

# Share a Sofa

## Additional questions and answers: February 2020

### Careers

**Q: Does the University have any direct links with companies offering graduate schemes?**

**University:** Our Careers service employs a dedicated Employer Engagement team. This team actively reaches out to companies running graduate schemes with the aim of building long term, positive relationships, to ensure we and our students know what the recruitment criteria and deadlines are, and to position Reading as a preferred University. This team regularly invites graduate recruiters on campus to speak to students, get advice on how to approach graduate recruitment in their respective companies, what behaviours and skills each of these recruiters are looking for, and ask how our students can stand out from the crowd when applying.

In addition to these on campus workshops and panel discussions, we run 10 careers fairs per year, where you can meet around 200 graduate employers and explore opportunities in various sectors. In 2019/2020, we have welcomed 320 employers onto campus.

Please visit our [Careers Essentials pages](#) for lots of information about upcoming events and opportunities.

**Q: How does the University intend to support placement students more?**

**University:** Our main challenge is encouraging students to access the [services we have available](#), and we are continually working on increasing our visibility and getting more students to seek out our Team's support. We introduced a new 24/7 online appointment booking system in 2019, meaning students no longer have to email back and forth to get a placement appointment – you can book as many as you need to online. We also introduced a large number of new support services including a Placement Year training course on Blackboard and a Peer Support Programme through which Part 2

students can seek advice from one hundred Part 3 and Part 4 placement year students. In addition, we run half-day 'Placement Bootcamps' three times a year, and we proactively telephone students to make it easier for you to access support that works for you. In autumn 2019, we started sending Part 2 students who are looking for a placement fortnightly emails, which list upcoming application deadlines and share application advice.

In 2020, we are working on developing a new digital placement management system, which will help make the administrative side of placements management easier, and allow you to do this largely online (rather than having to send us lots of individual documents by email).

**Please visit our [Professional Placement Year pages](#) on Essentials to find out more about how we can help you.**

We are always keen to hear how we can do better and welcome any suggestions from students. Please do email suggestions and ideas to Andrea Kreideweiss, Director of Careers [a.kreideweiss@reading.ac.uk](mailto:a.kreideweiss@reading.ac.uk)

## **Blackboard**

### **Q: Why is Blackboard so difficult to use?**

**University:** We are conscious that Blackboard is an important resource for students and work hard to make it as user-friendly as possible. This is an ongoing process, and we continue to develop the way the Blackboard interface and layout at Reading looks, to make it easier to use. Our recent redesign was based on extensive feedback with both colleagues and students, and we have now made functionality available that lets you choose how to download your materials.

The Blackboard company itself is currently developing a new look and feel to the tool, which we aim to make available at Reading as soon as we can. In the meantime, please do use the 'Help for Students' tab provided, to help you use Blackboard effectively.

We continue to work closely with Schools and colleagues to support them in designing clear and consistent courses, but if you can't find something on your course, please feed this back to your lecturer who should be able to advise you. If you have feedback about Blackboard generally, you can also raise this with your School or Course Rep for discussion at upcoming [Student Staff Liaison Committees \(SSLCs\)](#).

**RUSU:** RUSU, Blackboard and Me@Reading all use your University username and password, in order to streamline access. Please do feedback any concerns or suggestions that you have about Blackboard to your [School or Course reps!](#)

## Union prices

**Q: Why have Union prices gone up?**

**RUSU:** Union prices haven't increased in the last 8-10 years, despite the rise from inflation. The cost of resources such as security have increased, and these costs need to be covered. RUSU have done their utmost to keep the cost down as much as they can. If you are looking for a discount you can purchase a Totum card at [www.totum.com](http://www.totum.com).

## The fruit and vegetable market

**Q: Can we have the fruit and veg market more often?**

**RUSU:** RUSU currently hold the Fruit and Veg market on Thursdays. If you'd like to increase how often they come in you can submit this idea at [rusu.co.uk/representation/change-it/](http://rusu.co.uk/representation/change-it/).

## Sustainability

**Q: Does the University invest in fossil fuels or oil?**

**University:** In February 2020, the University announced that it is selling all its remaining investments in fossil fuels and putting its money behind green schemes. This decision means that our entire investment portfolio will be divested from fossil fuel companies within three months, following the appointment of fund manager Cazenove Capital.

