



Department
for Education

Higher education COVID-19 operational guidance

Guidance for higher education providers

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Introduction

From Step 4 of the government's COVID-19 roadmap, there will no longer be restrictions on the approach to teaching and learning in Higher Education (HE) providers as a result of COVID-19. There will be no requirement for social distancing or other measures within in person teaching. Providers will therefore be able 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 control measures which follow the health and safety hierarchy of controls to reduce the risk to the lowest reasonably practicable level. HE providers should have contingency plans to deal with any identified positive cases of COVID-19 or outbreaks.

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

Guidance setting out [expectations in maintaining quality and standards](#) is available from the Office for Students (OfS), the HE regulator in England.

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

Principles for higher education provision

As HE providers are autonomous institutions, they should identify and put in place appropriate plans, in line with this guidance and any other relevant government guidance, based on their individual circumstances.

In accordance with the [OfS guidance](#), providers should communicate clearly to their students on what they can expect from planned teaching and learning. This should include different scenarios; one based on the current circumstances, and one based on changes that would be made in response to changing health advice, so that they are able to make informed choices. It is important that obligations under consumer protection law continue to be met, including in relation to information provision, terms and conditions, and complaints handling. This guidance is designed to help HE providers in England to plan effectively to offer students a full, enriching and enjoyable experience, while staying as safe as possible.

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 those obligations.

Minimising COVID-19 risks

Risk assessments

As employers, HE providers have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety, including from the risks of COVID-19. They should complete a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of COVID-19 in the workplace and identify control measures to manage that risk, based on relevant government guidance and best practice. Employers have a duty to consult their employees on health and safety matters. HE providers should continually check, revise 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 changing circumstances.

The Health and Safety Executive have guidance on [first aid during COVID-19](#) which:

- supports local risk assessments
- provides guidance for first aiders

Guidance for buildings and campuses

Following Step 4, HE providers should continue to make efforts to reduce the risk of transmission where possible. They should not put in place measures which limit the teaching and learning outcome for students, or significantly limit the wider activities offered by the HE provider.

Testing

The government has been working with HE providers to offer twice weekly asymptomatic testing to all students residing in their term-time accommodation, or accessing university facilities, and to all staff. Testing will continue through the summer break where settings remain open. Students and staff should continue to test twice a week, either using home test kits or at an on-site facility. This will pause in settings that are closed. Where settings are closed, testing is still widely available, and kits can be collected either from local pharmacies or ordered online.

Contact tracing

HE providers should support NHS Test and Trace and ensure that students, staff and other visitors know how the contact tracing process works. The [NHS COVID-19 App](#) 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 in teaching settings.

To minimise transmission of COVID-19, it is vital that as many contacts as possible are identified and advised to take action as appropriate in accordance with government guidance. HE providers should follow the government's [Working Safely](#) guidance, and may be contacted by NHS Test and Trace to help with identifying close contacts, as currently happens in managing other infectious diseases. Settings will continue to have a role 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, further information is available in the guidance [NHS Test and Trace: how it works](#). This sets out what individuals should do if they test positive or if they are a contact of someone who has tested positive, and how NHS Test and Trace will work with them to stop the spread of the virus.

Face coverings

From 19 July, face coverings will no longer be advised for students, staff and visitors either in teaching rooms or in communal areas.

From 19 July, the Government is removing 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 a HE setting, a director of public health might advise that face coverings should temporarily be worn in communal areas or teaching rooms (by students, staff and visitors, unless exempt). Providers should make sure their outbreak management plans cover this possibility.

In these circumstances, transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression 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 with a breathable material capable of filtering airborne particles.

The main benefit from a transparent face covering is that they can aid communication, for example enabling lip-reading or allowing for the full visibility of facial expressions, but this should be considered alongside the comfort and breathability of a face covering that contains plastic, 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 equivalent alternative in terms of source control of virus transmission. They may protect the wearer against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in preventing the escape of smaller respiratory particles when used without an additional face covering. They should only be used after carrying out a 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 visual signals for communication. Those who communicate with or provide support to 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 them to access education successfully. Where appropriate, they should discuss with students the types of reasonable adjustments that are being considered to support them.

