Part of
Education, universities and childcare during coronavirus

Department for Education

Guidance

Higher education COVID-19 operational guidance

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Contents
Introduction
Principles for higher education provision
Minimising COVID-19 risks
People who are clinically extremely vulnerable
Outbreak plans
Compliance with guidance
Communications with students and staff
Social contacts
Testing asymptomatic students and staff using lateral flow device tests (LFDs)
Testing before travel
Testing on arrival
Testing arrangements for students and staff using polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests
Travel and transport for students arriving from the UK
Travel and transport for students arriving from overseas
Accommodation
Clinical placements
Student unions and societies

Print this page

Introduction

There are no longer restrictions on the approach to teaching and learning in higher education providers. Providers should use their risk assessments to ensure they are adapting to changes as necessary in order to keep students safe. They should use the guidance to shape their courses without restrictions to face-to-face provision.

In line with all other settings, HE providers should continue to conduct risk assessments for their particular circumstances. They should implement sensible and proportionate measures to manage the risks to students and staff, including those who are clinically at-risk to the disease and those who are potentially loaded well. HE providers should not contingency plans to deal with any identified positive cases of COVID-19 outbreaks.

The guidance does not apply to further education (FE) providers who offer HE qualifications. FE providers should follow FE guidance for these students.

Student unions and societies should follow the guidance for higher education providers to establish their SU Business COVID-19 risk assessment and plan.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has a series of resources to support HE providers.

Principles for higher education provision

All HE providers are encouraged to offer teaching and learning in person as a place appropriate place, in line with the guidance and any other relevant government guidance, based on their individual circumstances.

In accordance with the CPD guidance, providers should communicate clearly to their students and staff, including those who are potentially loaded well, that they have taken reasonable sufficient contingency, risk-based and the current circumstances, and we based changes that would be made in response to changing health advice, so that they are prepared to implement the changes. Providers should also consider how infection protection continues to be met, including in relation to infection control measures and conditions, and complaints handling.

The guidance is designed to help HE providers in England to plan effectively to offer teaching and learning in person as a place appropriate, within the objective to do so.

We expect providers to consider and comply with their legal responsibilities. These include:

- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Equality Act 2010, and to comply with their duties under

Minimising COVID-19 risks

Risk assessments

As employers, HE providers have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others affected by their activities, including students, from COVID-19 risks. HE providers should complete a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID-19 to the workplace and identify control measures to manage that risk, based on relevant government guidance and sector-specific guidance. Providers should also consider their duties under health and safety legislation. HE providers should continually review and update their risk assessments, especially when there is new advice and guidance.

Employers' health and safety obligations

Employers should continue to assess and update health and safety risks in the usual way, especially in the light of any changes to circumstances.

The Health and Safety Executive has guidance on first aid during COVID-19 which:

- supports local risk assessments
- provides guidance for first aiders

Guidance for buildings and campuses

HE providers should continue to make efforts to reduce the risk of transmission where possible. Providers should use their risk assessments to ensure they are adapting to changes as necessary in order to keep students safe and to shape their courses without restrictions to provide. Providers should follow guidance on working safely during the COVID-19 outbreak when it is applicable to their facilities.

Contact tracing

HE providers should support NHS Test and Trace and ensure their students, staff and visitors are aware of the NHS Test and Trace service. NHS Test and Trace allows users to check in to venues by scanning a QR code, which enables NHS Test and Trace to send notifications. We expect this to be applicable to HE providers' facilities and teaching settings.

To minimise transmission of COVID-19, it is vital that as many contacts as possible are traced and that those who are at risk of being infectious are quickly identified and given guidance. HE providers should follow the government's guidance, which sets out what may be contacted by NHS Test and Trace to help with identifying close contacts, or contacts, and how they should be traced. Providers should also ensure that they have a clear in working with health protection teams in the case of a local outbreak.

For those who test positive or who have been identified as a contact by NHS Test and Trace, the rules and exceptions are set out in the guidance for testing and isolation. Contact tracers will never ask for money or bank details, or for people to download an app, or to someone who has tested positive, and how NHS Test and Trace will work with them to stop the spread of the virus.

