

Important update on COVID-19: government announcement of lockdown measures

Dear students,

You have probably already heard about the Prime Minister's announcement proposing a pre-Christmas 'circuit breaker' lockdown in England starting on Thursday 5 November. The aim is to bring COVID-19 case numbers down using a month of increased restrictions, hopefully allowing people to travel more safely for the Christmas break.

You will undoubtedly be wondering what this means for you as a University of Reading student. The Prime Minister made clear that educational activities in schools, colleges and universities will not be subject to these additional restrictions. Public Health England has also last week expressed confidence in the safety measures we have in place. It does not recommend any additional steps at this time and is confident that there are no identifiable transmission risks associated with teaching sessions.

So, based on the information we have at the moment, we expect that after Week 6 we will continue with the blended approach of online and face-to-face teaching, with all of the safety provisions that we already have in place. We will let you know immediately if we get any further information from government that changes this position about our provision of teaching and access to University services and facilities. We will also update you before Thursday about any new restrictions that will apply to you.

Given this changing national picture, it is understandable that you may have questions or concerns so we are putting in place some extra support measures for our community.

New COVID-19 support line opens on Monday

We are launching a **University of Reading COVID-19 support line** on **0118 214 7813** to provide a central point of contact for you as well as staff and members of our local Reading community. The support line will **open at 10.30am on Monday 2 November**, and will then operate from 9am to 5pm on weekdays and 11am to 4pm on weekends.

We are also boosting the number of colleagues working in our Case Management Team, which is supporting national test and trace efforts. This means that we can continue to provide rapid support for students and colleagues who report a positive COVID-19 test result, and their close contacts within the University community.

Play your part in reducing the spread of COVID-19

Public Health England has confirmed that [cases at the University](#) clearly show that COVID-19 is spreading through student social activity and households, both private and in Halls, and they now consider that the University is facing an outbreak.

You may not feel vulnerable to COVID-19 yourself and you probably feel frustrated with the limitations that government rules place on your ability to see family and friends. **But failure to abide by these rules will cause an increase in cases and that will cause more deaths.** That is a fact.

We expect all members of our student community to play their part so please:

- **comply strictly with all government and University guidance**, including wearing face coverings, washing hands regularly and maintaining social distance
- **report if you have symptoms** either through the [online form](#) if you are in private accommodation or the Home@Halls app if you are in Halls
- **report if you receive a positive COVID-19 test result** through the [online form](#) regardless of where you are living
- download the [NHS Track and Trace app](#)
- download the University's own [CallMy Alert app](#), a mass notification system that we can use to contact you in an urgent situation
- **check the mobile number in your RISIS record** is correct so that the Case Management Team can contact you by text message or phone call if needed
- **check your University email daily** and the [Essentials webpages](#) for the latest information and guidance.

This is about more than whether you can go to the pub with your friends or have a party at home. This is about saving lives and we are extremely proud that most of our students are doing a great job of playing their part. Sadly, a minority feel they can ignore the rules. For the safety of our students who are doing their best, our staff and our wider community, we will continue to take disciplinary action against those who fail to comply, ranging from fines to potentially suspension or even expulsion.

This latest government announcement reinforces that the COVID-19 pandemic will be prolonged if we do not all act now. Please stay safe and contact the support line from 10.30am on Monday 2 November if you have any questions.

Best wishes,
Parveen and Paul

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