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

Cleaning

HE providers should put in place and maintain an appropriate cleaning schedule. This should include regular cleaning of areas and equipment (e.g., twice per day), with a particular focus on frequently touched surfaces. It will not generally be necessary to clean areas and equipment between use by different groups throughout the day and the sharing of equipment should be permitted.

PHE has published guidance on the [cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#). This contains advice on the cleaning required when there is a suspected case of COVID-19. See [guidance on the cleaning of non-healthcare settings](#).

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 assessment, and take steps to improve fresh air flow in these areas, giving particular consideration when holding events where large numbers of visitors are on site.

These can be achieved by a variety of measures, 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 checked to confirm that normal operation meets current guidance and that only fresh outside air is circulated.

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

Where mechanical ventilation systems exist, providers should ensure that they are maintained in accordance with the manufacturers' recommendations.

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

HE providers should balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature.

The [Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak](#) and [CIBSE 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 and requirements of each environment. Adhering to infection prevention measures will help stop 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 not attend the HE provider's facilities
- ensuring everyone is advised to clean their hands thoroughly and more frequently
- ensuring good respiratory hygiene for everyone by promoting the 'catch it, bin it, kill it' approach
- utilising outdoor space

Outbreak plans

HE providers should continue to have plans in place to respond in the event that there is an increase in the number of cases, or an outbreak associated with their setting, when they 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 proportionate actions to reduce transmission and should cover scenarios including:

- increased prevalence of infection locally that requires interventions in the whole community, including students and staff
- 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 student or staff member, faculty or department

Where restrictions are considered necessary, the default position is that HE providers will remain open, with non-educational facilities and activities reflecting wider restrictions in place locally. As a next step, and before advising limitations on attendance in education settings, they should work with Directors of Public Health locally to identify additional measures to put in place. For instance, by increasing testing, quickly identifying contacts within the HE provider's setting and providing appropriate support to those who are required to self-isolate.

If further limitations on attendance need to be made, attendance for in person teaching and learning should be prioritised for students and staff on those courses where it is most beneficial (for example, clinical or practical learning and research). HE providers should work with the Director of Public Health in their local authority to control and manage any outbreak, including agreeing which measures identified in the outbreaks planning should be implemented, based on an assessment of the risks.

HE providers should continually check, revise 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 where these have been reimposed as part of local or 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 have communications strategies for students and staff, which will include principles such as:

- encourage students to take up the offer of both doses of the coronavirus vaccine as soon as they are eligible
- encourage all students and staff to participate in the testing programme
- encourage students, including international students, to register with a GP local to their university as soon as possible after arriving
- do not assume that everyone understands any official guidelines
- ensure the rationale for behaviours and protective measures is understood
- encourage an atmosphere within their institution that supports actions people can take to keep themselves and others safe
- involve staff and students when creating communications
- maintain consistent messaging and guidance
- consider the range of cultural backgrounds when developing communications and plans

Social contacts

From Step 4 of the government roadmap, there will be no legal limits on social contacts in England.

Use the [Coronavirus restrictions: what you can and cannot do guidance](#) to find out more.

Testing asymptomatic students and staff using lateral flow device tests (LFDs)

HE providers should strongly encourage all students and staff to participate in the testing programme.

HE providers should also strongly encourage students who have yet to leave their university accommodation for the summer to test before they travel away from university for the break. Once students have travelled back to their accommodation for the summer, they should follow the [broader national guidance](#).

Where settings remain open through the summer break, students and staff should continue to test twice a week, either using home test kits or at an on-site facility. Testing will pause in settings that are closed to students over the summer break. Confirmation of the cost recovery arrangements from 1 August onwards will be communicated in the coming weeks. Where settings are closed, testing is still widely available, and kits can be collected either from local pharmacies or ordered online.

Testing before travel

Students should expect to 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 expect to take two LFD tests either using home test kits or at an on-site testing facility (3- 4 days apart). This is to reduce the risk of transmission following the movement of students across the country.

Final decisions about testing on return and ongoing regular asymptomatic testing in the autumn term will take into account public health advice. The position will be confirmed in the coming weeks.