Face coverings

Face coverings are no longer advised for students, staff and visitors either in teaching rooms or in communal areas.

The government has removed the requirement to wear face coverings in law but expects and recommends that they are worn in enclosed and crowded spaces where people may come into contact with people they don't normally meet. This includes public transport.

If there is an outbreak in HE setting, a director of public health might advise that face coverings should be worn in certain settings, for a specified period of time, by students, staff and visitors, unless exempt. Providers should keep their risk assessments under review and be prepared to implement this.

In these circumstances, transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate, can also be worn. Transparent face coverings may be effective in reducing the spread of COVID-19. However, the evidence to support this is currently very limited.

Face coverings (whether transparent or cloth) should fit securely around the face to cover the nose and mouth and be made of a breathable material, such as cotton, that can be washed safely and frequently.

Exemptions to wearing a transparent face covering is that they can act communicate. The exemptions are: to be able to lip read for the full visibility of facial expressions, but this should be considered alongside the comfort and breathability of a face covering and the risks of droplets, which may mean that the face covering is less breathable than layers of cloth.

Face visors or shields can be worn by those exempt from wearing a face covering but they are not an acceptable substitute in terms of covering contact of your mouth and nose. They may protect the wearer against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are not a substitute for face coverings in general. Face visors or shields should not be used without an additional face covering. They should only be used after an individual's risk assessment for the specific situation and should always be cleaned appropriately.

The use of face coverings may have a particular impact on those who rely on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate. We expect HE providers, and those who do, are exempt from any recommendation to wear face coverings in education and childcare settings.

Providers have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students to support their access to education and services. Providers should be sensitive to the needs of students this type of reasonable adjustments that are being considered to support.

No student should be denied education or the grounds of whether they are, or not, wearing a face covering.

Cleaning

HE providers should put in place and maintain an appropriate cleaning schedule. This should include cleaning of frequently touched surfaces, including those that are not a particular focus of a frequently touched surface. It will not generally be necessary to clean classrooms between different groups or different groups throughout the day but the sharing of equipment should be permitted.

PHE has published guidance on the cleaning of non-healthcare settings. This includes advice on the cleaning required when there is a suspected case of COVID-19.

Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated

When a setting is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

HE providers should identify any poorly ventilated spaces as part of their risk assessments and should take action to improve ventilation. This could include combination where bodily systems where large numbers of visitors are in attendance.

There can be achieved by a variety of resources, set out below:

Mechanical ventilation is a system that uses a fan to draw fresh air, or extract air from a room. These should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible and should be operated in normal operation meets current guidance that only fresh air is suitable air is circulated.

If possible, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air. If this is not possible, then systems should be operated as normal as long as they are able to operate and supplemented by an outdoor or supply.

Where mechanical ventilation is not in place, providers should ensure that they are maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Opening external windows can improve natural ventilation, and in addition, opening internal doors can also assist in creating a throughflow of air. Providers opening opening doors may also be used (if they are not fire doors and where safe to do so).

Ventilation should be balanced against the requirement to maintain a comfortable temperature.

The Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the COVID-19 outbreak and HVCA COVID-19 advice provides more information.

Additional measures

Providers should continue to identify and implement the range of measures required to comply with government guidance for safe workplaces, based on an assessment of the risks arising from the COVID-19 outbreak. Providers should take into account the current advice days the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses, including influenza.

This could include (but is not limited to):

- minimising contact with any individuals who are required to self-isolate by ensuring they do so where that HE provider is notified.
- ensuring everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more frequently than would normally be required for everyone by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- utilising outdoor space

People who are clinically extremely vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) people are advised, as a minimum, to follow the same guidance as everyone else. It is important that everyone adheres to this guidance, including the use of face coverings in the place they are required to be worn, and precautions they can continue to take. Further information can be found in the guidance on protecting people who are CEV from COVID-19.

Students who are CEV should be able to attend their course and it is no longer necessary for the government to instruct people to work from home. Students should be able to explain the reasons they have in place to keep CEV staff safe at work. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published guidance for employers and employees on how to talk about vulnerable risks in the workplace.

