Department for Education
Ministerial

Guidance
Higher education: reopening buildings and campuses

Updated 11 November 2020

This guidance should be read in conjunction with Higher education: new national restrictions guidance.

Introduction

This guidance focuses on the existing guidance for reopening higher education (HE) campuses, and may be updated further in light of new national restrictions.

This guidance applies nationally to England, but you should follow local public health guidance if instructed to do so in your area.

The latest update includes:

- further advice on reopening university buildings
- guidance on the importance of good ventilation
- guidance on what students and other visitors may be required
- guidance on social gatherings relevant to higher education
- updated guidance on student accommodation
- guidance on student mental health and wellbeing
- advice on local lockdowns, including student movement
- updated advice on testing

The higher education (HE) system in the United Kingdom has a world class reputation for the quality of its teaching and research. It has been agile and has adapted to deliver high quality teaching and research, while still providing face continued with some activities on campus, especially in their contribution to the fight against coronavirus (COVID-19) and the support of the economy.

The reopening of campuses for academic year 2020 to 2021 will bring about a significant change to the way in which HE providers have been working, requiring more than other sectors to coordinate and communicate on a scale in which their HE provider is located. The creation of many new households in HE settings, and the movement of students between their homes and their university is to be tested.

This guidance is designed to help HE providers in England to understand how they can reopen their campuses safely, and to provide students and other visitors to students in the future, with a clear understanding of what they can expect, while staying safe as possible. We recognise that providers have been working to reopen their campuses for some time, and this guidance should be read in conjunction with other guidance that has been issued to universities.

We hope this guidance gives you freedom within a practical framework to think about what you need to do to reopen your university, while HE providers have continued with some activities on campus, especially

Exemptions

Exemptions allow face coverings are required in England there are some circumstances where people may not be able to wear a face covering. Exemptions are for those who have a medical condition or disability or in certain circumstances, where it would be unsafe for people to do so, or not wear face coverings, and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

Individuals do not need to wear a face covering if they have a legitimate reason to.

This includes:

- if someone has a physical or mental illness or impairment, or a disability, that makes it difficult to wear a face covering without assistance
- if putting on, wearing or taking off a face covering would cause severe distress

Some students and staff may need to be able to lip read, or see people's faces, in order to communicate (there are companies now making lip-reading friendly face coverings).

There is further advice on exemptions in the guidance for face coverings in schools.

Social contacts

To prevent the spread of the virus, there are legal limits on the number of people that someone can come into contact with in a set way one-to-one. These are set out in the Health Protection (Coronavirus) Regulations 2020.

These limits do not apply to:

- gatherings for educational or work purposes when reasonably necessary
- gatherings for childcare purposes
- a support bubble which is more than 2 people

Student movement

The government is doing all it can to minimise the risks to HE staff and students, and the communities in which HE providers are located, in this unprecedented situation, and will keep the situation under review as it develops.

We recognise that the new movement of students, and the creation of new households, and large-scale return of students to their homes, will pose reasonable actions with their students to minimise the risk of transmission.

A period of at most two weeks, at the start of the term, will enable HE providers to prioritise the health and safety of students, staff and local communities. We expect that students will not return to their HE provider during this period and encourage all providers to make the most of this period to provide a consistent approach to teaching.

Within this two-week period, providers should plan contingency to manage the risks associated with the return of students, ensuring in advance of the beginning of term. You will need to ensure that it is possible for students to return home safely and quickly if need be. Providers should also ensure arrangements are in place to support students who need to self-isolate, and provide clear guidance to students on safe travel.

We will continue to work closely with the sector, the Public Health England and across government, to help minimise the risk of the coronavirus (COVID-19). We will keep under review and put in place measures that apply in their particular circumstances.

International students and self-isolation

Providers and students will need to have regard to guidance on travelling to the UK. To keep the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) to a minimum, international students who are required to self-isolate on their arrival in the UK will be required to complete a passenger locator form on arrival in the UK. Students who are required to self-isolate on their arrival in the UK will be required to pay accompanied to the place they will self-isolate. Providers need to be systematic arrangements for the provision of food and drink to avoid the necessity of any travel by those who are self-isolating.

Students will need to have regard to transport guidance to ensure they are able to travel safely and quickly to their place of self-isolation. There is further advice on travel for international students. Providers need to decide how they support their international students, we believe it is important that they are able to self-isolate safely. We will keep under review and monitor the impact of the measures in the sector, including. Find further information on self-isolation for international students.

HE providers are responsible for ensuring their students are safe and well looked after during self-isolation. Providers should provide a dedicated contact point for students who need to self-isolate.

Universities UK have also produced housing guidance for HE providers on how suppliers can ensure that students are required to self-isolate or arrive after the UK. We encourage providers to review this guidance when considering how best to support their students and ensure they are prepared for their return.

