

COVID-19 update from the University of Reading

Dear students,

I hope you are settling into university life, whether you have joined us this year or are returning to continue your studies with us.

In the last few weeks we have sent you a lot of information and I appreciate it may be difficult to keep track of all of the advice. The UK government has also introduced new measures and changes to the law for the wider population, which we are all getting used to. If you are unsure of anything the best starting point is our [Autumn 2020 Essentials website](#).

To help you keep up-to-date, I will be sending regular emails to all students this term with a summary of what has changed and what you need to know. The situation can change quickly, so please make sure you check your University email account at least once a day and keep an eye on [Essentials](#) and [Me@Reading](#) for the latest.

COVID-19 tests and symptoms – let us know on our new online form

We continue to work with Public Health England and local health partners to manage positive cases of COVID-19 in the University community and to improve the availability of testing for students and staff. To do this we need to know how many students have symptoms of COVID-19 and are trying to access testing.

If you [live in private accommodation](#) and are self-isolating while seeking a test or waiting for the results, please let us know using [our new online form](#). In particular, please let us know if you are struggling to access testing. If you [live in halls](#), please continue to use the Home at Halls app to report if you have symptoms. Regardless of where you live, support and guidance is available to help you manage any time spent in self-isolation, as outlined below.

Remember - if you receive a test result showing that you have tested positive for COVID-19 it is very important that you [notify the University straight away](#) using our online form. We can advise others who may have been in close contact with you of any action they need to take, in order to reduce the chances of infection spread. We will not share your details with other students.

Update on cases

As highlighted on [this interactive map](#), the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Reading remains relatively low compared with many other areas of the UK. However, we must not be complacent. It is our responsibility to follow all the guidance to keep the local infection rates as low as possible and avoid stricter local measures being introduced.

Here at the University, we have received a number of positive test results for members of our community as shown on this tracker. This will be updated each morning. We have been working with Public Health England to contact directly anyone identified as a close contact of those affected.

Protecting our community

Together with the Reading University Students' Union, we recently wrote [a letter to all students](#) about the steps we must all take to protect our community. While we know the majority of our student community is following the guidance to keep us all safe, we have unfortunately experienced

some incidents (in Halls and in private accommodation) where students have been breaching government regulations, including holding parties and gatherings. We are currently investigating these and will be taking action, including issuing fines where appropriate, in accordance with our disciplinary procedures. This is in addition to any action that may be taken by the police.

RUSU are running a range of events and activities on campus and online for you to socialise safely. [Visit their website](#) for further information.

Symptoms and testing

If you have any of the [main symptoms of coronavirus](#), you must [self-isolate \(stay at home\)](#) and [get a test](#) as soon as possible. You must also tell anyone else you live with as they will need to self-isolate until you get your test result. Please also let us know using [our new online form](#), as mentioned above.

I know there has been some confusion about how to get a test, so I wanted to share this useful [step-by-step guide on home testing](#). It has also recently been confirmed that the post box on campus outside Whiteknights House has been designated a '[priority post box](#)' by Royal Mail for returning COVID-19 tests. If you have symptoms and you are struggling to get a test, please let us know using [our new online form](#).

If you receive a positive test result, you must:

- follow all [government advice](#) to self-isolate (stay at home)
- notify the University using [our online form](#)
- if you live in University halls, use the Home at Halls app to notify the team
- let all members of your household know, as they will need to [self-isolate](#) in line with government advice
- follow all instructions from the NHS or Public Health England and engage with the Test & Trace system (including advising them that you are connected to the University)
- report your absence to your School in the usual way (contact your [Support Centre](#), Henley Helpdesk or Graduate School if you're not sure how to do this).

If you have downloaded the [NHS COVID-19 app](#), in addition to the steps you must take above, you can also register any positive test result you receive so Public Health England can notify anyone you have been in close contact with (they will not reveal your identity).

Self-isolation and support

We recommend that you take steps to prepare in case you need to self-isolate. For example, you could set up an arrangement with a friend outside your household so, if one of you needs to self-isolate, the other could bring food or other essentials to leave outside your door.

Remember that you must self-isolate if any of the following happen:

- if you or any member of your household has any of the [main symptoms of coronavirus](#)
- if you or any member of your household receives a positive test result
- if you are asked to self-isolate by NHS Test & Trace, Public Health England or other appropriate authority.

We have published further advice about [what to do when you need to self-isolate](#), as well as information about [shopping delivery options](#) in the local area.

If you are struggling with your period of self-isolation please do not hesitate to contact our team at covid-support@reading.ac.uk so we can help you.

Looking after your mental wellbeing

As a University of Reading student you have access to a wide range of resources and specialist teams to help take care of your mental health and wellbeing. This includes:

- [Life Tools](#) – a programme of practical webinars to help you manage some of the day-to-day challenges of university life (including sessions on coping with pressure and improving concentration).
- [Togetherall](#) – a free, online support community (available 24/7)
- [Student Space](#) – developed by Student Minds to help you find the support you need during the coronavirus pandemic, including access to a phone and text support service
- [Student Welfare Team](#) – our dedicated team are here to help with any personal difficulties you may experience while studying, by phone, email and in person
- [RUSU Welfare Directory](#) – a helpful overview of support available here at the University and externally
- [RUSU Advice Service](#) – free, confidential and independent advice is available from the Reading University Students' Union

Join our online Careers & Placements Fair

With so much going on, I wanted to make sure you hadn't missed hearing about our online Careers & Placements Fair. From 12 – 16 October, we have lined up over 50 employers looking to recruit for a range of placement, internship and graduate roles.

[Download and browse Career Fair Plus](#) to book onto webinars and employer chats. If you haven't used the app before, watch this [short screencast](#) to see how it works. Whether you have a particular role in mind, or would like to explore your options, come along to our [Prepare for the Careers and Placements Fair](#) online workshop on 7 October for advice to make the most of this event.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and I hope it has been useful. I will keep in touch over the coming weeks. In the meantime, if you have any queries related to your studies please speak to your [Academic Tutor](#) or Supervisor. For any other questions, you can [Ask A Question](#) on RISIS or, for research students, contact the [Graduate School](#).

Best wishes,
Paddy

Dr Patricia Woodman
Director of Student Services