

**To:** Continuing UG and PGT students

**Date:** Thursday 20 May

**Subject:** Our teaching and learning plans for 2021/22

Dear students,

We hope the summer term has been productive for you so far and that you are looking forward to continuing your studies next year. We are writing to share [our teaching and learning plans for next year](#), reflecting our ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the 2021/22 academic year your teaching will be through **a combination of regular face-to-face on campus sessions and online learning**. Although this will be different to how we delivered teaching and learning before the pandemic (as outlined in this letter), **we are planning to increase teaching and other activities on campus** compared to what we have been able to do this academic year.

We believe that the situation will be much improved by the time we welcome you back for the autumn term. However, we cannot be certain that all restrictions will be lifted, and so we must be prepared to be flexible if things change (for example, if new social distancing or lockdown measures are reintroduced with little notice). We are also mindful that some travel restrictions may still apply, particularly to international travel.

We remain committed to helping you benefit from all that university life has to offer. We are using everything we have learnt this year, together with your feedback, to deliver a high-quality learning experience, which includes the same levels of teaching as before the pandemic, although the way in which some of these things are being provided may be different.

We want to assure you that, subject to the information contained in this email and any other changes formally notified to you, we are committed to delivering your programme to you in accordance with the Terms and Conditions you have received from us.

## **Teaching and learning in 2021/22**

We believe bringing together in-person and online teaching will provide the best learning experience for you in the anticipated circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. It means we can optimise the amount of teaching we can provide on campus and support students who need to study remotely temporarily if this is required due to the pandemic. All students will also benefit from the flexibility that blended learning brings such as having structured guided learning and pre-recorded material in advance of on-campus sessions.

The Autumn Term will start on Monday 27 September 2021, except for those programmes that usually start teaching earlier.

You will be taught through a combination of:

- **Live interactive sessions (timetabled, in-person or online)**

**On-campus.** You will have regular, live interactive sessions on campus to provide you with opportunities to engage, discuss and interact with both academic staff and other students. Depending on the discipline, this could include tutorials, seminars, laboratory and practical work, workshops, breakout sessions, and lectures that involve a high level of interaction and discussion.

**Online (where required).** For modules with students who cannot come to campus and are therefore studying 'at a distance' (for example, international students prevented from travelling to the UK by COVID-19 related travel restrictions), a similar live interactive session will be held online to cover the same content as on-campus sessions.

- **Guided learning activities (asynchronous – to plan in your own time)**

You will have regular guided learning activities for your modules that you need to schedule around your live sessions, either individually or as part of a group. This will include two elements:

1. Core course content provided online (such as pre-recorded videos). These sessions will replicate contact hours that would normally be delivered through large lectures or similar sessions with limited interactivity.
2. Complementary materials and activities to support your learning and self-study. This could include watching additional screencasts and videos, listening to audio recordings, or taking formative tests through Blackboard.

All learning materials will be published by your Module Convenor at least 48 hours before the relevant live session.

We do not expect that the overall contact hours for your programme will change, although they will be delivered through a mix of live interactive sessions on campus and asynchronous core course content provided online, as explained above.

[Take a look at our video](#) for a summary of these plans.

## **Learning from our collective experiences this year**

We have listened carefully to feedback from our student community this year. It has been very clear that you value being able to engage in regular, live teaching sessions (on campus as much as possible), as well as having organised modules with learning materials published consistently and on time.

We have therefore made several enhancements for next year. This includes:

- weekly timetable reminders for you to schedule time for engaging with your asynchronous (not live) learning materials;
- weekly updates to outline all your learning activities for that module on a week-by-week basis (including live sessions, asynchronous core course content, and any other relevant self-study);
- new resources and training for using different technologies to support your learning.

## **Studying remotely next year**

We expect students to join us on campus to benefit from being able to engage with your learning in-person. If you cannot return to campus (for example, international students prevented by COVID-19

travel restrictions), you will have the opportunity to request permission to study 'at a distance'. We will provide more information about this by the end of July.

As has been the case this year, there are some programmes with practical, placement or studio-based elements where students need to be on campus to participate in these activities and meet required learning outcomes. We will write to students on those programmes separately by the end of July to confirm these arrangements.

