

Dear student,

I am writing to you with an update on our plans for re-opening some facilities on our campuses, our educational offer for next year and to return to the issue of our Students' Union (SU) desire to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS).

Re-opening some facilities on our campuses

I understand how eager some of our PhD students and other researchers are to get back into laboratories to continue their research, and how much other students want study space and other facilities to be available on campus. The safety of our staff and students is however paramount, and we have just finished developing a University-level risk assessment to guide our work. We are now discussing that risk assessment with our campus trade unions. We are taking a phased approach to re-opening facilities on our campuses; the first phase will be to open some research laboratories, which I expect to be possible in early June. The next phase will be to open some specialist facilities for students, and then other student facilities. I will keep you updated with progress.

Our educational offer for next year

For those who are not graduating, I fully hope to be able to welcome you all back, in person, in September. We realise however there may be travel restrictions still in place and I have already promised you that whether you are able to return to our campuses or not in the Autumn, you will be able to fully access your education. We are in the process of developing a dynamic blended educational offer for the first term, with a backbone education online, and of the world-class quality you rightly expect. You will be able to do all the things you would normally do, in relation to engaging with lectures, seminars, having tutorials and practical work alongside working in groups and on projects. All of these will have a digital version so that everyone, wherever they are, can have full access to their education.

The Students' Union's proposed use of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

I would like to return to the issue of our Students' Union (SU) desire to use the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). As a University, our foremost priority is our students' health and welfare. I cannot however support the SU's request to apply to the CJRS for the sums they are requesting as it is a misuse of the scheme and contravenes the scheme's guidance. The University has provided funding to the SU to cover the amount they could legitimately apply to the CJRS for, which relates to the actual salary costs to run the SU, and students should have been recompensed accordingly. I am worried, however, that some students have not received what they are owed. If you feel you have not been properly paid for work you would have undertaken in the lockdown period, please contact covid19-support@qmul.ac.uk. I am also very sorry that some students have been promised monies by the SU that they were not eligible to receive, and are now facing financial hardship. If you are in this position and are now facing hardship please have a look at our financial assistance scheme, or contact covid19-support@qmul.ac.uk.

Please stay safe, and look after yourself and your loved ones. I will write with a further update shortly.

Best wishes,

Colin

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