Outbreak plans

HE providers should continue to have plans in place to respond in the event that there is a local outbreak of COVID-19 or a local increase in transmission of COVID-19. Providers may have to adapt elements of their provision at very short notice. Providers should agree outbreak plans with their Director of Public Health and share their plan with DfE.

Their plans should identify preparations actions to reduce transmission and should cover scenarios including:

- increased prevalence of infection (results that requires interventions in the whole institution or a specified cohort)
- a large-scale outbreak that may impact on the activities of the university
- a localised outbreak in student accommodation
- a localised outbreak involving a particular cohort of staff members, faculty or department

Where restrictions are considered necessary, the default position is that HE providers will remain open, with recreational facilities and activities reflecting wider restrictions in place locally. As a next step, and before advising limitations on students' ability to attend their course in person, HE providers will be expected to locally to identify additional measures to put in place that mitigate against the risk of transmission, such as those set out in the provider's setting and providing guidance, and to take action to implement those measures.

Further limitations on attendance need to be made, attendance for in-person teaching and learning should be prioritised for students and staff in those courses where it is most critical to do so, such as those that are most vulnerable to the impact of disruption to their education, those that are most reliant on practical learning and those that are managed any outbreaks, including spaces which measures identified in the outbreaks management plan. Providers should also consider the impact on the Office for Students (OfS) collection the impact of managing local outbreaks of COVID-19 on education and childcare settings.

HE providers should continually check, review and update their outbreak plans, especially when there is new advice and guidance. Providers should share their plans with their staff.

Compliance with guidance

HE providers are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of any measures and guidance in place, including those that have been retraced and will be kept up to national measures.

HE providers should consider incentives for compliance, and disincentives for non-compliance including, in serious cases, the use of disciplinary measures.

Communications with students and staff

HE providers should encourage students and staff to take up the lateral flow testing programme.

When settings remain open through the summer break, students and staff should continue to test twice a week, either using home test kits or at on-site facility. Students who are not on campus should be tested at home or at a testing site in their home settings near school, testing in safe areas available, and to can be collected from local pharmacies or ordered online.

Testing before travel

Students should test before they travel back to university, by ordering a free test online or collection from their local pharmacy.

Testing on arrival

On arrival at university, students should take 2 LFD tests (2 to 4 days apart) using home test kit or at on-site testing facility. This is to reduce the risk of transmission following the movement of students across the country.

Students who are not on campus should be encouraged to home test kits or at on-site testing facility until the end of September, when they will be expected to take part in testing arrangements after September will be taken in response to the latest public health advice. The position will be continually kept under review.

It is very important that, when testing at home, test results are reported using NHS Test and Trace, so that students who are asymptomatic but have COVID-19 can help monitor the spread of the virus, contact the virus and save lives.

If a student or staff member has recently (within 90 days) tested positive for COVID-19, they do not need to be tested given immunity. If a student or staff member has had a PCR test, they should not take a lateral flow test for 90 days after the date of the test, they do not need to be tested again within that time period if they are asymptomatic. They are no longer infectious to have the national guidance for isolation and testing. Students who are not on campus should be encouraged to home test kits or at the 90 day window.

If students are on a placement and not attending university facilities, they should follow and participate in any testing regime in place of their placement. It is not necessary to test twice a week if a student is not attending to a placement. This is a decision by the placement provider.

Where students have a medical or other reason that prevents them from engaging in LFD testing, they should talk to their HE provider about alternatives.

Positive test result

Upon notification of a positive assisted LFD test result or positive home (self-reported) LFD test result, students and staff should follow the national guidance for people who have received a positive COVID-19 test result.

Those identified as a close contact of a positive case

Individuals are not required to self-isolate if they live in the same household as someone who is identified as a close contact of someone with COVID-19, and any of the following apply:

- they are fully vaccinated
- they are below the age of 18 years and 6 months
- they have been part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- they are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons.

Instead, they will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. We encourage all individuals to take LFD tests if advised to do so.