It is very important that, when testing at home, test results are reported [online to NHS Test and Trace](#) whether positive, negative or void. Reporting results helps the NHS monitor the spread of the virus, combat the virus and save lives.

If a student or staff member has recently (within 90 days) tested positive for COVID-19, they are likely to have developed some immunity. If a student or staff member has had a confirmed positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR test for COVID-19 in the last 90 days, they do not need to be tested again within that time period if they are asymptomatic. They are still required to follow the national guidance for adults who have been identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case, even if this is within 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 at their placement. It is not necessary to travel to university to be tested before travelling to a placement, unless this is advised 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

In general, students over the age of 18 and staff in HE should follow the national guidance for adults who have been identified as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case.

The Government intends to exempt people who have been fully vaccinated from the requirement to self-isolate if they are a contact of a positive case. Anyone who tests positive will still need to self-isolate regardless of their vaccination status. Further details will be published in due course and the changes are likely to come into effect later in the summer.

Similarly, from 16 August 2021, children under the age of 18 years old will no longer be required to self-isolate if they are contacted by NHS Test and Trace as a close contact of a positive COVID-19 case.

Instead, children will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, informed they have been in close contact with a positive case and advised to take a PCR test.

18 year olds will be treated in the same way as children until 4 months after their 18th birthday to allow them the opportunity to get fully vaccinated. Once they have been fully vaccinated, they will be subject to the same rules as adults and so if they choose not to get vaccinated, they will need to self-isolate if identified as a close contact.

Supporting students who need to self-isolate

For those students who do 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.

Universities UK have also produced a [checklist for providers to support students who are required to self-isolate](#) as well as [bespoke guidance for HE providers on how to prepare for and care for students who are required to self-isolate on arrival in the UK](#). We encourage providers to review this guidance when considering how best to support their international and other students arriving from overseas.

The OfS has published [a statement on support for students in self-isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

Some students may be eligible for a one-off payment of £500 through the [NHS Test and Trace Support Payment scheme](#), if they are required to self-isolate.

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 run by GPs or community pharmacies, at larger vaccination centres and in some hospitals. Local areas may also work with partners to set up “pop up” temporary clinics at locations convenient for students to access, for example, on university campuses. Students registered with a GP can book their appointment at a larger vaccination centre, a community pharmacy run site or at some GP run sites through the [National Booking Service](#) website or by phoning 119.

HE providers should encourage students to register with a GP practice if they have not already done so. Those who are registered with a GP will receive an invitation to be vaccinated from their GP practice. Individuals can request to book COVID-19 vaccination appointments as an unregistered patient through a local GP practice. 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 help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by following the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#).

If students are travelling from areas which are undergoing [surge testing](#), different public health guidance applies and they should ensure they get tested before they travel. If they test positive, their polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test will be sent to a laboratory for genomic sequencing and they must not travel. They must isolate with their household immediately and follow the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus infections](#). Public Health England will carry out enhanced tracing of close contacts of confirmed cases of the variants.

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. Visa concessions for those on Student (or Tier 4) visas allow for the provision of online 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 that are travelling to the UK from overseas will need to pay regard to and comply with border measures that have been introduced to help prevent transmission of COVID-19 on their return.

Arrival procedure for students travelling to the UK from overseas

Different restrictions apply to students arriving from overseas (known as the [‘traffic light system’](#)) depending on level of risk. Risk will be based on factors such as the level of community transmission, variants of concern, levels of testing, genomic sequencing and reporting. This will provide the UK government with flexibility to adapt to the evolving health situation around the world whilst keeping our borders open. Countries will be sorted into three categories:

- Red list countries: High-risk countries
- Amber list countries: Moderate-risk countries
- Green list countries: Low-risk countries

Students will need to comply with the following measures, depending on which country they have departed from/travelled through in the preceding 10 days:

Measure	Green	Amber	Red
Passenger locator form	Yes	Yes	Yes
Pre-departure test	Yes	Yes	Yes
Managed Quarantine at Hotel	No	No	10 days
Self-isolation at own accommodation	No	10 days	N/A
Test to release	N/A	On day 5	No
PCR testing	On or before day 2	On or before day 2	On or before day 2
Further PCR testing	No	Day 8	Day 8

Students should refer to the [latest information on country risk levels](#) before travelling.

