



GUIDANCE

Further education: coronavirus

Changes to learning, exams, and attending schools and colleges during the coronavirus pandemic.

Part of:
[Funding and finance for students, Further and higher education, coronavirus and Schools: coronavirus](#)

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Are colleges open this autumn?

Yes. Colleges will be able to open but things are likely to work differently for the time being. To help keep learners and staff safe, colleges will be planning to keep contact to a minimum.

For full-time learners this will mean staying in "contact groups" and not mixing with larger groups. For part-time and adult learners this is likely to mean maintaining social distancing of two metres when they are on campus.

Contact your college for more detailed information on what this might mean for you and your course.

Why are the arrangements different for full-time and part-time learners?

Part-time and adult learners often have jobs, including apprentices who attend college for part of their training. This means that they are in contact with more people and this increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

To help ensure colleges can manage this risk, we have asked them to put additional controls in place for these groups of learners.

Will I have to wear face coverings or personal protective equipment (PPE) when I'm at college?

Your college will carry out a risk assessment to decide whether you need to wear a face covering in areas like corridors, where it might not be possible to keep your distance from other people. Your college might also require you to wear PPE in some cases, for example if you're studying a course which involve contact with other people. You can choose to wear a face covering at all times in college if you prefer to.

Your college will be able to give you more information on when and where face coverings or other PPE should be worn.

You can see more information on our [face coverings page](#).

Will I still be doing any of my learning online?

Yes, in many cases your college or learning provider will give you some online learning to do alongside your college-based learning. This will help to cut down on the time you need to spend in college and help keep you safe.

What if I want to carry on learning at home and don't feel safe going into college at all?

Contact your college or other learning provider to talk through your concerns and see what may be possible for your course.

I should be going on a work placement as part of my course, will it still go ahead?

This will depend on the risk assessment carried out by your college or learning provider. You may be able to complete your work placement if your college is content that the workplace is safe for you, and if you are able to keep to two metre social distancing in work and at college.

Contact your college if you have questions about this.

What happens if there's an increase in COVID-19 infections, will colleges close again?

We will be monitoring this closely and it's possible that colleges may have to close for a period of time, if infection rates go up again. All colleges are planning for this situation so that learning can carry on during any future period of lockdown.

Are college buses running?

Please contact your college to find out what the arrangements are in your area.

Can I use public transport to get to college?

You can, but you should only do so if you have no other option. We're currently running reduced services on trains and buses and there is less capacity due to physical distancing, so bear this in mind when planning your journey.

Please consider walking or cycling where possible to help us keep the limited space available on public transport for key workers who need to travel to and from work.

If public transport is your only option, please make sure you follow the guidance below to help us keep you, your fellow passengers and our staff as safe as possible:

- stay 2 metres apart from people outside your household wherever possible
- avoid physical contact and keep the time spent with others within 2 metres as short as possible
- face away from people outside your household
- avoid touching surfaces onboard as much as possible
- avoid eating onboard, if possible
- wash your hands thoroughly or use hand sanitiser before and after travelling

Do I have to wear a face covering when travelling to college?

You must wear a face covering when travelling on public transport in Wales. For more information, see our [public transport guidance](#).

If you are travelling on dedicated college transport, or transport that's shared between your college and schools, some areas and some bus companies have policies of requiring face coverings for all passengers. You should check this with your college.

What are colleges and training providers doing to make sure it's safe to return?

Every college and training provider must complete detailed risk assessments and thorough planning before inviting learners and staff to return.

This includes:

- looking at their buildings to make sure that they can follow social distancing requirements
- putting guidance in place for staff and learners
- planning timetables so that they can manage the numbers of people involved
- stepping up their cleaning and disinfecting arrangements

If you have specific questions, contact your college or training provider who will be able to give you details of their arrangements.

I had a shielding letter and am classed as "extremely vulnerable", should I attend college?

We 'paused' shielding in August and this means that you can return to college.

If you have concerns about this, talk to your college to see what support is available for you. You may also want to consult your doctor to get advice on how you can stay safe.

I live with someone who was shielding, should I attend college?

Yes, you can attend college, but if you have concerns about the risks of doing so, talk to your college or training provider about your situation.

I'm concerned about whether it's safe for me to go into college, what should I do?

Talk to your college or training provider in the first instance; they will be able to discuss your concerns and tell you what measures have been put in place to manage risks around COVID-19.

If you don't feel comfortable in returning at this time, your college or training provider may be able to make arrangements for you to learn at home, depending on your course.

What can I do to help keep myself safe while attending college, during travel and when I return home?

There are a number of things you can do to keep yourself and other safe:

- Be careful to keep your distance, including in areas like halls, canteens, entrances and exits as well as in your classroom or workshop. If your college tells you to stay in a contact group with other learners studying the same kind of course, make sure you stay within the group
- Think about how you travel to your college or training centre and try to avoid public transport if possible
- Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly throughout the day and when you get home
- If you see another learner not following social distancing guidelines, report them to a member of staff at your college or training centre
- If you feel unwell, tell your college or training provider immediately, go home, and stay there for 14 days. The main symptoms of Covid-19 are:
 1. a high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
 2. a new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
 3. a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Will Education Maintenance Allowance or Welsh Government Learning Grant payments still continue?

Yes, colleges are allowed to continue EMA and WGLG (FE) payments for eligible learners during the COVID-19 pandemic, at their discretion. Learner absence for reasons of illness, self-isolation or college closure can all be treated as authorised absences. Please contact your college if you require more information.

Learners can apply for EMA for academic year 2020/21. The deadline is 31 August 2021, however, please be aware that the timescales for processing applications may be a little longer than usual. Applications can be downloaded from [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/ema](#) or contact your college to ask for an application form.

Please remember that EMA payments can only be made for school and college term times. EMA payments are paid fortnightly.

WGLG (FE) applications for academic year 2020/21 must be received by Student Finance Wales within 9 months of starting your course. Applications can be downloaded from [www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/fe/wglg](#) or contact your college to ask for an application form.

WGLG (FE) payments are paid termly.

What support will be available for learners who don't have access to computers at home?

Individual colleges and learning providers are taking action to help ensure that learners can access e-learning, for example through loaning laptops to learners who do not have facilities at home. Learners should be able to get further information from their learning provider.

We have provided some funding to colleges and other learning providers to buy laptops and other equipment to help learners who don't have their own.

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