Supporting students who need to self-isolate

Some students may be eligible for a one-off payment of £500 through NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme. If they are required to self-isolate.

For those students who need to self-isolate at university, HE providers should take steps to ensure their students are safe and well looked after during their self-isolation period.

University HE halls are exempted in Regulation 2 of the Coronavirus (Exemptions) Regulations 2020 and are required to self-isolate and HE providers have to HE providers are to ensure that students are supported to self-isolate in accordance with the guidance. We encourage providers to review the guidance when considering how to support their international and other students arriving from overseas.

The DfE has published a statement of support for students in self-isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 vaccination

HE providers should encourage students to take up the offer of both doses of the vaccine, as soon as they become eligible.

COVID-19 vaccination is now being offered to everyone aged 18 and over at local sites. This includes students who are registered with a GP practice near their term time address. Local sites may work with partners to set up, large-scale vaccination centres, or locations convenient for students to access, for example, on university campuses. Students can also book a vaccine at a local pharmacy, or at a vaccination centre, a community pharmacy or clinic at some GP or other NHS sites. Various learning service seeking to be planning PE.

HE providers should encourage students to register with a GP practice if they have not done so already, to ensure they can access a local GP practice and be invited to be vaccinated from their GP practice. Individuals can request to book COVID-19 vaccination appointments through their GP practice, or through the NHS App. HE providers should encourage students to consult the COVID-19 vaccination FAQs for students in higher education institutions which has been published by NHS England and provides a range of important information.

Travel and transport for students arriving from within the UK

HE providers should communicate travel guidance to all students, including how to travel safely and how to minimise risk of being exposed to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) using public transport or car sharing.

If students are travelling from areas which are undergoing local lockdown, different rules and restrictions apply and they should follow the guidance for those living in that area. If they test positive, then DfU Test and Trace (NHS Test and Trace) will be sent to a local lockdown area, they will be required to follow the Coronavirus (COVID-19): travel guidance for people in England.

New and returning students travelling from overseas

International students are permitted to study remotely without a visa, and in most circumstances will be able to begin their course via distance learning. This concessions will apply to students who are in the UK and those who are overseas. Students outside the UK until the 6 April 2021 or later these are concessions will be implemented so that students have a greater degree of flexibility or when they travel into the UK.

Students that are travelling to the UK from overseas will need to pay respect to and follow the guidance and rules that have been introduced to help prevent transmission of COVID-19 on their return.

Arrival procedure for students travelling from overseas

Different restrictions apply to students arriving from overseas (known as the "traffic light" system) depending on whether they are arriving from a country on the green, amber or red list of countries. Arrival procedures, testing requirements, quarantine requirements and reporting. This will provide the UK government with flexibility to adapt to the emergence of new variants of concern and to effectively testing our borders upon. Countries will be current this changes weekly.

red list countries - high-risk countries
amber list countries - moderate-risk countries
green list countries - low-risk countries

Students will need to complete the following measures, depending on which country they have departed from and their status in the preceding 10 days.

Measure	Green	Amber	Fully vaccinated/PHE-recognised recovered	Red
Passenger locator form	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-departure test	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Passenger locator form or Covid-19	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Self-isolation on arrival	No	10 days	No	Yes
Test on arrival	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Quarantine	Once before leaving quarantine	Yes - 10 days	Yes - 10 days if test result is pending	Yes - 10 days
Further PCR tests	No	Yes - 2 tests	No	Yes - 2 tests

Students should refer to the latest information on country-by-country basis, travelling.

If students are arriving from the EU or USA and have been fully vaccinated with a UKMA Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved Medicines Agency (EMA)-approved vaccine, they should bring vaccine certification and follow the rules.

