

Dear student,

I hope this email finds you safe and well.

Next week the current period of greater national restrictions will end, and London will move back into tier 2 restrictions. I imagine everyone is looking forward to a little more freedom. We will be able to reopen our gym and most of our sports facilities, and our catering outlets will all be open as normal. It also means we are able to offer more [events and activities](#) for you – do keep an eye on the calendar of activities as it is updated all the time. Remember that under tier 2 restrictions up to six people from different households can meet outside, so do take the opportunity to get out and socialise a bit more in line with the national guidelines.

Covid-19 cases among our communities

At time of writing, we have just ten active cases of Covid-19 among students (none of whom are in our residences), and four among staff. This is a direct result of everyone following our [Covid Code](#) and government guidelines. Well done everyone! However, please don't get complacent, particularly as we come out of the greater restrictions – remember to maintain social distancing, wear a face covering when required, and wash/sanitise hands frequently.

Keeping case numbers low in our communities is also a result of the excellent work undertaken by our Health and Safety and Estates teams, to keep our campuses Covid-secure. I am delighted that the leadership and hard work of the entire Health and Safety team has been rewarded by the [nomination for a national award](#)! Well done to everyone involved.

There has been some really encouraging news recently about vaccines for Covid-19. We are working closely with Government and with our local authorities to provide some of the infrastructure to roll out the vaccines to the general public. I will keep you updated about this important work to support the national effort to fight Covid-19.

Covid-19 tests for students and staff who do not have coronavirus symptoms: booking now open

As I mentioned last week, we are taking part in the government scheme to provide Covid-19 testing for students and staff. These tests are entirely voluntary; no one has to be tested if they don't want to be. We are taking part in the scheme because it can provide reassurance to students and staff who are tested that they are unlikely to have Covid-19 at the time of the tests. This can be helpful to anyone planning to travel home for the Christmas and New Year break, or looking to visit family and friends.

The testing is aimed particularly at students living on our campuses, and students and staff who travel regularly to our campuses. Testing will be available from 1-14 December, and we will have test facilities at our Charterhouse Square, Mile End and Whitechapel campuses.

If you would like to take advantage of the scheme, ideally you should take two tests, two to three days apart. You can book your tests now. To book, and to find out more, please visit qmul.ac.uk/coronavirus/book-a-test.

It is very important to emphasise that these tests will be for students and staff who do not have any coronavirus symptoms. If you [have symptoms](#), you should [book an NHS Covid-19 test or arrange for a postal test](#) as soon as possible. You must not attend our on-campus testing facilities if you have any coronavirus symptoms, as doing so could put students and other staff at significant risk.

Travelling at Christmas

Some of you have written to me asking about when you can travel home at Christmas, following widespread media coverage about the so-called 'student travel window'. Please be reassured that once this period of greater restrictions ends next week, and your in-person educational activities have ended, you can travel when you want to, as long as you abide by Government regulations in place at the time.

Some of you will be looking to travel overseas over the Christmas break. Please be aware that the Covid-19 testing we will be offering is very unlikely to be accepted by airlines or by the countries you are travelling to. I would advise those of you looking to travel overseas to check the particular requirements of the country and the airline, including the type of test required. I would also advise anyone travelling within the UK to plan their journey in advance to ensure they can get to their destination.

Plans for next semester

We are looking forward to welcoming you back [in January](#) and offering you a blended education, similar to this semester, with a mix of online and in-person activities. Please aim to join us back on our campuses in January, if you are able to travel safely. If you can't travel, you should be able to continue to follow your course online. Please note that for a few of our programmes, the in-person activities are critical elements of the course. In these cases your School or Institute will contact you directly.

I will write to you again next week, or earlier if there are significant developments. In the meantime, please do look after yourselves and each other and stay safe.

Best wishes,

Colin

Professor Colin Bailey, CBE, FEng, BEng, PhD, CEng, FICE, FIStructE, MIFireE
President and Principal | Queen Mary University of London | Mile End Road | London | E1 4NS