Before arriving in the UK, all students should:

- check the very latest information on [entering the UK](#)
- inform their provider when they intend to arrive on campus so that they can be appropriately supported
- check the [arrivals procedure](#) for the country that they are travelling from/through, and whether that country is on the [red, amber or green list](#)
- 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 and pay for a travel test package](#) which will include COVID-19 tests to be taken on or before day 2 and – in some instances - on or after day 8. More information about [quarantine testing](#) is available
- [complete a passenger locator form](#) upon arrival
- check whether the country they are travelling from is a [‘red list’](#) country, meaning they will need to complete their quarantine in a [managed quarantine hotel](#). These students should see the guidance for students who have been in, or transited through, a 'red list' 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 for arrivals from some countries (otherwise referred to as 'red' countries) as part of measures taken to protect the UK from new strands of COVID-19. The [‘red list’](#) will be regularly updated.

British and Irish Nationals, or third country nationals with residence rights in the UK - including international students - will still be able to enter the UK if they have been in or transited through a 'red' country in the last 10 days, but they will be required to [quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel](#) on arrival for ten days. Residence rights 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 EU Settlement Scheme ('EUSS') leave.

Individuals who have been in, or transited through, a 'red list' country in the last 10 days and who are not British or Irish Nationals, or third country nationals with residence rights in the UK will not be granted entry to the country.

The cost of quarantining in a hotel will be borne by the traveller. Students must book the managed quarantine package in advance of travelling. More information on [booking and staying in a quarantine hotel](#) is available.

Students cannot 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.

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 quarantining in a managed quarantine hotel](#). If they do not believe that their students will be able to satisfy the requirements for managed hotel quarantine, they should consider asking these students to study remotely in the meantime.

UK residents (which includes international HE students due to their visa status) that are facing significant financial hardship as a result of this charge 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 ("Qualco"), 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

All international arrivals who have departed or transited through an [amber list](#) country outside the Common Travel Area should [self-isolate immediately in their own accommodation for 10 days](#) when they arrive in the UK.

When 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 taken within three days of departure - more information on [pre-departure testing](#) is available
- book a [travel 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 check that they do not have COVID-19, students should use the [booking portal](#) to book their travel test package.
- [complete a passenger locator form](#) detailing where they will quarantine upon arrival
- only use public transport if they have no other option
- follow [safer 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, who do not need to quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel, may be able to exit self-isolation early via Test to Release.

International arrivals from amber list countries have the option to reduce their self-isolation period by taking a COVID-19 test from a private testing provider 5 full days after

arriving in England, with a negative result releasing them from the need to self-isolate. Read the [Test to Release for international travel](#) guidance. Look at the [list of providers of tests for Test to Release](#).

Students planning to use the Test to Release scheme must still [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 in 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 [travel 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 welcomed to the UK and are supported on arrival by their chosen university. Universities UK has developed a

[checklist for to support students who are required to self-isolate](#) to use as a guide in developing that support. Further guidance is available on [entering the UK](#).

Travelling to the Devolved Administration(s) 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 an 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 | nidirect](#)

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 make sure they have booked their pre-departure test, completed their passenger locator form and booked their travel test package. Please refer to the arrival 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 and health restrictions.

International students considering coming to study in the UK should be aware that visa concessions for those on Student (or Tier 4) visas allow for the provision of online 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 [visa concessions guidance](#) that international students who commenced their degree course of 12 months or less in the academic year 2020 – 2021 will remain eligible for the Graduate route as long as they successfully receive a Student visa, travel to the UK, and make their Graduate route application before either their Student visa ends or 27 September 2021, whichever is earlier. Students who begin a course of 12 months or less this autumn or early next year will need to enter by 6 April 2022.

Students who began a course of 12 months or less in the academic year 2020 – 2021 and who have already travelled to the UK during their studies with permission as a Student, will be able to make a Graduate route application, as long as they are present in the UK before the end date of their course and meet the other requirements of the route. The [Graduate route opened for applications](#) on 1 July 2021.

