

## COVID-19 update 2: Seating plans for campus sessions and the latest government advice

Dear students,

I hope my [previous emails](#) about the autumn term and latest government COVID-19 advice have been helpful. I am writing to share a few recent developments from the University and the government.

### **Serious consequences of failing to comply with government requirements**

Last weekend, our Security team were called out to several gatherings and parties on campus, including one that was attended by the Police and arrests were made. **This behaviour will not be tolerated**, as reiterated in this [video message from the Vice-Chancellor](#). We are thoroughly investigating these incidents and will take swift action in line with our student disciplinary procedures.

While the overwhelming majority of our students are behaving respectfully and adhering to all University and government rules to protect one another, it is entirely unacceptable that a small minority is continuing to act in a way that risks the health and safety of us all. It is particularly unfair for our fantastic Security team to be faced with such difficult circumstances while they are doing all they can to keep our whole University community safe.

As outlined in our recent [joint statement with RUSU](#), many areas of the UK are under much stricter socialising restrictions than those currently in Reading. If infection rates rise significantly, Reading will face similar increased limitations, as outlined in the [Prime Minister's statement](#) on Monday. It is our responsibility to do all we can to keep the infection rates as low as possible to prevent the risk level being raised and new measures being introduced.

Please visit [our Essentials pages](#) for the latest University and government advice.

### **University of Reading COVID-19 Case Management Team**

To enable us to respond quickly to provide support and guidance to those members of our community who have tested positive for COVID-19 and their close contacts, and to support the national Test & Trace system, the University has established a new Case Management Team.

Where the University is advised of a positive COVID-19 test for a student or colleague, the Case Management Team will work with the affected individual to identify and then make contact with their known [close contacts](#) at the University. The team will be giving advice about when and for how long affected students and colleagues will need to self-isolate, based on government guidance, and how they can access support.

If you are contacted by the team, either because you have tested positive for COVID-19 or because you have been named as a close contact of someone who has, please provide them with your full support and cooperation, for the safety of our whole community.

Anyone who receives a positive test or who is identified as a close contact may also be contacted separately by NHS Test and Trace, and we expect you to fully cooperate with the national process as we are sure you will with ours.

## **Seating plans for teaching sessions on campus**

In support of our efforts to identify close contacts of anyone who tests positive for COVID-19, this week we are introducing seating plans for on-campus teaching sessions. This will help us to identify more effectively 'close contacts' should a student or member of staff who has been in a teaching situation test positive for COVID-19.

Each desk in our seminar rooms and lecture theatres will be numbered and we will record your attendance against your corresponding desk number. The data will be stored securely and will only be used if someone who was in that session receives a positive test result. We can then determine which other people have been within 2 metres of them for 15 minutes or more. The member of staff leading your teaching session will work through this process in your upcoming teaching sessions.

When attending teaching sessions on campus, please remember to wear a face covering (unless you are exempt), follow all safety signs and instructions, and maintain your distance from others in corridors and when entering and exiting rooms and buildings.

## **Mobile testing unit**

I am very pleased to report that we have secured a mobile testing unit to be onsite at our Whiteknights campus for two days this week. This will be available for booking through the [national portal](#) and will hopefully make it easier for students and colleagues who have symptoms of COVID-19 to secure a test quickly and easily.

We are working with the local authority to secure an indoor testing facility on site, but in the meantime, we hope that the mobile unit will continue to visit the campus periodically.

## **Week 6**

The week commencing Monday 2 November is 'Week 6'. Please check your academic timetable to see what your School or Department have planned, which may include additional enhancement sessions on campus or online, or time to catch up on reading or coursework.

If you decide to travel to see family or friends, please make sure you follow the [government advice on travelling safely](#) and also check which areas of the UK are currently [subject to increased restrictions](#).

## **Spring term**

Many of you have understandably asked about our plans for the spring term. When we first developed our 'blended learning' approach for the autumn term, we had hoped that the wider situation relating to the pandemic in the UK would have improved sufficiently by January to enable us to return to a normal level of on-campus teaching in January.

Given the national situation and ongoing social distancing measures, it is now looking less likely that we will be able to do this and our intention is to adopt a similar blended teaching framework into the spring term. However, we are very aware that you value face-to-face teaching and this will continue to inform our plans for the rest of the academic year, in close consultation with RUSU, to continue to offer you the best possible learning experience. We will share more information with you in the coming weeks.

Alongside this planning, we have also been working on a range of contingency plans to respond quickly if local or national restrictions require us to change our current approach. We are updating our [phased return roadmap](#) to outline our plans in more detail which we hope to share with you soon.

Please continue to check your University email account every day during term time for updates as well as the [Essentials webpages](#) for the latest information and advice. You can also keep track of the latest number of positive COVID-19 cases among our students and staff on our [online dashboard](#). If you have any questions or need any support please [contact us](#).

Best wishes,  
Paddy

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Director of Student Services