

Your teaching and learning in the autumn term

Dear <NAME>,

Further to my previous email about preparing to return to Reading, I am writing with further information about what to expect from your teaching and learning this autumn term.

Please do continue to regularly check your University email account and our [Essentials webpages](#) for the latest information and advice.

Latest government advice

The UK government has introduced [strict restrictions](#) relating to gatherings, which includes for socialising. These restrictions are the law and you must ensure you understand and adhere to them at all times. This applies to all students, whether you live in halls on or off campus, in private housing, or at home. The [current rules](#) are that you must not:

- socialise in groups of more than six people (unless every individual is from the same household or support bubble) and whether inside or outside, including your own residence;
- interact socially with anyone outside the group you are attending a place with, even if you see other people you know, for example, in a restaurant, community centre or place of worship;
- hold or attend celebrations at other venues (such as parties) where it is difficult to maintain social distancing and avoid close social interaction – please note that parties are not permitted in our halls;
- stay overnight away from your home with members of more than one other household (and up to a maximum of six people).

Restrictions on gatherings can be enforced by the police, who can impose significant financial penalties for breaches.

We will also take breaches of the law and of our own [Health & Safety arrangements](#), including of government guidelines, seriously and breaches may lead to disciplinary action being taken under our [Student Disciplinary Procedures](#).

Current rates of infection nationally and locally

As many of you will have seen in the media, the number of confirmed cases of coronavirus nationally has risen in recent weeks, which is why it is especially important that we all continue to follow the latest government rules outlined above. Here in Reading, we have also seen a recent increase, although the overall infection rate remains below a level considered to be a cause for concern by Public Health England.

We are still looking forward to welcoming our new students on to campus next week for Welcome Week, with term starting as planned the following week from Monday 28 September. With a few exceptions, this is the first week of teaching for most courses.

It is very important to note, however, that the situation continues to change daily and we are closely monitoring developments in close consultation with our local health partners. We are prepared to adapt our approach to move more activities online, if this is necessary.

Your 'blended' learning environment

Based on the current situation, we will be providing a 'blended' learning environment this autumn term as follows:

1. All core course content will be available online

Content that would typically be delivered through large lectures will be provided digitally, on Blackboard in most cases, using screencasts, recordings of lectures, PowerPoint presentations, handouts and other supporting materials. This reduces the health risks from large groups in confined spaces and enables us to use teaching rooms for interactive sessions with smaller groups. It also means you can review the materials in your own time as often as you wish, wherever you are geographically based, and around any other commitments you may have.

2. Regular interactive sessions will be delivered on campus and online

Alongside providing access to your core course content online, we will schedule regular interactive sessions (for example, seminars and workshops), to enable you to develop and apply your understanding of the topic with your lecturer and classmates. In many cases these sessions will be face-to-face on campus. Online interactive sessions will be provided for those who need to study remotely. These online sessions will be live so you will need to attend at the scheduled time, as you would for a session on-campus (see further information about your timetable below). They will not be recorded, except in certain specific circumstances.

This flexible approach should enable you to continue your studies as planned this year, regardless of your personal circumstances. We will keep these arrangements under review and take steps to adapt as required, in line with government advice.

Re-enrolling onto your programme this year

All returning students will be asked to re-enrol for the 2020/21 academic year on [RISIS](#), like normal. This year, we have two enrolment statuses:

1. 'On-campus' – for students attending face-to-face sessions on campus
2. 'At a distance' – for students studying remotely in the autumn term (or completing a period of self-isolation)

You can change your status if, for example, you select 'at a distance' at the start of term but are able to attend 'on campus' later in the autumn.

Academic timetable for autumn term

We are currently finalising the autumn timetable, which will be published in the week commencing Monday 21 September. See [Essentials](#) for more information on accessing your timetable.

All students will receive a timetable as normal, which can be viewed in CMISGo and your Outlook calendar. On your Outlook calendar, your individualised activities are highlighted in peach. Some of these activities are delivered live online for all students, and some take place on campus.

Where you have been allocated an on-campus activity, you may also see a corresponding online activity highlighted in grey. The online activities in grey have been set up specifically for students who are unable to attend campus. Further information about accessing these sessions, as well as details all of your learning and activities within each of your modules will be published on [Blackboard](#).

The Library

Our [Library](#) is open for [Click & Collect](#) and [study space](#). From Monday 14 September you will need to [book study space in advance](#) and our system will allow you to choose your preferred type of space, subject to availability, including PCs, booths and armchairs. As well as the Library, a range of additional study space is available across campus, [including URS and The Study](#).

In line with our [policy on face coverings](#), you should wear a face covering in enclosed spaces (such as the Library) where social distancing of 2 metres is not possible. You do not need to wear a face covering if you can work 2 metres from others, so you may choose to remove it when sitting at a desk (if you are more than 2 metres away from other people) although you should put it back on to move around inside the building. Some people are also [exempt from wearing face coverings](#). This can be for a wide range of reasons, including hidden disabilities.

Your dedicated [Academic Liaison Librarian](#) is your main point of contact with the Library and you can book a one-to-one appointment online. They can help with finding resources, referencing, reading lists and supporting your research.

Our [Study Advice](#) and [Maths Support](#) teams continue to be available providing online support and appointments to help with your study skills.

Academic support

In addition to the support offered by the Library, you will continue to be supported this term by a wide network of professional staff.

Your [Academic Tutor](#) is there to support your academic, personal and professional development and you should meet with them, online or in person, at least once a term. If you have any queries about your studies in the autumn term, whether that's related to your modules, assessment, or online learning, please speak to your Academic Tutor in the first instance. They work closely with our specialist student support services to be able to direct you to these as appropriate.

I strongly recommend that you also take the time to familiarise yourself with our [suite of Blackboard support resources](#), which have been updated to provide further information about studying online and using new tools such as Blackboard Collaborate.

Our [Life Tools programme](#) is running a varied schedule of online workshops this term, including sessions on how to succeed with presentations and collaborations, and how to manage stress.

Please do also remember that our [Disability Advisory Service](#) is here to support any students with disabilities or long-term health conditions. If you have any concerns about managing your studies in the autumn term alongside particular health needs, please do [contact the team](#) for advice.

'Back to uni' induction course

Our Study Advice team have worked closely with academic staff to develop a new induction course for returning students this year. ['Back to uni'](#) provides useful information on how you'll be studying this term, including advice on how to make the most of face-to-face interactive sessions and online course content, as well as developing your study skills to adapt to learning online. The course will launch on Monday 21 September and we will be in touch to provide you with the link.

Lastly, if you haven't already read our ['Collective responsibility to keep our community safe'](#) information, you must do so before you come to campus. This outlines the measures we have put in place to protect you, as well as the steps you must take to play your part to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus.

I hope this information is useful. I will be back in touch soon with further details about our campus facilities, including venues and catering outlets, so you know what will be open in the autumn term. In the meantime, if you have any queries you can contact us on coronavirus-students@reading.ac.uk.

Best wishes,
Paddy

Dr Patricia Woodman
Director of Student Services