

Dear student,

I hope that this email finds you safe and well. The summer is upon us: however you are spending your summer, I hope you are able to make time for a break and to recharge your batteries.

The Government has now confirmed that [all Covid-19 restrictions will end on 19 July](#), although we must remain cautious and vigilant. The Department of Education (DoE) has published [updated guidance for universities \[PDF\]](#), and in this message I will go through what this means for you. We are now in the process of updating the University risk assessment, which will include the points below.

Face coverings

Our face covering policy will be updated to reflect current government guidance. At this time, for the wellbeing of all our students and staff, we encourage you to continue to wear face coverings when moving around inside buildings on our campuses if they become crowded. We will keep our face covering policy under constant review on a weekly basis working with Government and our local Directors of Public Health. This will include a full review before the beginning of Semester 1.

You can collect a free Queen Mary face covering from our libraries from mid-August onwards.

Social distancing, ventilation and cleaning

All social distancing requirements will be removed from 19 July. We will be removing our social distancing signage from around our campuses: there will be no more 'please do not sit here' signs! We will reconfigure our study spaces including our libraries where needed to fully maximise study space for students. We have received good feedback from students about the booking facility for library-managed study spaces and so we will keep this in place, to ensure that students can be certain of finding a space that is suitable for them.

We will continue to ensure that all our buildings and rooms are well ventilated.

We put significant cleaning regimes in place to help reduce the spread of Covid-19, and we will continue to ensure a high standard of cleaning across our campuses.

Testing

It is very important that we all continue to take two lateral flow tests a week. These tests are for people who do not have Covid-19 symptoms. You can do a test at one of our [onsite testing centres](#), or through using a home test kit. You can pick up home testing kits from our onsite testing centres. If you do not currently live near our campuses, you can also [order lateral flow tests online](#). If you use a home testing kit, please make sure you [register the result](#).

Self-isolation

Anyone who tests positive for Covid-19 must by law self-isolate for 10 days. If you contract Covid-19 you should email studenthealth@qmul.ac.uk, and of course look after yourself! If you contract Covid-19 and are worried, please [contact the NHS](#) and reach out to us if you need support. There is some support from Government for people who are self-isolating, including financial support for those on low incomes. Please see [visit the NHS website](#) for more information.

At the moment, close contacts of someone who has contracted Covid-19 are required by law to self-isolate for 10 days. If this applies to you, you will be contacted by [NHS Test and Trace](#). From 19 August, adults who have received both doses of a vaccination, and under 18s, will no longer need to self-isolate.

Vaccination

It is really important that everyone accepts their invitation for a vaccination: the vaccination programme has gone extremely well in the UK and is the reason why Government feels able to remove the Covid-19 restrictions. Being fully vaccinated protects you and everyone else around you. It also means you can obtain an [NHS COVID Pass](#). This will allow you to travel abroad, and may also enable you to get in to some public events. If you have not been vaccinated, [visit the NHS website](#) for information on how to book an appointment, and [visit the council website](#) for more information about drop-in centres and vaccination events in Tower Hamlets. If you have had one jab, make sure you book for the second as soon as you can. We are in discussions with our local public health partners to host a vaccination centre on our Mile End campus. This should be in place at the from the beginning of the first semester, and will enable any student or staff member who has not been vaccinated to get a jab as soon as possible. Please don't wait though – if you haven't had a jab, [please do get one](#) as soon as you can!

Implications of the new guidance for your student experience next year

Our plans for your educational offer next year are unchanged by this new guidance: we will be providing a mix of on-campus and online education. Every programme will have on-campus education for you to enjoy, combined with the best of online learning. You should be planning to come back for the start of Semester 1 to enjoy your in-person education. On-campus education is likely to be a mix of seminars, small-group teaching, practical sessions and laboratory work, depending on the disciplinary area. We will be sending you more details about your timetable nearer the start of Semester 1.

In relation to the wider student experience, all our campus facilities can now open fully for the start of Semester 1, so you can look forward to an exciting array of social and extra-curricular activities to get involved with! More details will be available near the start of Semester 1.

Impact of possible future change in government guidance on your learning experience

It is of course possible that case numbers may rise either locally or across the UK to an extent that we are required by local or national government to reintroduce restrictions. We have a comprehensive plan in place and can at any point increase any of the controls above should the need arise. We could, for example, change our policy on face coverings, or reintroduce social distancing. If we had to implement a change in social distancing policy, due to government instructions, it may lead to a temporary change in your timetable, and to the balance of on-campus and online education. If this happens, we will communicate the changes to you as quickly as we can. In an extreme scenario where the Government chooses to impose another lockdown, we can of course temporarily switch to purely online education. We can implement these plans quickly, should the need arise. Hopefully however none of these measures will be needed!

Travel

All students should be planning to join us for the beginning of Semester 1. You can of course travel freely within the UK. If you are joining us from overseas, there is some [guidance here for you \[PDF\]](#).

If you are overseas and are worried you won't be able to travel please don't worry, if you can't travel you will be able to follow your course online until such time as you are able to physically join us on campus*. I do however really encourage all of you though to plan to travel and join us as close to the beginning of Semester 1 as possible.

Recognising the costs that international students travelling to join us from countries on the Government's current 'red list' will incur, we are offering to reimburse half the current cost of quarantining in a Government hotel for those students. We are also committed to supporting any student from 'amber list' countries who has to self-isolate in our residences with food packages and the full support of our residential team.

Please also see our guide for students [travelling abroad as part of their course](#). If you have any questions about international travel please have a look at these websites, or email us coronavirus@qmul.ac.uk.

Looking after yourself

The end of Covid restrictions, while welcome, may make some people feel anxious. Please remember you can continue to wear a face covering if you wish and also that simple everyday activities - regular hand washing, following the Government's 'catch it, bin it, kill it' advice - will all help prevent the transmission of any respiratory illness, including Covid-19.

If you are feeling anxious, remember [we are here to support you](#). Do reach out if you would like to talk about any aspect of this email or your time at Queen Mary: we are here to help and support you.

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

Best wishes,

Colin

** Not all SMD students will be able to follow their course 100 per cent online. Affected students should contact their School/Institute.*

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