

COVID-19 update 5: Government plans for Christmas and an invitation to join our live Q&A

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. Please ignore this message if you are not a current University of Reading student.

I hope [my email last week](#), with further information about the new lockdown in England and what this means for you, was useful

This morning (Wednesday 11 November), we have received guidance from government about their plans for students returning home for Christmas at the end of term. We are currently reviewing the details of this so we can put the necessary plans in place here at Reading and will send further information to all students by email as soon as possible.

We have already submitted an expression of interest to government to be involved with rapid mass testing to provide our students with reassurance about safe travel home and are awaiting a specific response and instruction for our university. Please remember that the [current lockdown restrictions](#) remain in place until 2 December and the government asks that students do not travel home during this period.

We are also preparing a short survey, jointly with RUSU, based on the latest guidance to see how we can best facilitate your safe travel over the Christmas break. This will be shared along with our updated guidance.

We understand that the uncertainty is unsettling; please rest assured that we are committed to following the government advice to help students travel home at the end of term if they wish to.

If you have any questions about anything related to COVID-19, remember you can call our support line on 0118 214 7813 from 9am to 5pm on weekdays and 11am to 4pm at weekends.

Student Q&A on Monday 16 November from 5-6pm

Although we are sending you regular updates to keep you fully informed, we understand it's a lot to take in and you will no doubt have questions. So we are running a live Q&A to give you the opportunity to hear more about our response to COVID-19 and post your questions to a panel, including myself, Professor Julian Park and Professor Elizabeth McCrum, Pro Vice-Chancellors (Education & Student Experience) and your RUSU Education Officer, George Ingram, and RUSU President, Rachel Osborne.

As well as our COVID-19 response, there is a great deal of other work carrying on to enhance your experience so you can also hear more about this.

You'll need to [register in advance online](#) and we'll send you a link to access the live session.

Looking out for 'early' symptoms of COVID-19

Further [research has shown](#) that there are several less common symptoms of COVID-19, and PHE has asked us to pass this information on to you. These symptoms may include loss of appetite; diarrhoea; nausea/vomiting; extreme tiredness; headaches; joint pain; muscle ache; runny nose; sore throat; sneezing; altered consciousness; seizures. It is important for you to be aware of these, as well as [the main symptoms of COVID-19](#) – high temperature, new continuous cough, and loss or change to your sense of taste and smell.

You do not need to self-isolate or get a test if you experience these symptoms without the main COVID-19 symptoms, but you should monitor them closely and limit close contact with others. It is also advisable to reduce the amount of time you spend in communal areas and pay extra attention to cleaning any shared areas after use. Do also remember the basic measures you can take to reduce the spread of COVID-19; wearing face coverings, keeping your distance from others and regularly washing your hands. Please also be even more vigilant about watching for the [main symptoms](#) of COVID-19 and, if you develop these, self-isolate and get a test (as outlined below).

Let us know if you have the main symptoms or a positive test result

If you have **any of the [main symptoms](#)** of COVID-19 (a high temperature, a new continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell and taste) it is **really important that you [obtain a test promptly](#) and [let us know](#)**. This means we can make sure you and your household are supported while you need to self-isolate.

When you register for a test online, Public Health England have advised that you should note that you are a student at the University of Reading in the 'Occupation' section. In the address section, please provide where you are currently living (your term time address).

If you live in halls, use the Home at Halls app to notify the team so they can support you. For those in private accommodation, let us know using [our online form](#). You must also tell anyone else you live with as [they will need to self-isolate](#) until you get your test result.

You must self-isolate if:

- if you or any member of your household has any of the main symptoms of coronavirus
- if you receive a positive test result
- if any member of your household receives a positive test result – even if you get a negative test result, because of the incubation period of the virus
- if you are asked to self-isolate by NHS Test & Trace, Public Health England or other appropriate authority.

How long to self-isolate for

The length of time that you need to self-isolate depends on a number of factors but you will always be given a specific date when you are asked to self-isolate either by NHS Test & Trace or by the University's COVID-19 Case Management Team. It is essential that you self-isolate for the full time specified, even if you test negative for the virus within this period. This is because the incubation period of the virus means you could develop coronavirus after receiving a negative test result.

Further advice is also available on the [NHS website](#).

Remember that we're here to help. If you have any questions about self-isolation, please contact our COVID-19 Support & Behaviour team at covid-support@reading.ac.uk and they'll get back to you as quickly as possible.

Switching to study 'at a distance' this term

Like everyone else, you must keep travel to a minimum during lockdown and this means not travelling home during the lockdown period to prevent the increased risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19).

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office currently advises against [all but essential international travel](#), although the government has said international students [may choose whether to return home](#). All international students, including from the EU, should speak to our [International Advisory Team](#) before considering any overseas travel.

If you have already moved home to continue your studies, you must contact us so we can give you the right advice and change your mode of attendance on your student record. If you are studying from home please contact your [Support Centre or Henley Helpdesk](#) for further advice.

Supporting you

If you're experiencing difficulties, help is here. Please speak to your Academic Tutor for anything related to you studies, or our [Student Welfare Team](#) and they can provide you with advice.

If you're missing social interaction or feeling lonely, we have some resources to help:

- Our new [Get Together, Apart](#) diary lists a range of virtual events happening each week;
- our [Wellbeing Toolkit](#);
- the [Togetherall](#) free online support community;
- the [Supporting our Students scheme](#).

You can also:

- check out the [RUSU website](#) for information about online events they are running;
- join a [RUSU society](#) as many are running online activities throughout term;
- head to the Home at Halls app to see online events they are running (for students living in halls).

The government guidance on [how to meet others safely](#) during lockdown, might also be helpful.

If you feel uncomfortable with the behaviour of any other members of our community, you can contact our COVID-19 Support & Behaviour Team at covid-support@reading.ac.uk to discuss possible options.

This is another long email but I hope the detail is useful. As mentioned at the start, please keep your eye out for further updates from us about travelling home at the end of term.

Best wishes,
Paddy

Dr Patricia (Paddy) Woodman
Director of Student Services