

## **Subject: Advice and guidance for international students on travel and planning ahead**

Dear students,

I hope you found my [email to all students](#) about plans for COVID-19 and the end of term helpful. There is a lot of important information in that message and I encourage you to read it carefully.

However, we understand that for our EU and international students in particular, there are additional concerns and questions about overseas travel and support over the forthcoming Christmas vacation. I hope the advice in this email helps provide you with the more specific information that is relevant to your situation.

### **Making travel plans – things to think about**

During the [lockdown period in England](#) (5 November – 2 December) remember that there are restrictions around travel, socialising and other activity for everyone and students are only permitted to leave their term-time home for [certain reasons](#).

The government has updated their advice for international students and is asking that if students are planning to travel, whether within the UK or internationally, that they do so during the 'student travel window' between 3 and 9 December. You can, however, travel after 9 December (for example, if you have an existing travel booking) but should read all [government travel guidance](#) to do so safely.

Please also remember that you must **not** travel at any time if you are experiencing any [symptoms](#) related to coronavirus (COVID-19) or you are required to self-isolate. In both cases, it is very important that you complete your full isolation period to minimise further spread of the virus.

**If you decide to travel, we advise that you check the travel advice for the country you are travelling to before making any travel plans.** Before you make decisions in relation to travel, please consider these issues:

- **UK government travel guidance**

The [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office website](#) currently recommends essential travel only. If you decide to travel, you must make sure you do so safely by following the [UK government travel advice](#).

- **Travel guidance for your destination**

We advise that you check both the UK travel advice for the country you are travelling to, and travel and entry requirements in place for your destination country.

In particular, some countries require a negative COVID-19 test result to allow entry. It is important to understand that there are different types of COVID-19 test. It is most likely that the kind of rapid test that we will be able to provide on campus would be a Lateral Flow Test (LFT). You should check the travel requirements for your destination as soon as possible to make sure that this kind of test result would be sufficient for travel purposes, as many countries require a different kind of test called a PCR. PCR tests are available for free through the NHS if you have COVID-19 symptoms. If you do not have

COVID-19 symptoms, you need to pay to obtain a PCR test privately. Please ask your pharmacist or doctor for advice.

- **Self-isolation requirements**

You should consider [self-isolation requirements](#) for when you return to the UK as well as in the country you are travelling to. Currently, international students travelling from countries not on the [exemption \(travel corridor\) list](#) will need to self-isolate in their accommodation for 14 days on return to the UK. You can find information about support for self-isolation on [Essentials](#).

- **'On campus' or 'at a distance' attendance modes**

If you are considering returning home to continue your studies from there next term, you must also check with your [Support Centre](#) or Henley Helpdesk that studying at a distance is possible next term for your degree programme, as there are some courses where it is difficult for students to meet their learning outcomes without being on campus. There is, however, no need to check with us if you are travelling home over the winter break period but planning to return at the start of the spring term.

If you are considering returning home to continue your studies from there next term you will need to consider funding and immigration requirements before making this decision.

**Funding** - If you receive sponsorship or a scholarship, we advise that you contact your financial sponsor to discuss whether changing your mode of study will affect your funding. Similarly, if you receive a UK government student maintenance loan you should email [studentfunding@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studentfunding@reading.ac.uk) to check if travelling will affect your loan.

**Immigration** - If you are Tier 4/Student visa holder, the University will maintain sponsorship of your student visa providing you continue to engage with your studies and remain a current student, whether that is in Reading or overseas.

- **EU Settlement Scheme**

EU, EEA and Swiss nationals and their family members who wish to continue living in the UK after 30 June 2021 should apply for the EU Settlement Scheme. Please read our [online guidance](#).

### **Christmas closure**

From **22 December to 4 January**, the University will be closed for the Christmas break. Whether you are staying in Reading, traveling home, or joining us in January after studying at a distance in the autumn term, we will continue to support you.

We understand that some students will not be travelling and will remain in Reading over the Winter break. While the University is officially closed from 22 December to 4 January, support will remain available for those living on campus. All halls of residence are to remain open, with catering available if required and support for anyone who needs to self-isolate during this time. If you will be remaining in halls and you have any questions, please contact the UPP Halls Hotline.

Our COVID-19 Support & Behaviour Team will be available outside of the University closure period to support students and housemates of students who develop symptoms or have a positive test result at this time, including help for you to self-isolate.

## **Travelling to the UK**

For those students currently overseas with plans to travel to Reading in the coming weeks, the government has confirmed that our borders are open for international students wishing to study in the UK in person.

All international arrivals will be required to complete a passenger locator form on arrival, and passengers travelling from a country not on the [exemption \(travel corridor\) list](#) will need to self-isolate in their accommodation for fourteen days. Further information about support for self-isolation is [published on Essentials](#).

If you need to self-isolate upon arrival, you should only use public transport if you have no other option, and you should follow the [government's safe travel advice](#).

## **Spring term**

The government has said that it will provide advice to universities about re-opening for the spring term, but we have not yet received this. We will share this with you as soon as we are able.

We are currently planning the timetable for the spring term, which starts on Monday 11 January. We know that you value face-to-face teaching so we intend to offer as much scheduled on-campus activity as we safely can, while adhering to social distancing requirements and government regulations.

As with the autumn term, we anticipate that students on most programmes will be able to continue to study at a distance in the spring term if they cannot be on campus. However, there are some programmes for which it will be difficult for students to meet their learning outcomes without being on campus in the spring term, even if it has been possible in the autumn. We will write to all students, including those on these programmes, with more information by the end of November. We will continue to share information as soon as we can confirm further details about our plans, including for exams and assessments in the summer term.

As noted above, the University will be closed for Christmas from 22 December and will reopen on 4 January. However, you can still arrive during the Christmas closure period and support will remain available for those living on campus. All halls of residence are to remain open, with catering available if required and support for anyone who needs to self-isolate during this time.

You may also choose to arrive on or around 4 January, when the University reopens after the Christmas vacation. This means, if you need to self-isolate, you would spend your second week of self-isolation attending teaching sessions online only, before being able to attend on-campus sessions in the second week of term (from Monday 18 January).

## **Support and wellbeing**

The University understands that this is a challenging time for students, particularly when you are a long way from home. We have lots of [online guidance and advice](#) as well as the [Student Welfare team](#) that you can refer to for support. We want to do everything we can to support you – all you need to do is ask.

We will shortly be updating our [Essentials](#) webpages with detailed travel advice for all students and, in the meantime, if you have queries please contact [int.adv@reading.ac.uk](mailto:int.adv@reading.ac.uk) for advice.

Best wishes,

Paddy

Dr Patricia 'Paddy' Woodman

Director of Student Services