



Department  
for Education

# **Students returning to, and starting, higher education in Spring Term 2021**

**Guidance for higher education providers**

**February 2021**

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## Latest updates and reviews

On 22 February we updated this guidance. The latest changes include:

- Updated advice on when students can return to campus
- Updated advice on reopening facilities and buildings, including the use of face coverings and ensuring good ventilation
- Updates on asymptomatic testing for students and staff
- Updated advice for those who are clinically extremely vulnerable
- Refreshed advice on the importance of updating and revising risk assessments
- Updated travel guidance for students arriving from within the UK
- Updated guidance for new and returning students travelling from overseas and for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps

## Introduction

Universities and other higher education (HE) providers have worked very hard to provide [COVID-secure teaching and learning](#) to all students.

Evidence collated by SAGE shows that limited, anecdotal evidence from 10 universities suggests that minimal cases of transmission were attributed to face-to-face learning environments. Instances where transmission did occur were associated with guidance not being followed.

Based on the recent ONS data, the risks to higher education staff are similar to those for most other occupations.

At the beginning of term, we prioritised the return to face-to-face teaching for students on courses which had to be delivered in-person and which supported the pipeline of future critical key workers. We are now advising providers that they can resume in-person teaching and learning for students who are studying practical or practice-based (including creative arts) subjects and require specialist equipment and facilities from 8 March. Providers should not ask students to return if their course can reasonably be continued online.

The government will review, by the end of the Easter holidays, the options for timing of the return of remaining students. This review will take account of the latest data and will be a key part of the wider roadmap steps. Students and providers will be given a week's notice ahead of any further return.

The government recognises the difficulties and disruption that this may cause for many students and their families, but our objective remains to reduce transmission by minimising the number of students who return to university and who access university facilities.

As always, when local or national conditions change, HE providers should check, revise and update their risk assessments. Providers should ensure they follow [guidance on shielding and protecting clinically extremely vulnerable people](#).

The Department for Education (DfE) remains grateful for the HE sector's support in making these plans work and understands that a great deal of flexibility will be required, including on the management of assessment and exams.

We will continue to work with providers to put in place asymptomatic testing arrangements for all students on return to/arrival at university, and twice weekly thereafter, to reduce and better manage outbreaks of coronavirus (COVID-19).

## When students can return to campus

Providers should organise the return of students in a way that minimises the need for large numbers of students to travel between households at the same time, as was achieved successfully in December. We encourage providers to work with other local providers to manage the return of students in a way that minimises transport pressures. In addition, providers with high proportions of returning students should consider staggering their return to minimise the numbers of students travelling at the same time.

Students are encouraged to test before they travel back to university, where [community testing](#) facilities are available to them.

Once students have returned to their term-time accommodation they must remain living there unless an exemption to the national restrictions on leaving home and gatherings applies. They must only travel home where they have a legally permitted reason to do so. If students rely on an exemption to travel home (for example if they need to move home temporarily because of illness or mental ill-health), they should ensure that they test as soon as possible on their return to university.

In addition to the students who returned to in-person teaching and learning in January, providers can resume in-person teaching and learning for undergraduate and post-graduate students who are studying practical or practice-based (including creative arts) subjects and require specialist equipment and facilities from 8 March.

Providers should not ask students to return if their course can reasonably be continued online.

As in January, by exception only, a very limited number of additional courses which require Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) assessments and /or other PRSB mandatory activity which is scheduled for the Spring term and which cannot be rescheduled (although the presumption is that in the majority of cases, these will be rescheduled outside the period of national restrictions), can return to in-person teaching.

We appreciate that many providers have already had to compress practical elements of teaching in the autumn term (in part to enable students to return home safely for the holidays), and we are acutely aware of the challenges that this poses to both providers and students. However, in these very challenging times, we must continue to adapt and put in place enhanced measures to reduce transmission rates across the country, while supporting HE students to continue to progress with their courses.

International students who are not already staying on campus should follow the guidance on [new and returning students from overseas](#) section of this guidance.

## House parties

The government has introduced a new £800 fine for those attending house parties, including in halls of residence, which will double for each repeat offence to a maximum level of £6,400. These fines will apply to those who attend illegal gatherings of more than 15 people from outside their household. Providers should ensure that students are aware of what constitutes their designated 'household', particularly if they live within large scale student accommodation.

## Return of remaining students

All remaining courses should continue to be offered online as they have been from the beginning of term. The government will review, by the end of the Easter holidays, the options for timing of the return of remaining students. This review will take account of the latest data and will be a key part of the wider roadmap steps. Students and providers will be given a week's notice ahead of any further return. Providers should not offer in-person teaching before then, or later if further guidance to this effect is issued, and should encourage students to remain at their current accommodation until the resumption of their in-person teaching, wherever possible.