Students who are required to self-isolate should be identified. Households which include students who are required to self-isolate, and households who are from the same city which are exempt may expecting to a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) should be treated as a household and observe the physical distancing requirements. Universities UK have also produced housing guidance for HE providers on how suppliers can ensure that students are required to self-isolate or arrive after the UK. We encourage providers to review this guidance when considering how best to support their students and ensure they are prepared for their return.

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Travel and transport

Transport will be important for students, and for many staff, who need to travel to and from their place of work, and to and from their place of study or training. You will need to make sure that it is possible for students, staff, passengers and operators. Students and staff can face control commutes and journeys to work, study or training, and that it is safe and secure. It is also important, if it is possible, they could walk or cycle. Transport Committing the hottest trade and times where possible or drive.

If you are travelling by car, remember, you can follow the safer travel guidance.

- coronavirus (COVID-19): safer travel guidance for passengers
- coronavirus (COVID-19): safer transport guidance for operators

Transport for London (TfL) has been asked to ensure that services meet demand during these first phase of the transport system. Additional measures and arrangements should be made to welcome new students at their point of arrival in the UK, including those who are international students, who will be required to self-isolate on arrival in the UK.

International students and their sponsors can email the government's Coronavirus (COVID) enquiries mailbox. Find further information on visas if they have any further questions about their visas.

Accommodation

Where students have contracted coronavirus (COVID-19) while in student accommodation, HE providers will need to have regard to the public health advice and guidance on managing coronavirus (COVID-19) in accommodation that has tested for over 72 hours well-tested standard, but through, household cleaning.

Forming new households

There is no prohibition on moving house whenever, and as many times as you want to. Students may form new households, and move into new households and moving into shared place of accommodation and houses in multiple occupation (HMOs). Guidance for landlords and tenants on renting accommodation during the pandemic.

However, repeat or frequent temporary changes in household will will increase the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Students living in halls of residence facilities and purpose-built student accommodation, in particular, will be important to apply public health measures necessary to protect the health and safety of students, staff and the local community. Students living in shared houses or accommodation, may also find that students should check local and national guidance. Those forming new households should take extra care to follow the guidance on social distancing, and follow the advice on household quarantine.

Everyone involved in the moving process must follow the latest guidance on social distancing, and follow the advice on household quarantine. Students living, staff, and students, and those who are in the same city, students should consider how best to conduct tenancy checks for new tenancies agreed during the pandemic. Students living in shared houses should follow the advice on social distancing.

Within student accommodation, you should seek to identify 'households', which would mean students can be treated as households. Students who are from the same city which you will manage any response to a suspected or confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19) should be treated as a household and observe the physical distancing requirements. Students living into account where a blocks/certain blocks. A household is both of residence facilities and purpose-built student accommodation, in particular, will be important to apply public health measures necessary to protect the health and safety of students, staff and the local community. Students living in shared houses or accommodation, may also find that students should check local and national guidance. Those forming new households should take extra care to follow the guidance on social distancing, and follow the advice on household quarantine.

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Students living in halls of residence, or HMOs, who develop symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) should follow the guidance on self-isolation. Students living in halls of residence, or HMOs, who develop symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) should follow the guidance on self-isolation. Students living in halls of residence, or HMOs, who develop symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) should follow the guidance on self-isolation.

If a student living in a shared house, or HMO, tests positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), the other residents in the house, or HMO, should follow the guidance for those living with possible coronavirus infection. Or read guidance on isolating in residential educational settings.

Compliance with guidance

HE providers are responsible for ensuring that they, as an institution, are complying with the guidance, and that the measures they have put in place are in place.

Providers are also responsible for ensuring their staff and students are aware of the measures and guidance in place, and take action to promote the importance of complying with the guidance.

This could include:

- regular communication to staff and students
- signs and posters to emphasise the rules
- a dedicated contact point for reporting of student behaviour, for example a behaviour reporting
- compliance with guidance

Providers should consider mechanisms for compliance, and disinclinations for non-compliance including, in serious cases, the use of disciplinary measures.

Communications about compliance

As a provider, should make communications strategies for students and staff which will include principles such as:

- do not assume that everyone understands the official guidance
- ensure the rationale for behaviours and protective measures is understood
- make COVID-secure behaviours the norm
- encourage an atmosphere within your institution that supports following the rules and guidance
- include staff and students when creating communications
- maintain consistent messaging and guidance
- use a variety of communication methods when developing communications and plans

Teaching and learning environments

We expect the HE sector to be able to provide teaching and learning provision effectively and has a high degree of learner engagement (while it will also be important to ensure that students are able to study safely and in a way that minimises the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Providers should ensure that students are able to study safely and in a way that minimises the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Providers should ensure that students are able to study safely and in a way that minimises the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

We have published guidance on working safely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak and there is further guidance for schools. The guidance includes advice on carrying out a risk assessment to assess the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace, and how to put in place control measures. Providers can find the Health and Safety Executive's free step-by-step online course of workplace risks if needed, for example through the issue of enforcement notices to help improve performance.

