

## Updates on plans for teaching in the autumn term 2020

**To:** all students

**Date:** 26 May 2020

**Subject:** Our plans for teaching in the 2020/21 autumn term: Campus open in September

Dear students,

We would like to share a summary of our plans so far for teaching in the autumn term and to provide as much clarity as we can at this time.

This email is being sent to all our current students, including those due to complete their studies this summer, as you are all part of our community and we know many of you are interested in how we are continuing to respond to the current situation. The Graduate School will be in contact with our postgraduate research community in the coming days about relevant arrangements.

First of all, we can confirm that term will start as planned on **Monday 28 September**, with this being the first week of teaching for the majority of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.

### **Campus open in September**

We are all looking forward to welcoming you back to campus, whether that's Whiteknights or London Road, in September. To create a safe and supportive study environment for when you return, we will be adapting our teaching, facilities and services to comply with the government's ongoing social distancing requirements.

While we intend for teaching to take place on campus from the start of term, our plans have also taken into consideration the needs of those who may not be able to return to Reading in September, as outlined below.

### **Teaching and learning for the autumn term 2020**

Our first priority is on creating a **flexible, supportive and quality teaching and learning environment** for you and our colleagues, while protecting the health and wellbeing of our whole community.

To enable this, we will:

#### **1. Make all core course content available online**

Content that would typically be delivered through large lectures will now be provided digitally, on Blackboard in most cases. This reduces the health risks from large groups in confined spaces and enables us to use teaching rooms for interactive sessions with smaller groups (see below). It also means that you can review the materials in your own time, wherever you are geographically based, and around any other commitments you may have.

#### **2. Provide regular interactive sessions on campus and online**

Alongside the provision of online course content, we will schedule interactive sessions appropriate to the relevant discipline (for example, seminars and workshops), to enable you to develop and apply your understanding of the topic with your lecturer and classmates. In the majority of cases these sessions will be face-to-face on campus. There will be suitable social distancing and other safety measures in place, to align with government restrictions

and guidance and our commitment to protect the health and safety of our community. These will be complemented by online interactive activities for those studying remotely.

### **3. Amend assessments to encourage more interactivity**

We will take the opportunity to review and adjust some assessments, where possible and appropriate to the discipline, to increase opportunities for you to interact with members of staff and your classmates face-to-face and online.

### **4. Continue to offer support from academic staff and your Academic Tutor**

At a programme and module level, we will continue to provide academic support through lecturer contact hours and our Academic Tutor System, complemented by our range of specialist welfare support services (see below), whether you are on campus or studying remotely.

We believe this supportive and flexible approach will best ensure you can continue to work towards your academic goals as planned, whether you are based on campus or elsewhere. The measures implemented for the spring term in 2020 obviously had to be put in place very quickly, so we are using the time we have between now and September to reflect on everything we have learnt from this experience.

### **Support for students who need to study remotely at the start of the autumn term**

If you find yourself unable to return to Reading in September, we understand that the prospect of studying at a distance may be disappointing. As members of staff, we feel the same about missing face-to-face interaction. We will support you to maintain a strong connection to the University and to your course community, even if you have to study remotely. We have seen some excellent examples of students and staff using digital technology to stay connected with one another and we will be actively building on this.

### **Your wider support network**

Our [specialist support services](#) (including Careers, Financial Support, Disability Advice, International Visa & Immigration Advice, Study Advice, and more) will continue to offer help and advice face-to-face on campus, where it is safe and possible to do so. As we have done for the latter part of the spring and the summer terms, we will also continue to make these services available online for those who need to study remotely. We are also developing plans to ensure all students can continue to safely access our Library and study resources.

This will ensure you can continue to benefit from this advice, whether you are on campus or based elsewhere. Your [Academic Tutor](#) and [Support Centre](#) should be your first point of contact for any queries related to your programme – whether that's relating to modules, exams, deadlines, assessments or other questions.

### **Halls of Residence**

It is our intention for Halls of Residences to be open in September, subject to any government restrictions, and we look forward to welcoming Halls residents as planned at the start date of their contracts in September. We are working closely with our Halls providers, UPP and Unite Students, to put the necessary social distancing and cleaning arrangements in place. We will monitor the government's developing advice and will be prepared to make additional arrangements as required, including facilitating quarantine if needed.

We are continuing to accept applications from returning students for Halls next year. Further [information is available on Essentials](#).

We recognise that your student experience is about much more than the course you are studying. Although our planning so far has focussed on core teaching and learning, we are also doing our very best to ensure that you can benefit from all that Reading has to offer in terms of wider facilities, development and social opportunities. We are actively working on plans for what this will look like on our reopened campus in the autumn term and we will be in touch with more detailed information as these plans take shape.

We hope this email helps explain the necessary changes we have made to how we deliver your programme in response to circumstances arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Through the measures outlined above, we can take steps to protect the safety of students and staff, while mitigating so far as possible any negative impact on your programme arising from this unprecedented situation.

It is also important to note that all of our plans are, understandably, subject to the wider national and international situation and evolving government advice.

In the meantime, please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any queries about what this will mean for you, or if you would like any advice about next steps based on your individual circumstances. In the first instance, please contact your [Support Centre](#), HBS School Office or ISLI Helpdesk. You should also continue to check our [Essentials webpages](#) regularly for the latest advice and remember [RUSU's Advice Service](#) also continues to be available to you.

Best wishes,  
Professor Elizabeth McCrum & Professor Julian Park

Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Education and Student Experience)