

The [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) has updated its travel advice and is recommending that UK nationals currently in mainland China should leave if they are able to do so, noting that it may become harder to access departure options. Our updated advice regarding travel in the coming weeks is at the bottom of this message. Please read this closely if you have travel booked or planned.

[Public Health England](#) continues to advise that anyone who has travelled from Wuhan or Hubei Province to the UK in the last 14 days should take the following steps immediately, whether or not you are displaying symptoms:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with the flu
- call NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the area.

They also advise that those who have travelled to the following countries in the last 14 days should follow the same steps if you develop symptoms of cough, fever or shortness of breath:

- China
- Thailand
- Japan
- Republic of Korea
- Hong Kong
- Taiwan
- Singapore
- Malaysia
- Macau

It is very important that you let the University know if you are in this situation by contacting coronavirus-students@reading.ac.uk. We can then provide you with the right support. You should also [notify your absence](#) from any teaching or other academic sessions. Postgraduate research students should contact your PhD supervisor/School Director of Postgraduate Research Studies know and, if you're on a Tier 4 visa, you must also inform the Doctoral Research Office.

It is understandable that you may have concerns so please familiarise yourself with the official [PHE advice](#). The current coronavirus outbreak is clearly serious, and it is a particularly anxious time for those in our community with family and friends in China. In the UK, however, it is important that we keep our response in proportion to the risk. The [government advice is very clear](#) that the **risk to individuals in the UK from coronavirus remains low**. There have only been three cases diagnosed in the UK; for context, thousands of people are hospitalised every year in a typical winter flu season. This [short video](#) with our own Professor of Virology Ian Jones explains why the risk to individuals is low.

While the coronavirus can develop into a serious illness, this risk primarily applies to those with an underlying health condition. There is no need to treat everyone with a cough as a risk. If the Public Health England guidance changes, we will keep you informed and you can find the latest information on [Essentials](#).

For most of us, the best advice is to take standard NHS-recommended precautions to prevent the spread of colds and flu: wash your hands often with soap, and cough or sneeze into a tissue and bin the tissue as quickly as possible.

There are some reports in the UK where people who are, or appear to be, of Chinese heritage being treated with hostility or openly harassed. This is clearly unacceptable. Our community is a welcoming one for people of all races and backgrounds and we are committed to providing a safe environment for all our students and colleagues. We will never tolerate any form of discrimination, bullying or harassment. Indeed, I hope we will all demonstrate sensitivity towards those who may be concerned for friends and family.

If you are subject to, or witness, harassment or discrimination you can report the incident and find information about the support available on our [#NeverOK page](#). If you are worried for family and friends in the region, please remember our Student Welfare Team are here to offer support, including by phone and email. Find out more at www.reading.ac.uk/welfare-team.

Best wishes,
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Travel advice

If you have travel booked or planned for mainland China as part of your studies

Further to the FCO advice against non-essential travel to mainland China, the Major Incident Team consider that no category of travel to China for University-related studies is essential and will therefore be replaced by alternative arrangements. The advice on travel everywhere else (including HK) is to take a risk-based approach. This policy will be updated as the situation changes.

- Given the current FCO advice, please do not book any flights, accommodation, etc for visits to mainland China until further notice.
- If you have already booked for a visit in **February** or **March**, this should be cancelled. Please complete the Notice to Cancel Form available on the [Insurance website](#) as soon as possible. The team will cancel on your behalf so they can liaise with our travel insurance providers.
- If you have already booked for a visit **after the end of March**, you should check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office country information for the latest advice and complete the risk assessment and risk management forms available on the Insurance website. The [Insurance team](#) can provide help and advice.

If you are planning personal travel to mainland China

You should take time to read the FCO advice and consider whether your travel is essential. You should also be aware that there may be growing travel disruptions in and out of China in the coming days, and if the situation changes further, you may face issues re-entering the UK or needing to be quarantine yourself on return.

If you have visitors from mainland China

The PHE advice is that anyone who has been in Wuhan City or Hubei Province in the last 14 days should isolate themselves, **whether or not** they are showing symptoms of the virus. On that basis, you should not receive visitors from this area.

If your visitors are from other parts of China, please make them aware of the PHE guidance.