

Urgent COVID-19 Update: University of Reading response to lockdown

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.

Following Parveen and Paul's [message](#) on Sunday, we wanted to update you on the University's planning for the four weeks of lockdown (5 November to 2 December, when it will be reviewed). We apologise that this is a lengthy message but it is important that you understand the way things will operate during the lockdown period. Please take time to read this full message carefully. We have also created a [one-page document](#) that summarises how lockdown will affect our main areas of activity.

Our response is based on the [general lockdown information](#) released at the weekend, [a letter from the Minister for Universities](#) and the [latest Department for Education guidance](#). We will keep our plans under close review and adjust if necessary. The government has been very clear that it wants universities to remain open and so many of our services and activities will continue on campus, although there will be some changes. We also include here [a letter to you as students](#) from the Minister for Universities.

Please remember that, while universities are allowed to remain open, the [general lockdown rules](#) do apply to you wherever you are – on campus, in halls, in the supermarket, visiting a COVID-19 testing centre, in town or at home. This includes the guidance about wearing face coverings, social distancing and restrictions on socialising outside of your household. Whether you are on campus or studying remotely, please play your part in ensuring that this lockdown is effective in reducing the number of COVID-19 cases.

Continuing our face-to-face teaching

Many students have shared how much they value the in-person teaching they are receiving, both for learning development and for the interaction it provides with others outside their household. The Minister has also made clear that the government does not expect a move to online-only teaching.

So we intend to continue with our blended approach of online and face-to-face teaching, with strict adherence to all the safety measures we already have in place and in which Public Health England have expressed confidence. Please also be aware that all assessments will go ahead this term as planned unless you are specifically informed otherwise by your Module Convenor.

Maintaining the Library and study space

The Library will [remain open](#) during the lockdown period, with amended opening hours starting from 5 November of **08:30 till midnight Sunday to Friday and 08:30 to 21:00 on Saturdays**. The [Click and Collect service](#) will also continue. You will have access to the bookable study space in the Library and the non-bookable space in URS and [other locations around campus](#) such as halls – all of which is socially distanced. The Study at RUSU will also be open.

Student support services maintained

We will also maintain all our [student advice and support services](#). These will continue to be available remotely, plus reception desks will remain open for drop-in queries and you will still be able to make bookings for face-to-face appointments where needed.

Life in halls

Halls of residence remain open and fully staffed. If you are living in halls, we will continue to support you, including all of the assistance we are providing for those who must self-isolate. In particular, we will continue to provide temporary assistance with deliveries of food and emergency items where required. Home at Halls will continue its programme of virtual social activities.

Socialising

From Thursday 5 November there can be **no household mixing** indoors regardless of where you live (in halls or in private accommodation), and this includes in gardens of private properties. Outdoors, in public spaces, you can meet with members of your household or support bubble OR **one** other person from another household. However, many virtual social events will continue to be held online.

Food, sports and recreation

Catering and food services will continue on campus, with some changes. Students on catering packages will still be able to access their catering needs. You can find all the details on the [Hospitality webpages](#). However, the international food market will not be on campus during lockdown.

Government has said that all pubs, clubs and bars must close so all our University bars will shut during the lockdown period. Gyms and outdoor leisure facilities are also required to close under the lockdown restrictions, so the SportsPark will also close temporarily.

Essential food retail can remain open both on and off campus and we anticipate that The Co-op on the Whiteknights campus will remain open for the full lockdown period. The market place will also continue to operate at Park Eat providing essential grocery items.

Your Students' Union, RUSU, has advised that most of its services will be moving online, although its food outlets will still provide takeaway services and its societies will continue to operate virtually. RUSU is currently working to create a series of alternative activities you can take part in through the coming weeks. Keep an eye on the [RUSU website](#) for the latest updates and opening times. We are also working to create a 'What's on, when?' resource on the Essentials website.

Travel during lockdown

The government is advising against travel in and out of your local area during lockdown, but there is an exception for education. If you are commuter student, this means you will be able to travel to and from University.

It also means that if you are away for Week 6, you will be able to travel back to Reading for the rest of the autumn term. If you need to travel back to University with those with whom you are currently staying (for example parents), to avoid using public transport or because there is no other way you can return to campus for the rest of term, the guidance does not expressly prohibit this. However, no-one other than members of your student household can enter your accommodation given the restrictions on [indoor mixing of households](#) under the new lockdown arrangements.

If you are on a placement you may travel to undertake your placement if required. Apart from these instances you should not travel elsewhere during the lockdown period, except for any the reasons outlined in the government guidance. The government has, however, said that it will be providing further guidance about travel at the end of term. If you have any queries about your placement please contact the team at Placements@reading.ac.uk.

The government has asked students to remain at university and not to travel home before Thursday 5 November, to allow all students who are able to, to benefit from face-to-face teaching and COVID-secure educational facilities, and to prevent the increased risk of spreading coronavirus (COVID-19). International students should be mindful that the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office currently [advises against all but essential international travel](#) and we will send further specific advice for international students soon.

If there is a compelling reason that you need to continue your studies from home, it is important that you let us know you are considering this so we can give you the right advice and change your mode of attendance on your student record. This may, depending on a number of factors, affect your student loan or your immigration status. It is also important to check that you will not be missing essential face-to-face teaching. If you are thinking of studying from home please contact your [Support Centre or Henley Helpdesk](#) for further advice. Our international students, including from the EU, should speak to our [International Advisory Team](#) before considering any overseas travel.

Please note that there are some programmes for which it will be difficult for students to meet their learning outcomes without being on campus in the autumn term. We wrote to all students on these programmes at the start of term but if you have any queries about whether this affects you please contact your Support Centre.

We look forward to getting back into teaching and other activity after Week 6. In the meantime, we recommend that you continue to check your University email and [Essentials](#) for the latest information. Our COVID-19 Support Line launched on Monday, so if you have any questions, please call **0118 214 7813** between 9am and 5pm on weekdays and 11am and 4pm on weekends. And of course, please remember that there are all sorts of resources to help you, including our [Wellbeing Toolkit](#), the [Togetherall](#) free online support community, the [Supporting our Students scheme](#) and the [Student Welfare Team](#). As ever, we are here to help if you need it.

Best wishes,
Julian and Dominik

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