may not be a cause for concern, we must all be mindful of the current increased risks that COVID-19 presents.

If you feel unwell with any of the ‘early symptoms’, we recommend that you:

- monitor the symptoms closely, limit contact with others by staying at home as much as possible, and pay extra attention to cleaning any shared areas after use;
- and
- book a Lateral Flow Test at the University SportsPark if you are currently living on or close to campus.

Remember that you should self-isolate and get a PCR test, **if you develop any of the main symptoms - even mildly.**

Protecting our whole community

We all have a responsibility for our own safety, and an equal responsibility for the safety of those around us. As a community we must be constantly mindful of others’ concerns and personal preferences. Please be respectful of the choices and reasonable expectations of others.

You may notice lapses in compliance with the safety arrangements from time to time. Bear in mind that people do, and will, make mistakes. Be tolerant, but also please feel confident to raise this in a polite and supportive manner. For example, if you feel someone is coming too close, you can say

'Please stay back'. If a lapse is pointed out to you, please do not take offence – we are all trying to keep each other safe.

However, serious or repeated breaches of our safety arrangements place members of our community at risk and cannot be tolerated. Where such breaches occur they may result in disciplinary action being taken. If you are worried the behaviour of others in our community, please contact our [COVID-19 Support & Behaviour Team](#).