**If you hold a Tier 4 student visa, [please see important information at the end of this email.](#)**

### End-of-year exams

We have not yet made decisions related to the format of exams for summer 2022. Depending on any government guidance or public health advice in place at the time, it may be necessary to hold exams online. We will keep you updated as soon as we can share more information about these plans.

### Curricular placements and Study Abroad

If you will be undertaking a curricular placement next year (or one that is credited to 2021/22), including those regulated by Professional, Statutory and Regulated Bodies, you will soon receive further information from your School or Department.

Further information for students due to return from their Study Abroad placements in summer 2021, as well as those due to go abroad in 2021/22, will be sent to you directly by the Erasmus & Study Abroad Office.

## **Supporting your student journey**

We will continue to support you with your studies, through both your Academic Tutor and our wider network of professional, specialist teams. Subject to any changes in government guidance, we are planning for our campuses to be open in the autumn, with our full range of facilities and services – such as the Library, Support Centres, catering and SportsPark.

## **Access to technology and digital services**

As you have done for your studies so far, you will need to access technology to fully engage with your programme, including using Office 365 (free for all Reading students), a computer or laptop, and a reliable Wi-Fi connection. We provide a range of study space on campus, including PC labs with relevant software for use by students, although it is possible that availability may be limited at times.

You can find out more about the advised minimum requirements, as well as advice on purchasing a laptop (or other IT equipment or software) on our [Digital Technology Services \(DTS\) webpage](#).

## **Future changes**

As the COVID-19 pandemic remains an unpredictable and evolving situation we cannot guarantee that further changes will not be required. These could be as a result of changing national or local government guidance or direction, ministerial direction, local public health guidance or direction, required safety measures, or changing local or national circumstances.

There may be circumstances outside our control that cannot currently be foreseen or prevented that require us to make further changes to your University experience next academic year. Examples may be local or national lockdowns, changes to the law, staffing shortages arising from the effect of the pandemic, and guidance or instructions issued by bodies such as national or local governments, councils or public health authorities. Our responses to these circumstances may mean that we need to make other changes to programmes. This may include, but is not limited to, changing the mode of teaching (such as moving some or all learning online where we are not permitted or it is not safe or it is contrary to guidance to teach face to face); changing field trips, study visits or placements (including making these virtual or altering their physical destination); changing assessments and/or moving the order of teaching activity to different times of the year or amending term dates; and making changes to the number or type of contact hours you receive. If any of these situations arise, we will use all reasonable endeavours to minimise any disruption to students and will communicate any changes as clearly and as quickly as possible.

We hope this has been helpful and provided you with some useful information for continuing your studies next year.

If you have any queries, or you wish to discuss your options, please contact your Academic Tutor or Support Centre (or Henley Helpdesk or ISLI Admin Office). If you wish to, you may make a complaint related to the information included in this email, by following the [Complaints Procedure](#). If we do not hear from you and you re-enrol on your programme as planned, you will have accepted these changes.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information and we hope it has been helpful as you start to look ahead to the next academic year. We will keep in touch over the coming months as we can share more details. In the meantime, check out our [Careers website](#) for advice about how you can use the summer break to develop your wider skills and experience – including our virtual [Graduate Recruitment & Internship Festival](#) from 9-11 June and our new [Work Experience Framework](#).**

We very much hope to welcome you back to campus for the autumn term.

With best wishes,

Julian & Elizabeth

Professors Julian Park and Elizabeth McCrum

Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Education & Student Experience)

**Important advice for Tier 4 student visa holders**

Due to COVID-19, students who hold Tier 4 student or Student route leave are currently able to undertake distance learning from within the UK or from Overseas without it affecting their visa/immigration leave. However, **this concession is in place for the 2020/21 academic year only**. The Home Office have advised they will keep this decision under review, but there are no plans at present to extend this concession for the next academic year.

This ending of this specific concession will impact students who are unable to travel to the UK for the start of the autumn term, and the University will be required to withdraw sponsorship of your visa. Most students in this situation will be able to continue to study from outside the UK by distance, if granted permission to do so, (unless their programme is identified as one where students need to be on campus to participate in face-to-face activities in order to meet learning outcomes) but students would need to apply for a new visa at the point they are able to travel to the UK.

If you have any further questions about this, you can contact the [International Student Advisory team](#).