

## COVID-19: New government restrictions and what they mean for you

Dear students,

The government issued clear directions on Monday evening to all of us in the UK to further reduce our day-to-day contact with other people and to remain indoors where we live except for very limited and specific reasons:

- shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, as infrequently as possible
- one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk or cycle – alone or with members of your household
- any medical need, including providing care or help to someone
- travelling to and from work, but only where essential.

The [significant restrictions](#) announced on Monday by the Prime Minister reinforce the seriousness of the current COVID-19 outbreak. It is increasingly clear that this situation will not be resolved quickly, with the new restrictions in place for at least three weeks. I want to assure you that your safety and your learning are our absolute priority. We are working hard to maintain our advice, guidance and support services, while also revising end-of-year assessments to enable progression to the next phase of your studies or your life beyond university.

Below is information on:

- Self-isolation and social distancing and what this means for you
- Completing the online departure form
- Supporting those remaining in Halls
- Advise for those in private rented accommodation
- Continuing your studies and information on Easter closure.

### Self-isolation and social distancing and what this means for you

The government has made clear that the **single most important thing we can all do in fighting the spread of coronavirus is to stay at home**. The new measures announced include prohibiting all gatherings of more than two people in public. This is not just for your safety but also for that of others with whom you may have contact, and in turn, the people they are meeting.

You can still spend time with people in your household but you cannot join together with groups of other friends or relatives who do not live with you. Within Halls, this means you can continue to interact with those who live in your flat or immediately neighbouring rooms, but you cannot move about and socialise with others from within your wider building or other Halls. It is the University's expectation that these government requirements will be followed in Halls.

If you are remaining in Reading in private accommodation, it is particularly important that you show consideration to your neighbours. This is a challenging time for everyone. You may not be able to go out as you normally would, but neither can they. These exceptional circumstances are no excuse for nuisance behaviour like excessive noise. Of course you can socialise with your housemates but you cannot have guests from outside your household and you should be mindful of any impacts on others. Normal disciplinary arrangements around student behaviour continue to apply.

Please check the [government's updated guidance](#), to understand the implications and guidelines around [social distancing](#) (limiting contact between other people) and [self-isolation](#). You must self-isolate for 14 days if you or someone in your household or shared accommodation is showing

symptoms. If you are in halls and need to self-isolate, please tell us using the [online self-isolation notification form](#).

### **Completing the online departure form**

Whether you have been living in Halls or private accommodation, I know that many of you have already taken the decision to return to your family home and the University recognises that this will be the right decision for many.

It is vital that all students who leave their term-time accommodation to return home complete the [online departure form](#), if you have not done so already. We need to know who is here in Reading and who has gone home, so that we can maintain the health and safety of those who are staying on campus.

### **Supporting those remaining in Halls**

We do understand that not everyone is able to leave their Halls accommodation and return home. If you are unable to leave, we will continue to provide appropriate support.

Wardens will continue to operate as will the UPP halls hotline, and Park Eat continues to provide a takeaway food service. We are also developing a buddying network with staff and student volunteers to support you, and we will share more details about this soon. If you have particular medical needs or feel you require assistance please contact the Halls Hotline for UPP or Kendrick Hall Reception as soon as possible.

All Student Services teams will continue to offer advice and guidance including student financial support, disability, international support and immigration advice, counselling and mental health advice, welfare advice, careers advice, and professional development and advice and guidance relating to academic processes. You can find information about how to access all of these teams on the [Essentials coronavirus page](#).

We know the pressure and anxiety being caused by current circumstances and that many students in Halls have been concerned about whether they can cancel their contract. We continue to work with our accommodation providers to give you greater clarity. Unite Students, who run **Kendrick Hall**, have agreed that they will release residents from their contract if they want to return home. All students in Kendrick Hall who wish to cancel the third term must inform Unite Students by **Friday 10 April** at the latest by emailing [cancellations@unitestudents.com](mailto:cancellations@unitestudents.com). Information is available on their [website](#); please note the strict deadlines by which you need to communicate with Unite Students.

We are in the final stages of decision-making regarding our Halls operated by UPP and we expect to have a decision about these arrangements by Friday.

### **Advice for those in private rented accommodation**

If you are living in private rented accommodation in Reading and are now preparing to move out please can I remind you to be a good neighbour and to leave your residence in a responsible way. This includes ensuring that any rubbish or unwanted belongings are disposed of appropriately and sustainably.

If you require advice regarding your private accommodation arrangements please contact [RUSU's housing advice service](#). The Vice-Chancellor has provided a letter addressed to [private landlords](#) to remind them of their obligations to support their tenants through this difficult period. You may wish to draw this to the attention of your landlord if you feel it appropriate.

### **Continuing your studies and information about Easter closure**

With the huge challenges of recent weeks, it would be easy to lose sight of the normal academic calendar. As I explained in my email last week, exams and other assessment will still go ahead but will move to online provision. It is important that you continue to prepare for these. **You will receive further information about examination arrangements by 3 April.** Please be patient while we draw this information and guidance together for you.

All of the government measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus mean very significant changes to how we usually live, work and study, but the University is continuing to operate. We are continuing to operate through online teaching, assessment and support to minimise the impact on your learning as much as possible. You should continue to engage with your studies online and to [access our advice and guidance services by phone or email.](#)

With Easter approaching, I can confirm that term will finish as expected this Friday, 27 March, and that we will be observing the Easter closure period, from Thursday 9 April to Monday 13 April inclusive. We will continue to maintain critical services and facilities, including security, takeaway catering at Park Eat, Halls hotline and Warden cover for students who need to remain in their accommodation outside of term time. However, other services will be closed for this five-day Easter closure period as normal

As you know, the situation continues to change rapidly, and we will continue to keep you updated on any major developments. Please also continue to check the [Essentials pages](#) for the latest information. If you have any questions that are not answered by our online FAQs, please contact [coronavirus-students@reading.ac.uk](mailto:coronavirus-students@reading.ac.uk).

Finally, please continue to observe [NHS advice](#) on hygiene and self-isolation if you develop a high temperature or a new persistent cough.

Kind regards,

Patricia

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Director of Student Services