Before arriving in the UK, students should:

- check the very latest information on entering the UK
- complete a passenger locator form within 48 hours before arriving in the UK
- book and pay for a test from a provider on the country that they are travelling from or through, and whether that country is red, amber or green list
- ensure that, prior to departing for England, they have proof of a negative COVID-19 test result, or proof of recovery from a COVID-19 infection, to show to the airline operator before boarding
- book and pay for a test from a provider which includes COVID-19 tests to be taken on day 2 and day 8 after arrival in the UK, and on the day 10 if they are required to self-isolate
- complete a passenger locator form upon arrival

Students who are arriving in the UK from a country on a 'red list' country, travelling through a 'red list' country, or who have been in a 'red list' country in the 10 days before arrival in the UK must:

- book a place in a government-approved quarantine hotel
- pay for the cost of their stay in a government-approved quarantine hotel
- complete a passenger locator form upon arrival
- take a test on day 2 and day 8 after arrival in the UK, and on the day 10 if they are required to self-isolate

Students should refer to the latest information on country-by-country basis, travelling.

If students are arriving from the EU or USA and have been fully vaccinated with a UKMA Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved Medicines Agency (EMA)-approved vaccine, they should bring vaccine certification and follow the rules.

Before arriving in the UK, students should:

- check the very latest information on entering the UK
- complete a passenger locator form within 48 hours before arriving in the UK
- book and pay for a test from a provider on the country that they are travelling from or through, and whether that country is red, amber or green list
- ensure that, prior to departing for England, they have proof of a negative COVID-19 test result, or proof of recovery from a COVID-19 infection, to show to the airline operator before boarding

students should use the guidance for students who have been in, or transited through, a 'red' country (see below) in the last 10 days
- while travelling, remember to follow the safer travel guidelines, and plan ahead to avoid busy times
- speak to their travel insurer

Guidance for students who have been in, or transited through, a 'red list' country in the last 10 days

Students should be aware that the UK has introduced travel bans from 'red' countries to arrivals from some countries (otherwise referred to as 'red' countries) as part of measures taken to protect the UK from the new strains of COVID-19. The 'red list' will be reviewed regularly.

British and Irish Nationals, or third country nationals with residence rights in the UK, who have been in, or transited through, a 'red' country in the last 10 days, or who have been in or transited through a 'red' country in the last 10 days, but they will be required to quarantine in a government approved hotel for 10 days on their return to the UK. This requirement includes those with an entry clearance or visa that grants such leave, for example, students, holders of existing leave to enter or remain such as those students with biometric residence permits, and holders of Entrepreneur Scheme/ Tech City Visas.

Individuals who have been in, or transited through, a 'red list' country in the last 10 days will need to book a place in a government approved hotel for 10 days of quarantine on their rights in the UK and not be granted entry to the country. The cost of accommodation in hotel will be borne by the traveller. Student must book the managed quarantine package in advance of travelling. More information is available on managed quarantine hotel is available.

Students could use the Test to Release scheme if they have been in or through 'red list' countries in the 10 days before they arrive in England.

Students should note that the number of hotels available to take part in the managed hotel quarantine scheme is increasing for the new academic year. This will ensure that more rooms will be available for travellers from red list countries. This is positive news for international students travelling from red list countries who should experience a smooth and successful transition to university life in the UK.

All red list travellers will be accommodated. However, the coming months are peak arrival months for students and we anticipate that there will be a temporary lag in the time it will take to book. All providers should therefore encourage students to get in touch when they book their travel and consider travelling slightly later, or at a time when there is more availability. This should only result in a short delay to student arrivals in a minority of instances during periods of peak demand in August and September.

Remote learning now concessions and visa concessions for the duration of the course are in place until 6 April 2022. This means that students can start their course remotely with their sponsor and then travel to the UK at a later date. Students who are unable to comply with practical requirements should still aim to travel to the UK in keeping with their course requirements. Students should always look to book their hotel room and flight simultaneously to avoid any disruptions.

Providers that recruit international students (or other students who will be travelling to the UK unaccompanied) who are under the age of 18 should pay particular notice to Department of Health and Social Care guidance on quarantine in a managed accommodation. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) is aware of the requirements for managed hotel quarantine. they should contact their sponsor students to study remotely in the meantime

UK residents (which includes international students due to their visa status) that are facing significant financial hardship as a result of this change will have an opportunity to apply for a deferred repayment plan when booking. Travellers who access hardship will be referred to our debt collection agency ("Quidos"), who will perform an independent financial assessment and determine an appropriate payment plan.

