

**To:** all UG, PG-T and PG-R students

**Date:** 20 November 2020

**Subject:** COVID-19 update #7: University to launch on-campus rapid testing

Dear students,

**This message is being sent urgently to all students and we recognise that this may include some who have recently completed their studies. Please ignore this message if you are not a current University of Reading student.**

The University is launching an on-campus COVID-19 rapid testing service, following the government's announcement of [plans to help students travel safely between 3 to 9 December](#). In providing quick and free on-campus testing for those who do not have symptoms of COVID-19, we hope to provide reassurance to our community ahead of the Christmas break, particularly those intending to travel.

### **Testing available to all students**

The University's testing service will run from Tuesday 1 December until Friday 11 December, but this may be extended further depending on capacity. Bookings will open at 12 noon on Wednesday 25 November and there will be multiple slots each hour. Testing will be by appointment and will be open to all undergraduate and postgraduate students, including PGR students, whether you intend to travel over Christmas or not. The service will operate six days a week in the Sports Hall on Whiteknights campus from 10am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 11am to 4pm on Saturday.

Details of how you can book will be shared next week and we strongly encourage you to book a test.

### **What to expect**

The Lateral Flow Test that government is providing to universities is quick and easy to administer, with the whole process taking no more than 20 minutes. You will also get results quickly, usually within 20 to 30 minutes, delivered by text message or email.

Free testing through the NHS system is only available to those displaying symptoms. The testing we are offering will be available to those **not** displaying symptoms to provide reassurance that you are not carrying the virus. This is particularly important if you plan to travel home for the Christmas break, so that you have some reassurance that you will not transmit the virus to your loved ones.

If you are already showing any of the main symptoms of COVID-19 – a high temperature, new continuous cough or a loss/change of your sense of taste or smell, you should book your test through the [national NHS testing system](#).

### **Possible outcomes if you take a test**

If you take a test, there are three possible outcomes:

- If you test positive, you will need to self-isolate in your student accommodation and let us know about your result by completing the [online form](#). This helps us to support you during your self-isolation and work with your close contacts to ensure that they are not unintentionally spreading the virus. It is also strongly recommended that you take a PCR test through the main NHS testing system to confirm the result.
- If you test negative, best clinical practice recommends that you repeat the test three days later to confirm your negative result. This is because the amount of virus in your system might be too low to show up in this type of test very early in your illness. You

can book this second test through our system as well. The government advises that you travel as soon as possible after your negative test result, or your second result if you choose to have a second test.

- If you test negative but you are identified as a close contact of someone who tests positive, you can undertake your period of self-isolation either at your term-time address in Reading or at your home or holiday address, if you plan to travel.

### **Testing for international travel**

If you are planning to travel overseas, we advise that you check both the UK travel advice for the country you are travelling to, and travel and entry requirements for your destination country.

Please be aware that some countries require a negative COVID-19 test result to allow entry. The type of Lateral Flow Test that the government is supplying to universities may not be sufficient for this purpose. You should check the travel requirements for your destination as soon as possible to make sure that a Lateral Flow Test result is acceptable, as many countries require a result from a different type of test, called a PCR test.

PCR tests are only available for free through the NHS if you have COVID-19 symptoms. If you do not have COVID-19 symptoms, you need to pay to get a PCR test privately. Please ask your pharmacist or doctor for advice.

### **Other steps you can take to keep yourself, family and friends safe**

In addition to testing, there is much that all of us can do to help reduce the spread of COVID-19:

- **comply strictly with all government and University guidance**, including wearing face coverings, washing hands regularly and maintaining social distance
- **report if you have symptoms** either through the [online form](#) if you are in private accommodation or the Home at Halls app if you are in halls
- **report if you receive a positive COVID-19 test result** through the [online form](#) regardless of where you are living
- download the [NHS Track and Trace app](#)
- download the University's own [CallMy Alert app](#), a mass notification system that we can use to contact you in an urgent situation
- **check the mobile number in your RISIS record** is correct so that the Case Management Team can contact you by text message or phone call if needed
- **check your University email daily** and the [Essentials webpages](#) for the latest information and guidance.

To operate our rapid testing service, we will be looking to recruit students who are interested in part-time work. If you are interested, please contact [Campus Jobs](#).

We will update you with details of the booking system next week before it opens at noon on 25 November but in the meantime, if you have any other questions, please contact our COVID-19 support line on 0118 214 7813 from 9am to 5pm on weekdays and 11am to 4pm at weekends.

Best wishes,

Parveen

Professor Parveen Yaqoob (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)  
Chair of the Mass Testing Team