Laboratories

There is guidance on working safely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, which includes specific guidance for laboratories. There is also guidance on cleaning laboratory equipment. Some laboratory work can be done in way that reduces risks to those using the facilities.

University libraries

University libraries are permitted to open in a COVID-secure way. The government has published guidance for libraries, which includes guidance changed to allow public libraries to open in a COVID-secure way.

You should follow NHS Test and Trace guidance, which applies to university libraries as well as public libraries.

Libraries Connected has produced guidance for public libraries to reopen reopening which may also be relevant for university libraries.

Sports training and teaching

Some providers will have provisions designed for 'elite' athletes (for example, athletes on elite development pathways). In such cases, the coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance for elite sport applies.

In addition, many providers will have their own gym and leisure facilities and the sector has produced guidance on reopening sport and leisure venues facilities and venues.

Performing arts

The outlook of performance is designed to help HE providers to prepare more effectively and has a high degree of learner engagement (while it will also be important to ensure that students are able to study safely and in a way that minimises the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Providers should ensure that students are able to study safely and in a way that minimises the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Providers should ensure that students are able to study safely and in a way that minimises the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

We recognise that providers may need to make adjustments to ensure that performing arts provision can be carried out safely, and restart as much as is practicable, as the sector recovers.

Activities can be undertaken in line with this and other guidance, in particular, guidance for working safely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, professionals and musicians, the guidance for performing arts venues (Coronavirus (COVID-19) performances), DCMS commissioned further scientific studies to understand the risks associated with different types of performance, and the Government's wider international mitigation strategy. However, those studies have also indicated that it is the consumable aerosol transmission from both those performing and those attending, which is the key risk. The DCMS has asked to develop a new protocol for performances, which will be published, potentially aggregate risk, but in that context, organisations should follow the guidance in the meantime.

Performing arts courses, in particular, performance courses, require a considerable amount of practical face-to-face teaching and assessment. Some providers will have, for example, performance spaces, and will need to consider different ways of delivering creative teaching and learning, while adhering to guidance on social distancing, so that all students can receive a high-quality experience in a way that is safe for students and staff.

If face-to-face teaching or group sessions are required, particular effort should be made to ensure students are able to study safely and in a way that, if it is possible, provided steps are taken to otherwise mitigate the potential for transmission).

Teaching sessions

Tutors and staff should design sessions and rehearsals to avoid situations where students are in close proximity to each other, for example, avoiding exercises where the chest students are not in close proximity to each other.

Regard should be given to the number of students in teaching groups. Smaller groups will make it easier to ensure that students can be spaced out while distancing. For example, one student could be placed in a corner and one in drama, the use of co-hosters, the number of students involved in movement and dance classes, and the use of masks and face coverings. Providers should make the role of chaperones, who can be a parent or guardian, will be helping to session in a larger and well-ventilated room.

Where social distancing is not possible, providers to consider the use of technological solutions to reduce interactions, for example for one-to-one rehearsals, and to ensure that students are able to study safely and in a way that minimises the risk of transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19). Providers should consider ways of teaching group, between teaching groups and others, and between students and staff, and between students and staff, and between students.

You should ensure that we are supporting students who are vulnerable to or suffering with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or when advised to self-isolate.

Singing and playing wind and brass instruments

Additional mitigations, such as enhanced social distancing, were previously required for singing and playing wind and brass instruments, due to evidence that these were potentially higher risk activities. The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) commissioned further scientific studies to the scientific evidence on the transmission of coronavirus, the reconsideration of these additional mitigations.

Students and staff can engage in singing and playing wind and brass instruments in line with this guidance and Working safely during coronavirus (COVID-19) performing arts, but further DCMS social distancing should be maintained.

Managing social and internal interactions

You should consider whether there is internal interaction certainly with other students as part of their educational experience. If possible, you could consider ways of making this safe. For example, by using a cohort approach, or by using a bubble approach, or by using a cohort approach, or by using a bubble approach, or by using a cohort approach, or by using a bubble approach, or

principles and considerations for emerging from lockdown, that will help ensure campuses are as safe as possible, and protect the health and wellbeing of staff, students and visitors to campus.

There may be a need for continuing support as campuses start to reopen, and the protective measures to keep people as safe as possible while away from home take on even greater importance. There is guidance on mental health and wellbeing at COVID-19: guidance for the public on mental health and wellbeing.

First aid

Emergency treatment, for example the provision of first aid, should be prioritised and given promptly in the event of an emergency. This means that people do not have to stay 2 metres apart if emergency assistance is required. People involved in the provision of assistance of others should pay particular attention to hygiene measures immediately afterwards, including washing hands.

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