Guidance for students who have transited through an amber list country in the last 10 days

International arrivals who have departed or transited through an amber list country outside the European Travel Area (and not included in the EU or USA amendment explained below) should self-isolate immediately in their own accommodation for 10 days when they arrive in the UK.

Passengers that have been fully vaccinated with vaccines authorised by the EMA and the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) or certain countries and European microstate countries of Andorra, Monaco, San Marino and Vatican City) and the US are now able to travel to England without quarantine, or a day 8 test. They should still take a day 2 test. Further details are available in the announcement about ending quarantine for some vaccinated individuals.

When non-vaccinated (EU/USA, EFTA/FTAS) arrival students arrive in England, they must travel directly to the place they are staying and not leave until 10 days have passed. They should:

- ensure that prior to departing for England they have proof of a negative COVID-19 test result within three days of departure - more information on pre-departure testing is available
- book a day 2 test package before travelling to the UK test on or before day 2 for variant surveillance and a test on or after day 8 to ensure that they do not have COVID-19. students should use the booking portal to book their travel test package
- Complete passenger locator form detailing where they will quarantine upon arrival
- only use public transport if they have no other option
- follow UK travel guidance for passengers
- only leave their accommodation in limited circumstances and follow guidance on how to self-isolate when they travel to the UK (England only)

Students travelling from an amber country may be able to exit self-isolation early via Test to Release.

International arrivals from non-vaccinated (EU/USA, EFTA/FTAS) amber list countries have to self-isolate and have self-isolation period by taking a day 2 COVID test from a private testing provider 5 full days after arriving in England with a negative result. Students should use the booking portal to book their travel test package. International travel guidance is available at the list of providers for Test to Release.

Students planning to use the Test to Release scheme must book a travel test package and take a test on or before day 2, unless they are exempt. Even if individuals get a negative result from their Test to Release and are released from self-isolation, they will still need to take a test on or after day 8 if travelling from an amber list country to check that they do not have COVID-19.

Students who have chosen to self-isolate for 10 days instead of taking a private Test to Release are not expected to take a further LFD test (administered by their HE provider) at the end of their self-isolation period when they initially return to campus.

Guidance for students who have transited through a green-list country in the last 10 days

International arrivals that have transited through a green list country do not have to self-isolate on their accommodation or enter managed quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel on arrival, but they are required to:

- ensure that prior to departing for England they have proof of a negative COVID-19 test result taken within three days of departure - more information on pre-departure testing is available
- book a day 2 test package before travelling to the UK. This involves taking a COVID-19, test on or before day 2 for variant surveillance. Students should use the booking portal to book their travel test package
- complete a passenger locator form upon arrival
- ensure they follow public health guidance to reduce social contact, maintain social distance, adopt good hand and respiratory hygiene measures, and self-isolate and get tested if they have symptoms

All international students should get tested twice a week after arrival at their HE provider, as is the case for the rest of the student population.

Arriving on campus

After following the correct arrivals procedure, students should follow instructions on ongoing asymptomatic testing as set out by their HE provider.

We are working with the HE sector to ensure that all students are able to travel to and from and be supported on arrival by their chosen university. Universities UK has developed a checklist for support students who are required to self-isolate on arrival in a quarantine or developing that support. Further guidance is available on entering the UK.

Travelling to the devolved administrations via a connecting flight in England

If travellers have not transited through one of the red countries in the 10 days before arriving in England and they are getting on onward connecting flight to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland (Devolved Administration or DA) then they are not required to self isolate on arrival in England.

Travellers from amber list countries should however self-isolate immediately on arrival at their destination in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Travellers should check individual devolved administrations for their policy on self-isolation to ensure they are following the most up to date guidance:

- Scotland - COVID-19: guidance on travel and transport
- Wales - arriving in Wales from overseas
- Northern Ireland - COVID-19: international travel advice

If travellers have transited through one of the red list countries in the 10 days before arriving in England then they will be required to quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel on arrival in England for ten days.

