

Target audience: All UG, PGT and PGR students
Send date: Wednesday 1 April
Subject line: Your University of Reading support network

Dear students,

I hope this email finds you and your families safe and well. I am writing further to the email sent by Professors Julian Park and Elizabeth McCrum on Monday about exams and alternate assessments in the summer term.

Even at the best of times, the exam and assessment period is a source of anxiety for many. The prospect of doing take home exams or alternate assessments under such different conditions quite naturally adds to this concern. In the last 48 hours or so, the strength of feeling amongst some students has been very clear. I am particularly grateful to RUSU for working in the last few days to help us identify key student concerns and better understand your viewpoints. My senior colleagues and I take these concerns very seriously and are working to find a solution to the issues you have raised as quickly as possible

There is no established framework or rulebook to guide us through this set of circumstances and the solutions will differ between institutions. The feedback we have received reiterates the diverse needs of our own student community and there are differing views in how students would like us to respond. We need to deliver the best possible outcome for all our students, and so it is important we take all of the views expressed into account alongside the resulting implications for our governance, academic standards and accreditation requirements.

I appreciate it is frustrating that we have not been able to confirm these details before now, but I hope you will understand that we want to ensure we get this right. As previously promised, **we will share more detailed information with you on Friday**, including addressing the concerns many of you have raised this week in particular.

Your support network

Given the huge changes we have faced in such a short time, I want to take the opportunity to share information about the wide range of support that our dedicated network of specialist academic and pastoral support colleagues continue to deliver.

Academic Tutors

You should keep in contact with your [Academic Tutor](#) or supervisor by email as usual, although there might be a delayed response as colleagues adjust to working remotely alongside personal commitments. You may be able to meet your Academic Tutor virtually, using Blackboard Collaborate or Microsoft Teams for example, or you could have a catch-up by phone.

Library

Your [Library](#) team continue to be available to support your studies. [Academic Liaison Librarians](#) can provide advice on finding good quality literature for your work and referencing and [Study Advisers](#) can offer one-to-one advice online through video, chat or email. Visit the Library [website](#) for more information.

Support Centres

Please use the online [Ask a Question](#) service for any Support Centre enquiries and the team will get back to you as quickly as possible.

Careers

Careers are offering [face-to-face support online](#). They can help with [finding jobs right now](#), have suggestions on how to be a [great remote worker](#), help you [research career options](#), and are available for [1-2-1 Careers Advice or video mock interviews](#) daily.

Student Financial Support

We understand some students may be facing unexpected hardship as a result of COVID-19. Please do [contact the team](#) who will be able to provide specific advice and recommended support for your particular circumstances.

International Student Advisory Team

If you have any queries about immigration or visas, please [contact the team](#) who will be happy to provide advice by phone or email.

Student Welfare Team

The team are offering continued support by telephone for any personal difficulties you may be feeling. Please [contact them by email](#) to arrange an appointment.

Counselling & Wellbeing

All scheduled sessions are continuing as planned, over the telephone. Visit their [website](#) for further information about how to register with the service if you think you would benefit from this.

Disability Advisory Service

All scheduled appointments will continue as planned, over the telephone. If you would like further advice or support please [contact the team](#).

Keeping in touch

As we all transition to spending much more time at home, with significantly reduced face-to-face interaction with friends, family and others, it is incredibly important for our wellbeing that we try and maintain relationships and networks in different ways.

There 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.

Finally, we will continue to keep you updated with important developments on our [Essentials webpage](#) so please do check here regularly for the latest advice. We expect all students in the UK to adhere to the government requirements on [social distancing and staying at home](#), whether you remain in Reading or have returned home. There is also government advice on [looking after your mental health and wellbeing](#), which you may find helpful.

Our priorities continue to be to maintain, as best we can, the quality of your learning outcomes and supporting your wellbeing. Thank you for your continued patience and understanding.

Best wishes,
Dr Patricia Woodman
Director of Student Services