

**To:** All students

**Date:** Tuesday 16 March

**Subject:** COVID-19 update #21: Roadmap progress and travel over Easter

Dear students,

Following the announcement of the [government's roadmap for easing of restrictions](#) in England, the continued success of the vaccination programme and the steady decline of COVID-19 cases, there is a lot to feel optimistic and hopeful about.

We are awaiting further guidance from government about the summer term and hope to be able to welcome more students back to campus for face-to-face activities. However, the roadmap steps are dependent on us all continuing to play our part to keep case numbers low, and we must not become complacent.

Last week marked the beginning of the lockdown easing, as [you are now allowed to meet up with one other person](#) from outside of your household socially outdoors.

This is a positive development, but it is only the beginning, and **there are [other rules still in place](#)** which we must follow to ensure we can continue on this trajectory. In particular, I wanted to highlight the following:

- Meeting indoors with anyone other than members of your household or support bubble is still against the law.
- Outdoors, you can meet with either one person from outside your household, or members of your household together, for exercise or recreation (socialising) - this includes on our campus.
- On campus, face coverings are expected to be worn in all indoor spaces (including the Library) at all times, as well as outdoors where it is difficult to maintain a 2 metre distance from others.
- Students on campus must carry ID (such as a Campus Card) at all times and present it to a member of staff if asked.

## **Student behaviour in our community**

We are sadly continuing to see a small number of incidents where students have not been following the rules, as well as concerning reports of students being verbally abusive to staff when asked to show ID or wear a face covering, for example.

Everyone should feel safe when on our campus, and we are taking a firm approach in response to incidents when they occur. Since September we have had to issue over 450 fines, generally ranging between £200 to £400 per incident, for breaches of COVID-19 related rules, in accordance with our Student Disciplinary procedures.

I am sharing this with you to be open and transparent that we will not tolerate behaviour that risks the safety of our colleagues or your fellow students. We do not take disciplinary decisions lightly and understand accidental lapses can happen from time to time, but our primary responsibility is to keep our whole community safe. Money collected from fines is allocated to a dedicated fund for student welfare and has been used this year for a wide range of social activities, online and on campus (when this was permitted), as well as additional support for those self-isolating.

## **Returning to Reading and lateral flow testing twice a week**

Some of you may have recently returned to campus for face-to-face teaching or be coming back over the coming days and weeks. As well as being aware of the restrictions outlined above, please do also remember to be considerate of your housemates and neighbours at this time when we are all spending more time at home, whether you are living in Halls or private accommodation. If you are moving back, consider saying 'hello' to your neighbours – you might be able to help one another with parcel deliveries or picking up essentials from the shops.

For those coming onto campus, do not forget to book yourself in for a [free rapid lateral flow test](#) at the SportsPark. In line with government guidance, **you are strongly encouraged to take a test twice a week, ideally three days apart**. We will continue to offer these tests until at least the end of the spring term, but we anticipate further guidance on testing from the government soon.

If you do test positive for COVID-19, let us know by completing [this form](#) so that we can properly support you.

## **Easter break**

The government is strongly encouraging students to stay at their current term-time address, including over the Easter break, to minimise transmission.

For those students currently on campus, the government regulations say that you can leave your term-time address to travel home for some or all of the Easter vacation, and then return to Reading for the summer term. However, you can only do this once between 8 March and 29 April (once to travel to a vacation address and once to return) and you cannot travel back and forth between addresses during this period.

Students who are not currently on campus should continue to study at a distance until the government has published further information about whether more students can return for face-to-face activities, beyond those on programmes we have already confirmed.

If you decide to travel away from Reading, you should take a lateral flow test as close to your planned travel date as possible. You should also take a test before travelling back to Reading, if you have access to [community testing](#), and book a further test at the SportsPark for when you arrive back.

You should follow all government advice about travelling safely, whether that's in a [private vehicle](#) or [public transport](#).

## **Specific travel advice for international students**

Please be aware that the government has brought in [new rules for travelling from England](#) to outside of the UK, Ireland, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. This means that you have to declare that your reasons for travelling are within the legally permitted reasons for leaving home.

Leaving home or travelling for the purposes of Education is permitted – which includes for international students returning home from university in England, or those students with activities directly linked to their course that need to be completed overseas (for example, overseas placements).

Before travelling, **you need to complete [the declaration form](#)** on the UK government website and take a printed copy or copy saved to a mobile device, along with evidence to support your reason for travelling. The government has recommended that students take proof of your enrolment at the University of Reading as evidence that you have a permitted reason to travel – a ‘Certificate of Enrolment’ letter can be printed from the RISIS Portal, or contact your Support Centre (or Henley Helpdesk, ISLI Admin Office or Doctoral Research Office) if you need help. Students on Study Abroad placements should contact the Erasmus & Study Abroad Office.

## **Vaccination programme in the UK**

Finally, as vaccinations are rolled out across the country, if you feel you are likely be offered a vaccine based on the current priority groups but you haven’t been contacted yet, please speak to your GP for further advice. You can also enter your NHS number on the [NHS website](#), now and in the coming months, to check when you become eligible to book a vaccine.

We are continuing to provide a wide range of [support resources](#) for you, both academically and for your wellbeing and mental health. Our [Get Together, Apart](#) diary also highlights a range of online social activities for you to get involved with. If you have any queries relating to your studies, please speak to your Support Centre (or Henley Helpdesk or ISLI Admin Office). You can also contact our COVID-19 Support & Behaviour Team at [covid-support@reading.ac.uk](mailto:covid-support@reading.ac.uk).

Best wishes,  
Paddy

Dr Patricia (‘Paddy’) Woodman  
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