Travellers should refer to the section in the guidance on managed hotel quarantine for more information, including on how to book their managed hotel.

Anyone who travels via England, whether they have been through a red country or not, should complete a passenger locator form before they arrive in England. Failure to complete a passenger locator form and bypass their travel test package. Refer refer to the rules and procedure for students travelling to the UK from overseas above for more information.

Visas

Since the outbreak of coronavirus, the government has implemented a number of immigration concessions to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel health restrictions.

International students considering coming to study in the UK should be aware that visa concessions have been put in place for students who are in the UK and students who are learning for students outside the UK until the 6 April 2022. These visa concessions have been implemented so that students have a greater degree of flexibility on when they travel into the UK.

Students arriving from red and amber list countries in particular should check in with their HE provider as to when they intend to arrive on campus, so that their arrival can be appropriately supported and managed.

Many HE courses continue to be conducted online, so that students unable to enter the UK in the immediate term can study remotely.

The government has confirmed in its visa concessions guidance that international students who commenced their degree course of 12 months or less in the academic year 2019 – 2020 and who have already travelled to the UK during their studies with permission to remain in the UK, and who have their Graduate route application made before their current visa expires. Discretion on this requirement will be exercised if the Graduate route application is made no later than 28 days after the Cut-off date of 31 December 2021.

This will reduce the need for some international students to return home to make their next application, in line with wider public health guidance to minimise overseas travel.

Students will not be penalised for being unable to collect their biometric residence permit (BRP) due to COVID-19 measures and in place.

Students should be aware that rules may differ depending on the UK nation within which they are studying, so are advised to consult the relevant COVID-19 guidance that applies in those nations.

International students and COVID-19 vaccination

International students will not be charged for vaccination against COVID-19. Students should make sure they are registered with a General Practitioner (GP), who will contact them directly to book their vaccine via an online or telephone system when it is available. For information on booking coronavirus vaccination appointments is available.

International students have further questions regarding vaccines, should consult the COVID-19 vaccination FAQs for students in higher education institutions, which has been published by NHS England and provides a range of important information. Students can also read about being an international student in England during the pandemic.

Guidance for students travelling overseas during the summer break

All students should be aware that in England, government guidance is that people should not travel to red or amber list countries.

All students should also note that travel guidance can change at short notice and that there are continued risks of travel disruption. This is particularly relevant for students looking to return to the UK for the start of academic year 2021/22. All students should check red, amber and green list rules for entering England for the latest updates on overseas travel.

The traffic light system will be in place for those arriving in England until 1 October 2021 at the earliest. All students should check whether the country (or countries) to which they are travelling is on the green, amber or red list and what their arrival procedure will entail when they return.

Students should be aware of any travel restrictions in place when they reach their destination and consult the relevant foreign travel advice page.

Travel guidance for Turing Scheme, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps exchanges

This section of the guidance is for organisers of Turing Scheme, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) exchanges with participants planning to travel in the UK or overseas, and those who have participants who are already overseas.

Turing Scheme mobilities will take place from September 2021. As part of the transition from Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps, the Turing Scheme, Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps special strand of the end of the 2021 academic year will continue. Therefore, Turing Scheme and Erasmus+ mobilities will both be in operation during the 2021 to 2022 academic year.

For UK beneficiaries managing these mobilities, they should utilise any funding to the best of their ability, while ensuring participants remain as safe as possible and following all relevant guidance and advice related to their funding.

We expect all universities, colleges, schools and other organisers managing international educational mobilities to follow the relevant FCDO travel advice for the destination country and highlight this to their participants, being aware the situation can change rapidly.

We expect all providers to be flexible in their approach and be conscious of the potentially rapidly changing situation on a country by country basis. Providers should be aware that there may be local restrictions in place which may change at short notice and amending start and end dates if feasible as restrictions may change over time.

