



Michelle Donelan MP
Minister of State for Universities

Sanctuary Buildings 20 Great Smith Street Westminster London SW1P 3BT
tel: 0370 000 2288 www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus

22nd February 2021

Dear Students,

I know this continues to be a very challenging time for many of you as you undertake your education during a global pandemic. Throughout this period, I have been working with your provider and engaging with the different Professional Statutory and Regulatory bodies to ensure that all courses lead to vital qualifications.

Today, the Prime Minister announced the roadmap to the reopening of education settings. While we are confident that in-person teaching and learning can be delivered in COVID-secure environments, the mass movement of students across the country poses a risk for the transmission of the virus – particularly because of the higher prevalence and rates of transmission of new variants. This is why we have made the difficult decision to restrict the number of you returning to campus in this period.

At the beginning of term, we prioritised the return to in-person teaching for students on courses which support the pipeline of future critical key workers. We are now allowing providers to invite those of you on practical and creative courses who need access to specialist equipment and facilities (including creative arts subjects) back to in-person teaching and learning from 8 March. If you are not in this group, the Government will review the options for the timing of your return by the end of the Easter holidays. This review will take account of the latest data and will be a key part of the wider roadmap steps. We will give you at least a week's notice ahead of any further reopening.

While we are keen to get you back to in-person teaching, we must all do all we can to minimise the risk of transmission across the country. This includes minimising travel wherever we can, so if you are returning to in-person teaching, please await confirmation from your provider of your return date before making travel plans, and do not return before you are asked to, since some providers may stagger return dates by subject. On return, it is important that you continue to minimise your risk of transmission by continuing to follow government guidance.

While we are still in a period of national restrictions, we ask you to remain where you are until your in-person teaching starts; however, we have asked providers to ensure appropriate support is in place for you if you fall into the following groups:

- International students who have remained in the UK and those who have arrived and do not have alternative accommodation.
- Those requiring additional support, including for mental health.

- Anyone without access to appropriate study spaces or facilities in their vacation accommodation. This also applies to commuter students who (if not able to return to in-person teaching) should only access university resources if they have inadequate study spaces or require additional support, such as mental health provision.
- Those of you who have remained in term time accommodation, but we ask that you only utilise campus resources when you have to in order to reduce footfall on campus.

On return, it is vital that you take part in your provider's testing programme to help to break the chain of transmission and identify asymptomatic infections. You should be tested twice in your first week of return – immediately upon arrival and then again three days later. Thereafter, you should get tested twice weekly wherever possible. We appreciate that different circumstances will apply, and once a week may be appropriate if you only visit campus once a week.

Students travelling from overseas whose courses have been prioritised for return should carefully check the additional entry requirements and restrictions that have been introduced due to coronavirus (COVID-19) before travelling to the UK, including checking whether the country you are travelling from is on the UK's red-list and whether you will be required to quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel for 10 days; please see [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) for more information. Students arriving from countries not on the red list should follow the guidance available [here](#).

For those of you who are yet to return, I recognise the difficulties and disruption that this delay will cause for you and your families who have endured a difficult and uncertain time for the last 11 months of your studies. This financial year, we have provided an additional £70m of hardship funding for providers in England to support you with the cost of accommodation and other costs associated with remote learning. This is available to all students, regardless of whether they are now returning to face-to-face teaching, including international students. Please get in touch with your provider if you could benefit from this and know that we are doing what we can to facilitate your return as soon as it is safe to do so.

I am grateful for your continued patience and cooperation with the measures we have put in place to keep you and your wider community safe. Your education and wellbeing continue to be my top priority, and I want to assure you that we are doing as much as we can to support you. Please continue to access the mental health and pastoral support provided by your institution, should you need to.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michelle Donelan', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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