

Target audience: UG and PGT returning students

Send date: 7 September 2020

Subject line: Preparing for the start of the autumn term – COVID-19 guidance

Dear students,

With the start of the autumn term now just a few weeks away, I am writing with further information to help you prepare to return to your studies this year.

We will be sending a number of emails over the coming weeks to confirm further details about the following:

- teaching in the autumn, your academic timetable, and how to access online course materials and interactive sessions;
- campus facilities and what will be open in the autumn term;
- your University of Reading support network and where to go if you need any additional help or advice this term.

Please do continue to check your University email account and our [Essentials webpages](#), which will continue to be updated with new information and advice.

Essential measures to protect the health and wellbeing of our university community

We have recently published further information about the [arrangements we are putting in place](#) to protect the health and wellbeing of our whole community and the steps you must take to play your part. It is our collective responsibility to follow all UK government and institutional advice.

You must read and take note of your obligations as outlined in our [‘Collective responsibility’ briefing](#) before you return to campus.

In addition, you should also familiarise yourself with the [latest guidance on the symptoms of coronavirus](#) and when you need to self-isolate. We have shared some [practical advice](#) about things you should make sure you bring with you to Reading this year, and how you should prepare in case you need to self-isolate at some point this term.

It is important to emphasise that you must not travel to Reading if you have symptoms, or if you are required to self-isolate for another reason (for example, because someone you live with has symptoms or has received a positive test result). If you are travelling from overseas, further information about self-isolation (or ‘quarantine’) arrangements are provided towards the end of this email. You should report any absences to your School in the usual way, or contact your [Support Centre](#) or Henley Helpdesk if you are not sure what these arrangements are.

Face coverings

Many of you have understandably asked whether you will need to wear a face covering on campus this term. The University supports the government’s advice that face coverings can be used as a precautionary measure to protect others and advises that we “Protect our Community: Wear a Face Covering”.

There are three main points for both students and colleagues to remember:

1. All [legal requirements](#) about face coverings apply on campus. For example, you must wear a face covering in shops, takeaway food outlets, on public transport, places of worship and in our

museums.

2. We **strongly encourage** that you wear a face covering:

- in enclosed spaces (inside and outdoors) where social distancing of 2 metres is not possible (this includes our Library, classrooms and lecture theatres)
- where you come into contact with others that you do not normally meet.

3. 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 buildings. Some people are also [exempt from wearing face coverings](#). This can be for a wide range of reasons, including hidden disabilities.

Further information about this policy is [published on Essentials](#).

Accommodation and socialising

Some of you have already returned to Reading to move in to student accommodation and I hope you are settling in well. At this time, when we are all spending more time at home including to work and study, it is particularly important for you to be considerate of your fellow housemates, neighbours and our local community.

Visitors to your student accommodation

If you are living in halls, for the first 14 days following your arrival you are asked to focus on forming your 'household'*. This means taking particular care to socially distance from anyone who is not part of your household, which includes not going into other flats and not allowing visitors into yours. You are welcome to meet others outside, so long as you follow the appropriate government guidelines to minimise the chances of infection spread.

If you are living in private accommodation we recommend you follow the approach outlined above to form your household during the first two weeks you live together. This does not mean that you cannot socialise and meet other people, but it is essential that you adhere to the guidance on socialising below.

Once you have formed your 'household', you should only invite others into your accommodation if you maintain social distance from them and you adhere to government guidelines (see further guidance below). You should also speak to the others that you live with to ensure they are comfortable with having visitors.

* If you are living in a flat or house (in halls or private accommodation), this will be your 'household'. For corridor style halls your household will usually be those other residents with whom you are sharing kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Restrictions on socialising

The UK government has introduced [strict restrictions](#) relating to gatherings, which includes for socialising. You must ensure you understand and [adhere to these restrictions at all times](#). This applies to all students, whether you live in halls on or off campus, in private housing, or at home.

At the time of writing, you must not:

- socialise indoors in groups of more than two households – this includes when dining out or going to the pub;
- socialise outdoors in a group of more than six people from different households; gatherings larger than six should only take place if everyone is exclusively from two households;
- 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 (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.

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

We will also take breaches 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](#).

In general you should try to limit the number of people you see, especially over short periods of time, to keep yourself and others safe. The more people with whom you interact, the more opportunities there are for the virus to spread. As with other areas around the country where infection rates have increased, an increase of infections in the Reading area could result in stricter local lockdown restrictions being imposed.

Self-isolating (or ‘quarantine’) when arriving from overseas

If you are travelling to the UK from overseas, you should read the latest UK government advice about [what to expect when you arrive](#). You must self-isolate (also known as ‘quarantine’) for 14 days when you arrive in England, unless you have travelled from [one of the countries with exemption](#). This list may be changed by the government at short notice so please regularly check these links for the latest advice. Our [recent email to international students on 18 August](#) provided more advice about support for students who need to self-isolate for this reason.

I appreciate that the instructions above mean that many students will have to make changes to aspects of their social lives that may be frustrating after such a long time away from University life. However, it is vital that everyone adheres to the expectations set out here and on the [Essentials website](#). Everyone has a part to play in protecting the University and our community in the coming term. We ask you to take this responsibility seriously, follow the guidance and work with us to maintain the health and wellbeing of everyone. .

I will be back in touch soon with further information about your academic timetable and how to access online course content and interactive activities in the autumn term. In the meantime, if you have any queries you can contact us at coronavirus-students@reading.ac.uk.

Best wishes,
Paddy

Dr Patricia Woodman
Director of Student Services