Providers who have mobility participants who are students at non-UK providers (considering where the UK is begun or resume any exchanges, or UK participants who are re-entering the UK after a period overseas participating in an exchange need to ensure all other participants:

- review the information in the section on arrival procedures for students travelling from overseas
- Comply with all quarantine and self-isolation requirements that apply to them

Providers who have mobility participants who are UK students who are considering starting a placement overseas need to ensure all their participants review the information on arrival procedures for students travelling to the UK from overseas.

Before starting a placement, providers should consult with their participants to confirm details and ensure all UK students participating in trips abroad:

- check the Living in guide and travel advice for the country they will be visiting, being clear with participants that their placement may not be able to continue as originally planned
- be ready to comply with local isolation, testing or quarantine requirements, and will need to meet the local health system
- be prepared to return early from their placement, they should contact their home provider to learn more of their plans

If there are any UK participants who need emergency help from the UK government while overseas because the country they are in will not allow them to travel back to the UK, or there are no commercial travel options available, providers can direct them to contact the nearest British embassy, consulate or high commission or the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) in London on 0207 008 1500 for help or advice 24/7.

Travel insurance

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has produced information on travel insurance implications following the COVID-19 pandemic. If providers have any further questions about their insurance and the further measures they should contact their travel insurance provider or, where their participants are required to provide their own cover, ensure their cover meets the provider's requirements.

Accommodation

It is important that shared accommodation such as kitchens and bathrooms are cleaned regularly to minimise the risk of transmission, and in particular after use by those who have tested positive or are displaying COVID-19 symptoms. More information can be found in the guidance for households with possible or confirmed COVID-19 infection.

HE providers should ensure that appropriate cleaning supplies and clear instructions are provided to students living in shared accommodation. Students living in shared households should take practical steps to minimise transmission within the house at all times, the overall risk of transmission will be reduced. This requires focusing on the three main routes of transmission – close-range, airborne, and surface contact with routine measures that include: ensuring regular hand washing at all common areas, frequent cleaning of surfaces and shared items, and ventilating shared spaces by opening windows where feasible, and frequent cleaning of shared surfaces.

The College and University Business Officers and the Universities Safety and Health Association have jointly issued a checklist for students living in shared accommodation to help minimise the risk of coronavirus transmission. This checklist includes practical advice on cleaning, food hygiene, and various among other aspects of co-living. This guidance also provides advice on how to minimise transmission within shared accommodation and how to manage cases of COVID-19 in shared accommodation. They should encourage students and visitors (where visitors are permitted) to follow this advice.

Forming new households

Students can form new households and move into their shared student accommodation as normal. Within student accommodation, providers should ensure that they can identify 'households', which will form the units by which they will manage any response to a suspected or confirmed positive case. Providers' approach to defining a household constitutes a household will depend on the physical layout of the accommodation. Where a room is shared by two students, it is reasonable to assume that the bedroom is normally occupied by the two students living in that room, or in the same flat or house, who share a kitchen or bathroom, rather than an entire block. Accommodation providers should make clear which kitchen(s) or bathroom(s) are intended for each household's use.

If a household within student accommodation is not obvious, providers may need to identify students as belonging to households (these households may be greater than 6 people, but should be no greater than 30 people). Providers should ensure that students defined households, and students should understand what constitutes their household for the purposes of any guidance on interactions within and between households.

Students living outside of residences, or houses of multiple occupation (HMOs), will develop symptoms of COVID-19 should self-isolate in their current accommodation. Students should discuss this with their provider, and with the manager of their halls if they are privately owned, or the landlord of their HMO.

Educational visits and field trips

There are no restrictions on educational visits and field trips within the UK.

International visits

The government has published international travel advice (red, amber and green list rules for entering England).

In line with the roadmap, students and staff may undertake international visits to green countries. Students and staff should be aware that if the country they are intending to travel to is subject to change and green list countries may be moved into amber or red. The travel lists may change during a visit and travelers must comply with international travel legislation and have contingency plans in place to account for these changes.

For information on the Turing Scheme, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps exchanges, see the travel guidance for the Turing Scheme, Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps. Providers should be aware that there may be local restrictions in place in organisers managing international educational mobilities to follow the relevant FCDO travel advice for the destination country and highlight this to their participants, being aware the situation can change rapidly.

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