Cazenove Capital has been selected to look after our £120million portfolio of shares and bonds after a competitive re-tendering process. With valuable support from RUSU, the tender process allowed us to respond to the concerns of students, staff and other stakeholders, and the decision was reached after giving a significant weighting to ethical,

social and governance issues. Please visit [RUSU's own project page](#) for further details, which includes a timeline of key events.

Given our globally recognised research into climate change and sustainability, we wanted to choose an investment manager with a proven track record of helping UK universities fully divest from fossil fuel companies. We have a longstanding aim to be one of the world's leading universities for climate action, to align with our current status as one of the leading centres for climate science.

This milestone comes in addition to us hitting a 40% reduction target in our carbon footprint since 2008/09, in July 2019.

## Safety after nights out

**Q: What are you doing to improve student safety after late nights at 3sixty/Park Bar?**

**University:** The safety of our whole University community is our top priority. Our Security team is available 24/7 and strives to maintain a safe and secure environment across our sites. As well as regular patrols, surveillance and emergency response, they also operate a [Chaperone Service](#). Through this service, you can either request for a member of Security to accompany you on the walk to your car or Halls, or you can request that Security track your location on CCTV as you travel across campus. You can find further information on how to use these services [here](#), or by calling 0118 378 7799.

The University also operates a Street Support Team staffed by Street Wardens, who provide advice to students socialising late at night, and encourage responsible and safe behaviour when travelling through residential areas. The highly trained and visible team patrols residential streets around campus between 22:00 and 04:00 on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. The team will also support you if you have become separated from friends, or if you are having trouble getting home late at night.

**After dark generally, we recommend:**

- That you do not walk alone
- Sticking to well-lit routes at all times

When it comes to safety after nights out at venues such as 3sixty and Park Bar, it is particularly important to make safe choices if you've been drinking. Our ['Be A Mate'](#)

campaign aims to support you in looking out for one another, and in taking a responsible and informed approach to alcohol. By providing more information about how to make informed choices, alongside peer-to-peer training, we hope to bring about a positive culture change here at Reading.

Read some tips submitted by other students for looking out for friends while drinking:

- Give water to a friend who's reached their limit (remember you can get free water from any of the Freestyle machines on campus, including in Park Bar)
- Make a plan for getting home together at the start of the evening
- Don't let a friend take an unlit path when walking after dark

Please do visit our [alcohol support page](#) for further advice.

**You must always report an accident if it takes place on the University premises** – including incidents which could have caused injury or damage, but did not, i.e. 'near misses', as well as hazards or faulty equipment. We have an online incident reporting system that can be accessed [here](#), but in an emergency please call 999 or Security on 0118 378 6300. Please also familiarise yourself with the recommendations put forward in our [Lake Safety Review](#), published in December 2019.

**RUSU:** RUSU have been working closely with the University on a working group called DAAP (Drugs and Alcohol Action Partnership). This involves a campaign (our '[Be A Mate](#)' campaign) to encourage students to make more informed decisions when drinking and look out for their friends. We are also inputting more water fountains in 3sixty so water is more easily accessible on nights out.

In addition, Gemma and Molli have been sitting on a lake safety working group to ensure lake safety measures are implemented, and to encourage students to take safe routes when walking home after nights out. You can find the [finalised Lake Safety Review on our webpages, here](#).

Gemma and Molli have also been working with Uni Fried Nosh and provided them with a safety pack so that they can signpost students to support if needed, and 'The Study' is also now used as a safe space where students who might need 'in the moment' support, can go to.

## The Library

## **Q: Why are the electrics in the Library not working?**

**University:** As far as we are aware, the electrics in the Library are all working. However, occasionally, certain power adapters can blow the fuses in individual plug sockets. If you encounter a socket that does not seem to be working, please make sure to report the issue to the Welcome Desk by the main Library entrance. This will allow us to check if a socket needs a new fuse and replace as necessary, to minimise any further disruption.

**RUSU:** The Library had the final finishes completed throughout the autumn term, including the final sockets joined to the circuit and turned on.

## **Q: Can you improve the Library doors? They're too small and heavy – not good for accessibility**

**University:** The Library doors were chosen to be consistent with others on campus, and adhere to current accessibility guidelines. However, we have received feedback from other sources, such as Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) about the width and weight of them, and these comments have been passed back to our Estates Department and Refurbishment Project team.

## **Study space**

### **Q: How many study spaces are there?**

**University and RUSU:** You can find a list of study spaces at [reading.ac.uk/study-space](https://reading.ac.uk/study-space), as well as a link to our [study space map](#).