

Coronavirus (COVID-19): update on online teaching

Dear students,

The nature of the COVID-19 outbreak is unprecedented for our University community. We have been listening to the concerns of students and colleagues and completely understand how worried many of you are for yourselves and your family and friends. The rapidly changing travel situation around the world and the expanded Foreign & Commonwealth Office travel advice is also a concern, particularly for our international students.

We were also advised yesterday, Sunday 15 March, that a visiting post-graduate student has tested positive for COVID-19 after leaving the UK. The student had only limited engagements on campus during a short visit and we will be contacting those in direct contact with further information. We are also aware that a student in Halls accommodation called an ambulance and was taken to hospital. We have had no confirmation of COVID-19 in this case. Naturally these developments will cause for concern for our community. However, as I noted on Friday, my best advice is to focus on factual information rather than what is being said on social media or other commentaries.

The University Executive Board met this morning to consider these local, national and international developments. It agreed that from **Wednesday 18 March face-to-face teaching will cease and teaching and assessment will be provided online**, other than in some exceptional circumstances where this is not possible. If you are concerned for any of the reasons outlined above, we understand if you wish to return to your home, whether in the UK or overseas. Our primary concern remains the safety and health of our community, in all the uncertainties we are all having to navigate.

A move to online teaching on this scale will take a little time to fully implement and delivery may vary, given differences across disciplines and teaching formats. This represents a major change from our normal activity and I ask for your patience and understanding as we transition to these new arrangements. These online teaching arrangements will continue for the rest of this term. **All assessment will also be online this term** wherever possible or via an alternative format where necessary. You will be updated by your School by the end of Tuesday 17 March about what this means for you and your studies. The overall requirements of your programme will continue to be met.

If you decide to leave, you must let us know by completing the [online departure form](#). If you are remaining in Reading and need to self-isolate in Halls under government or medical advice, please complete an [online self-isolation form](#).

Other facilities like the Library, Study@URS and catering will continue to operate at this time to support those who remain. Halls will also remain open, and your Halls accommodation remains available to you for the rest of the academic year.

We are actively working on contingency plans for exams. Preparing for hundreds of exams is a huge task under the best circumstances, and there are a number of issues to work through, including impact on professional accreditation. We will update you on arrangements for the summer term, including exams,

by Monday 23 March. We are doing everything we can to ensure that you are able to progress your studies as expected.

We are also revising our Extenuating Circumstances Policy to reflect this revised situation. Colleagues across the University are working hard to minimise the impact on your teaching and studies, and you will not be penalised if there is undue impact on your academic performance.

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

We will continue to monitor the situation so we can respond as quickly as possible to changing circumstances. We will keep you updated on any major developments and will also update our [Essentials FAQs](#). If you have any questions that are not answered by our online FAQs, please contact coronavirus-students@reading.ac.uk.

Best wishes,
Patricia

Dr Patricia Woodman
Director of Student Services