Students who are studying courses lasting longer than a year in length, which are not due to be completed in 2021, will not be prevented from being eligible for the Graduate route as a result of any distance learning that took place either in the UK or overseas between the period of 24 January 2020 6 April 2022 due to the pandemic.

The Government has also confirmed that an additional concession has been re-introduced regarding the '28 day' rule. When a student is applying in the UK to study a further course, it is normally required to commence no more than 28 days after their current period of permission expires. Discretion on this requirement will be exercised if the start date of the new course named on the Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies (CAS) is no later than 27 September 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) while COVID-19 measures are 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 appropriate to do so. Information on [booking coronavirus vaccination appointments](#) is available.

If international students have further questions regarding vaccines, they 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 holiday in [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 should consult the relevant [GOV.UK 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 for those who have participants who are already overseas.

Turing Scheme mobilities will take place from September 2021. As part of the Withdrawal Agreement, legacy activity involving UK-based students on Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps agreed ahead of the end of the Transition Period will continue. Therefore, Turing Scheme and Erasmus+ mobilities will both be in operation during the 2021/22 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 ready to make quick changes to projects and mobilities, consider delaying mobilities 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 entering the UK to begin or resume an exchange, or UK participants who are re-entering the UK after a period overseas participating in an exchange need to ensure all of their 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 procedure 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 rely on the local health system
- If they need to return early from their placement, they should contact their home provider to let them know 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 cover or would like further reassurance, 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 areas within 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 residents in university- managed accommodation. It is likely that where households follow good practice 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 fresh air of common areas; frequent handwashing using soap and water; limiting the use of sharing surfaces or objects 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 visitors among other aspects of co-living. This guidance also provides advice on how to minimise transmission within shared accommodation, where someone has suspected symptoms or tests positive. 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 continue to seek to identify 'households', which will form the units by which they will manage any response to a suspected or confirmed positive case. Providers' approach to deciding what constitutes a household will depend on the physical layout of the accommodation, taking into account who shares a kitchen or bathroom. A household in halls of residence is normally considered to be those students living in the same flat, or on the same floor, 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). There should be an easily accessible record of who is in each of these provider-defined households, and students should understand what constitutes their household for the purposes of any guidance on interactions within and between households.

Students living in halls of residence, or Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO), who 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.

Opening of facilities and buildings

From Step 4 of the government's COVID-19 roadmap, buildings and facilities can open as normal. Providers should follow Guidance on [working safely during the COVID-19 outbreak](#).

Teaching and learning environments

Guidance on [working safely during the COVID-19 outbreak](#) is relevant to the HE estate. This guidance points out that the Health and Safety Executive may take action to improve control of workplace risks if needed, for example through the issue of enforcement notices to help secure improvements.

Laboratories

Find information about [working safely during the COVID-19 outbreak in the guidance on laboratories and research facilities](#). The same considerations should be applied to laboratory science teaching as well.

University libraries

We expect university libraries to continue to remain open to provide library services, including study places in a COVID-secure way.

HE providers should follow the [NHS Test and Trace guidance](#), which applies to university libraries as well as public libraries.

Libraries Connected has drawn up [guidance for public libraries](#) to support reopening, which may also be relevant for university libraries.

Sports training, teaching and activity

HE providers may have programmes designed for 'elite' athletes (for example, athletes on elite development pathways). In such cases, the [guidance on returning to training for elite sport](#) will be relevant.

All indoor and outdoor sport and physical activity, including extra-curricular sport, is permitted. Those responsible for indoor and outdoor sporting facilities should follow the [providers of grassroots sport and gym leisure facilities guidance](#).

Performing arts

Activities can be undertaken in line with guidance on [working safely during COVID-19 in the performing arts](#) which applies to both professionals and non-professionals.

Educational visits and field trips

Following Step 4, there will be 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 list countries from Step 4. Providers should be aware that the travel list (and broader international travel policy) is subject to change and green list countries may be moved into amber or red. The travel lists may change during a visit and travellers 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 exchanges section in this guidance. We expect providers 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.



Department
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