

Dear student,

I hope this email finds you safe and well.

You will have seen in the media this morning various announcements from Government about students travelling home for the Christmas period, and about mass testing for Covid-19 for students. We are waiting for further details from Government on these issues, and I am writing to you today to explain what this means for you based on the latest information from Government.

### **Travelling home at the end of term**

Some of you will be thinking about travelling at the end of term, and others will be planning to stay on or near our campuses over the Christmas period. Please be aware that Queen Mary will remain open over the Christmas holiday, and support will be available for students who stay living in our residences or who are looking to use our facilities.

At the moment, whilst we are living through this four-week period of extra restrictions, I should draw your attention to [the Government's guidelines](#) about not travelling from your term-time address to your permanent home before 2 December. You are however free to travel to and from our campuses for educational purposes or to undertake research: please do continue to travel to our campuses as you have been so far.

Today's announcements were particularly aimed at those students who are thinking about travelling home for the Christmas period. If you are planning to travel at the end of term, and were unlucky enough to catch Covid-19 near the time you intended to travel, or be in close contact with someone who had it, under current government national guidelines you should not travel until you had finished the necessary self-isolation period. The Government, through their latest announcement, is therefore suggesting that [students may wish to plan to travel home earlier](#), in the first week of December. This is purely your choice. To facilitate any students who wish to travel, in-person educational activities will stop at Queen Mary on 9 December, and all education activities from then to the end of term will be online. The University will remain fully open after this date, including our libraries, all study spaces, research facilities and University-run catering facilities.

There are a very small number of courses where the in-person elements of the course planned after 9 December are critical for students to achieve their learning outcomes. In these exceptional cases, Schools and Institutes will communicate separately with their students.

Healthcare students who are on placements are considered essential workers and can remain in their placements until the end of term.

### **Plans for next semester**

We will be delivering a blended education for next semester, similar to Semester A. The backbone of your course will be online, to enable students who can't travel to join us to be able to achieve their learning objectives. Similar to this Semester, there will also be in-person educational activities available for all students who can join us on our campuses. Please note that for a small number of courses the in-person educational activities are critical for students to achieve their learning outcomes. In these cases, the School or Institute will communicate separately with their students.

## Research facilities

Our research facilities are not affected by today's announcement and will remain fully open.

## Mass testing at universities

This morning's announcement also indicated that voluntary mass testing for students who do not have coronavirus symptoms would shortly be available to those universities who have a high number of Covid-19 cases. At the moment, we have 18 cases of Covid-19 among staff and students. We are waiting for further guidance from Government about possible voluntary mass testing for students. I will write to you again as soon as I have more details from the Government about this.

Please remember if you have [symptoms of coronavirus](#), you should visit an NHS Covid testing facility or arrange for a postal test.

## Impact of restrictions on staff and student welfare

I realise everyone is living under a lot of strain, with the current greater level of restrictions and with ever changing news and guidance such as we have seen today. I am working closely with Government, including to ensure that students are not treated any differently to the general public.

Please do look out for each other, and remember [we are there to support you](#). Do stay safe, on and off our campuses, and follow our [Covid Code](#).

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

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