

Dear student,

I hope that this email finds you safe and well. I know many of you will be taking assessments now: do please look after yourselves while you study, and take breaks to socialise and wind down, and do reach out if you need any support. If you are able to travel to our campuses – and remember all students can now return - please come and take part in some of the [on-campus activities](#) organised by the Students' Union and University. There are some great activities to try! There are also online activities if you are not able to come on to our campuses.

With the easing of national Covid-19 restrictions, you can now gather in groups of up to six from different households or two households inside, and in groups of up to 30 outside. I'm delighted this means you have more opportunities to study together and to socialise! We are looking to make the most of this easing of restrictions with the activities on offer for you. Of course, if you are involved in a timetabled activity that is part of your programme, you can meet inside in larger groups (there are no restrictions) up to the Covid-safe capacity for the room that is being used.

Change in face covering policy

Following the easing of national Covid-19 restrictions this week we have updated our University risk assessment, and made a slight change to our face covering policy. Face coverings no longer need to be worn when you are sat down working or studying, as they were previously in some study areas. So now, if you are sat down studying in our libraries, you can take off your face covering, which hopefully will be more comfortable. However, please do continue to wear a face covering when you are moving about indoors on our campuses. It is very important that you continue to wear your face covering when you are moving about indoors: if we cannot maintain that rule, we will have to go back to requiring them to be worn all the time.

Educational offer for next year

Some students have been asking about our educational offer for next year, and so I've focused on that for the next three points.

Our educational offer next year will be a mix of on-campus and online education. We know from feedback how much students enjoy on-campus education; please be reassured that every programme will have some on-campus education for you to enjoy, combined with the best of online learning. On-campus education is likely to be a mix of seminars, small-group teaching, practical sessions and laboratory work, depending on the disciplinary area.

Should I come to campus for the start of Semester 1?

Yes. We expect and encourage all our students to come to our campuses for the start of Semester 1.

We know from feedback how much students value on-campus education, and delight in the opportunity to learn and work together in person, which is so important not just for education purposes but also for all our general well-being. We have been reminded over the last year that learning is a social activity, and that bringing students and academics together in person can enable creativity, diversity of thought and excitement that is possible, but difficult, to recreate perfectly online. We have also all been made painfully aware over the last year of the significant detrimental impacts on mental and physical wellbeing that lack of social contact can bring. For all these reasons, we look forward to welcoming you all back for the beginning of the first Semester, recognising of course that some PGT and PhD students will be with us throughout the summer.

What about international travel restrictions?

All students are encouraged to join us on campus for the start of Semester 1. We are however aware there may be ongoing international travel disruption in the Autumn. Please do plan to travel to our campuses for the start of Semester 1 if you can, but if you cannot travel to join us at the beginning of the Semester, you will be able to follow your course purely online. You will be very welcome, and should plan, to join us on our campuses as soon as you are able to travel.

Cases in our communities and keeping safe

I'm very pleased to tell you we currently have no cases of Covid-19 in our student and staff communities, and the number of cases in our local boroughs, including Tower Hamlets, remains very low. It is of course still important, however, that we all keep safe. I strongly encourage you to register with a GP, if you haven't already, so that you receive your invitation for a vaccination when the time comes. Please do have the vaccination when it is offered to you, this will ensure that you, your families, friends, and everyone else will remain safe.

When you are on our campuses, please remember to follow our [Covid Code](#), and also remember to take a lateral flow test for Covid-19 regularly. You can now either collect lateral flow tests from our [test sites](#) to do at home, or [book a Covid-19 test](#) at one of our centres up to twice a week depending on how frequently you are on campus. The Mile End test site, and the pick up point for lateral flow tests to do at home, will move from the Octagon to Mucci's from Monday 24 May.

I know that some of you have friends and family across the world in countries where the situation in relation to Covid-19 is not as positive as it is in the UK. Some countries are really struggling at the moment and our thoughts are with those of you who have friends and relatives in countries that are suffering. Do please look after yourselves, and remember we are here to support you - [do reach out for help if you need it](#).

I will write again when there is more news to share.

Best wishes,

Colin

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