

To: All Students

Date: Wednesday 24 February

Subject: COVID-19 update #20: Our response to government announcement on Monday

Dear students,

The government announced on Monday its roadmap for [exiting the national lockdown in England](#).

The Prime Minister outlined the steps that will be taken to gradually ease restrictions at a national level, subject to continued monitoring of COVID-19 cases and the uptake of vaccinations. These steps will have a direct impact on our activities, and we are writing to share more information about our plans in response.

Teaching for the rest of the spring term

Now the government has confirmed we are permitted to do so, **from Monday 8 March**, we will schedule face-to-face teaching for some **placement, practical and studio activities** that cannot easily be replicated online, as outlined in our [update from 5 February](#).

We are currently working through the detailed government guidance to finalise which sessions fall into this group. We have previously contacted students on programmes likely to be affected by this and, **once we have agreed a final list of on-campus sessions this term, we will send further information to these students**, including advice if you are unable to attend these sessions. Please do not make plans to travel back to campus until you have been notified of the dates of any on campus teaching.

For all other students, as previously confirmed, **all remaining scheduled teaching sessions will continue to be delivered online only** for the rest of the spring term and you should continue to study from your current address.

Planning for the summer term

We have already confirmed that the [majority of exams will be online this summer](#) and we have developed our [assessment support package](#) to mitigate the impact of the current circumstances on your academic performance.

The government has told us that it will review, by the end of the Easter holidays, the options for any further return of students to universities. This review will take account of the latest data and will be a key part of the wider national roadmap steps. Students and universities will be given a week's notice ahead of any further return and we will share information with students and colleagues as soon as we hear from the government. In the meantime, unless you have face-to-face teaching on campus, you should stay at your current address and continue to study remotely online.

In line with the government's plans to ease restrictions over the coming months, we hope to be able to offer some face-to-face activity in the summer term, such as revision sessions, field classes and activities for taught postgraduates in particular. However, we are aware that many of our students will be unable to travel to campus (particularly those currently overseas) and this will be an important part of our planning, as well as ensuring appropriate safety precautions are in place to minimise the risk. We will work with Schools to identify how best to do this for specific subjects and we will keep you updated with these plans.

Student travel

As outlined by the government, the [current lockdown restrictions](#) will remain in place until **at least 29 March**, although many restrictions will continue after this date. This means you must **stay at your current address** and only leave your home if it is for a [permitted reason](#).

If you have timetabled face-to-face teaching in the coming weeks from 8 March, you may travel back to campus but **you are strongly encouraged to [book a Lateral Flow Test](#) for when you arrive**. If you have access to [community testing](#), you should take one of these tests before travelling to Reading.

If you are travelling to the UK from overseas, **you must follow the updated government rules** which we have [published on Essentials](#).

Once you have returned to your term-time accommodation you must remain living there unless [an exemption to the national restrictions on leaving home](#) applies. Students living in Halls should use the Home at Halls app or Halls Hotline to confirm your intended arrival date.

Remember – if your teaching is online for the rest of the spring term, you should stay at your current address while the national restrictions are in place.

Further advice is also published in this [letter to students](#) from Universities Minister, Michelle Donelan.

Keeping us all safe on campus

If you are currently on campus, or will be returning soon, please study from your residence wherever possible and only use the Library and other facilities on campus if it is necessary or if you do not have access to suitable study space. You also need to be aware of and adhere to the [rules on household mixing](#) at all times.

You are strongly encouraged to **take a [free lateral flow test](#) twice a week**, to give extra reassurance that you are not unknowingly carrying the virus.

The existing advice to mitigate the risk of spreading the virus remains fundamental, also in light of the new variants. Regular hand-washing, maintaining a distance from other people and wearing face coverings have all proved key and effective in reducing transmission, and should be continued.

Research

Research activities should continue to be conducted remotely, in line with government advice. If you are a doctoral student and require access to specialist facilities on campus, you must seek approval from your Head of School.

Campus facilities

We do not anticipate making changes to the current provision of campus facilities until at least the end of the spring term. We will keep opening of other facilities under review in line with government advice and the roadmap plan. The current arrangements are:

Library and study space: The [Library](#) is open for Click & Collect and bookable study space for students who need it. Students can also use non-bookable study space in RUSU's The Study and our PC Labs in Palmer and Agriculture, all of which are accessible 24/7 by Campus Card.

Student support: Our full range of [specialist advice and support services](#) are available remotely, including Support Centres and the Henley Helpdesk, the ISLI Administration team and the

Graduate School. The Student Services Reception in the Carrington Building remains open for drop-in queries.

Catering: The Library Café, Park Eat and The Dairy are continuing to offer takeaway service. The Marketplace at Park Eat is also open for food and other household essentials.

Halls: Our Halls are open for students who need to be here, along with our Halls Welfare Team. Catering is available for residents at Wantage and St Patrick's.

RUSU: The Students' Union has moved all support services online, and clubs and societies are continuing remotely as much as possible. The Seoul Plaza and Mailbox shops are open, as well as the Bagelman for takeaway. Under government guidance, the nursery remains open.

While there is cause for optimism based on the successful implementation of the vaccination scheme, the Prime Minister has also made it clear that the current restrictions will be eased slowly and carefully. We, too, will keep all of our current arrangements under close review and we will only consider lifting any control measures when it is safe to do so.

As with all other major government COVID-19 announcements, we anticipate that there will be more detailed guidance provided for universities about these latest measures, and we will update our current plans if we need to. The national situation may continue to change, so please keep an eye on your University email account and the [Essentials webpages](#) for any important updates.

Please do not forget all of the [support resources that are available for you](#), both academically and in relation to your wellbeing and mental health. Our [Get Together, Apart](#) diary also highlights a range of online social activities for you to get involved with.

If you have any queries, please speak to your Support Centre (or Henley Helpdesk or ISLI Admin Office). You can also contact our COVID-19 Support Hotline on 0118 378 5445 from 9.15am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday.

Best wishes,

Paddy

Dr Patricia ('Paddy') Woodman

Director of Student Services