

## Important update on COVID-19: Government guidelines and planning for 2020/21

Dear students,

We are writing further to the UK government's [recent announcements](#) about their next steps in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister has reiterated that to protect the health of our community and prevent the spread of coronavirus we must all:

- stay at home as much as possible;
- work from home if you can;
- limit contact with other people;
- keep your distance if you go out (2 metres apart where possible);
- wash your hands regularly;
- self-isolate if you or anyone in your household has symptoms.

Please read the full guidance on the [Gov.uk website](#).

From **Wednesday 13 May**, some restrictions relating to exercise and the use of public spaces are being relaxed. People in England will be able to:

- spend time outdoors – for example sitting and enjoying the fresh air, picnicking, or sunbathing (alone, or with others from your household);
- meet **one** other person from a different household outdoors - following social distancing guidelines;
- exercise outdoors as often as you wish - following social distancing guidelines;
- use outdoor sports courts or facilities – with members of your household, or one other person while staying 2 metres apart;
- go to a garden centre.

However, you **must continue to obey the rules on social distancing**. Increased fines will be imposed on those who break these rules.

We have agreed that **there will be no immediate change to our current remote studying and working arrangements**. Access to buildings at our UK campuses (Whiteknights, London Road and Greenlands) will continue to be restricted to key workers carrying out critical activities and those students who are continuing to live in Halls.

### Face coverings

In their latest update, the UK government have advised that you should [consider wearing face coverings](#) in enclosed public spaces, such as shops, trains and buses, to help reduce the spread of coronavirus. The public is being strongly urged not to purchase surgical masks, which are prioritised for healthcare workers where the risk is greatest. Instead, you should make face coverings at home, using scarves or other textile items. Please see the [Gov.uk website](#) for further information.

### Phased reopening of campus

Restarting life on campus is not a straightforward process. Our priority is to protect the health and wellbeing of all members of our community. As such, in the same way that the introduction of restrictions was phased, our next steps for lifting these will need to be done in stages as well.

For example, since we scaled down our on-site activities, we have been unable to do some of the usual maintenance, cleaning or safety checks in buildings that are unoccupied. These would need to be done before people could return. New access arrangements may also be required in some

buildings to allow for social distancing, and this will be harder for some facilities than others. Additional cleaning may also be required, particularly in shared spaces.

Therefore, **we will continue to keep many of our buildings closed until further notice**. Unless you are continuing to live in Halls, **please do not travel to our campuses** (Whiteknights, London Road or Greenlands). We are developing plans to prioritise the reopening of different buildings and we will keep you updated when we have more information to share.

The end of the academic year would usually be marked with celebration and socialising, especially for those finishing their programmes with us. It is disappointing that we cannot do this in-person as we normally would, but we expect everyone in our University community to follow the government requirements. This is important not just for your own safety, but for that of friends, family members and others around you in the community.

### **Planning for the start of the 2020/21 academic year**

We intend to welcome students back on to campus at the start of the autumn term. However, this will be subject to the evolving government advice. We understand remote study may be needed for some students initially, so we are working to provide a high quality learning experience for all students, including online provision for those who are unable to join us in person.

We are currently planning for a number of scenarios for the start of term, as we receive further advice from the government, and will, of course, keep you updated when we have further information to share.

### **Belongings left on campus and unreturned Library books**

If you have left any items in Halls of Residence, UPP and Unite Students (Kendrick Hall) will be in touch to confirm the arrangements they have put in place for packing, storage and delivery.

Some students have contacted us about arranging to collect belongings left in other buildings on campus. We are setting up a process for you to do this, which we hope will be available from mid-June, subject to any changes in government restrictions. We will keep you updated when we have further information.

If you have unreturned Library books, these will continue to be renewed so you do not incur fines. Please email [library@reading.ac.uk](mailto:library@reading.ac.uk) if you have any questions about your Library account. Academic Liaison Librarians, Study Advice, and Maths Support staff continue to be available online to support you. Visit the [Library website](#) for more information and to book an online appointment.

### **August/September examinations**

As outlined in Dr Patricia Woodman's previous email, given that social distancing and travel restrictions are likely to remain in place for some months, it will not be possible to hold examinations in August/September on campus. As such, any examinations taken at this time will take place as 'take home' exams and alternate assessment, in the same way as the current summer exams. We are aware that there are a number of examinations with practical components that cannot be undertaken remotely. In these cases the relevant Schools are liaising with professional bodies and considering how to manage this. If you have any immediate concerns about the exams period then visit the [exams webpages](#) or email [take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk](mailto:take-home-exam@reading.ac.uk).

## Staying connected with your University community

As we continue to spend most of our time indoors, with significantly reduced face-to-face interaction with friends, family and others, it is important that we maintain relationships and networks.

Here are a range of different ways to keep in touch with your University community:

- [Student Services news blog](#) – for expert advice and tips from our range of support services, on topics from academic referencing to mindfulness and self-care
- [Student Life blog](#) – for stories and advice from current students about adjusting to this new way of studying and living
- [Big White Wall](#) – a free, online support community which provides a safe and anonymous space to share your thoughts and feelings, as well as accessing a range of self-help articles videos and online courses
- [RUSU's Community Facebook page](#) and [dedicated webpage](#) for students to share ideas, tips and information to support one another

We hope this update has been helpful. Please do continue to check our [Essentials webpages](#) for the latest advice and information and we will also keep in touch by email with any significant developments. We wish you the best for the remainder of the summer term.

Kind regards,

Professor Elizabeth McCrum & Professor Julian Park  
Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Education & Student Experience)