Because of the changing position relating to in-person teaching and learning and occupation of accommodation, students' loan entitlements for the current term will not be reassessed if they are still incurring accommodation costs away from home, meaning that students in receipt of the 'living away from home' loan rate will retain the maintenance loans paid at the start of term, which will be repaid in the usual way. This should help to ensure students have the financial support they need during these exceptional circumstances. Students who are no longer incurring accommodation costs away from home (e.g. because they have exited their contracts, or moved home permanently), or who no longer wish to receive the higher rate of loan, should continue to request reassessment.

We expect providers to help ensure students know when and if they should return to in-person teaching and learning, in line with government guidance. Some other students may also need to return to their term-time accommodation before the resumption of their face-to-face teaching and learning, as set out under "Other students who may need to return to university facilities" below.

Providers should set a clear expectation that all students should access coronavirus (COVID-19) testing immediately on their return to university and on a twice weekly basis thereafter. Those who are returning to placements should follow the testing guidance for their placement setting and undertake a test through their placement provider where offered, or through their university if advised by the placement provider.

To minimise the risk to themselves and others on their return, students should act responsibly before they travel and follow [National lockdown: Stay at Home - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/campaigns/national-lockdown-stay-at-home) on social contact. Where available, and where they fit with locally defined priorities, students should access local community testing programmes to get a lateral flow device (LFD) test before they travel to university.

International students (including Erasmus+ or other exchange students) who are not already on campus should follow the guidance [on new and returning students from overseas](#) section of this guidance.



## Other students who may need to return to university facilities

Wherever possible, students should remain where they are and should not travel to their term-time address or to access their university facilities until the resumption of in-person teaching and learning.

Students should avoid returning to university to collect any of their belongings which they may have left at their university accommodation. However, students can travel back to collect any medical equipment or items required for online learning if it is essential.

However, providers should consider supporting the return of students in exceptional circumstances, for example, where students do not have access to appropriate alternative accommodation, facilities or study space, or where students need to return for health or safety reasons. There may also be some students who remained in their university/term-time accommodation, or have already returned, including many international students, but are not expected to return to in-person teaching and learning at this stage. These students should remain at their current university accommodation. They should be asked to only utilise campus resources when they have to, in order to reduce footfall on campus. Where there is a need for students to access campus resources, HE providers should set a clear expectation that they participate in testing.

Providers should consider appropriate provision to support access to university facilities for the purposes of online learning and to prevent isolation and mental ill health of students.

We would expect university libraries to stay open to provide library services, including study spaces, in a COVID-secure environment. However, students should not return to in-person teaching unless they study a practical course and require specialist facilities and equipment.

The following students should be tested as soon as they start accessing university facilities:

- international students who have remained in the UK and those who have arrived and do not have accommodation alternative to their term-time address
- any other students who have remained in their university accommodation
- those who have returned to their term-time accommodation in exceptional circumstances, for example because they are without access to appropriate study spaces or facilities in their vacation accommodation
- those requiring additional support, including where there is a concern about their mental health and wellbeing
- commuter students on non-practical courses, on an exceptional basis, who require access to university facilities to access online learning (for example because they

do not have access to appropriate study spaces or facilities in their usual accommodation)

- researchers and research students who require access to specialist facilities for their work. If research students can work from home, they are encouraged to do so

## Opening of facilities and buildings

Providers should consider opening facilities to support the teaching and learning of those who fall into the categories above and those who have resumed in-person teaching and learning, but these should be maintained for essential use only wherever possible. Providers should make their own judgement on the facilities that need to be made available and should complete appropriate risk assessments to do so. Providers should take any additional measures as required, including limiting access or numbers of students accessing facilities. Facilities that providers may consider opening include:

- libraries and specialist collections, for both studying and borrowing materials, on an essential access only basis
- study spaces and practice areas
- facilities required for research activities, including those undertaken by postgraduate research students, if the research cannot be reasonably conducted from home, including laboratories, suites and associated offices and specialist collections. Providers should also adhere to the guidance [on working safely in labs and research facilities during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- catering facilities provided as parts of halls and educational accommodation can continue to provide that service. All other catering outlets on campus would need to follow the takeaway only model but on-premises provision can continue where there is no practical alternative for staff and students to obtain food and drink, and alcohol is not served for consumption on the premises. Students should take their food home to the place where they live to consume it wherever possible
- whilst any on site gym and leisure facilities should be closed in line with the wider government guidance for gyms and leisure facilities, providers may want to designate specific outdoor areas to allow those students who live in halls, access to space for exercise

In welcoming more students back into university accommodation, providers should review their measures to ensure their accommodation is COVID-secure and is as safe as possible for students. It is important that shared areas within accommodation such as kitchens and bathrooms are cleaned regularly to minimise the risk of transmission, and in particular after use by those who have tested positive or are displaying coronavirus (COVID-19) symptoms. More information can be found in the [guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus \(COVID-19\) infection.](#)

Providers should ensure that appropriate cleaning supplies and clear instructions are provided to residents in university managed accommodation. It is likely that where households follow good practice to minimise transmission within the house at all times, the overall risk of transmission will be reduced. This requires focusing on the three main routes of transmission – close-range, airborne, and surface contact with routine measures that include: ensuring regular ventilation of common areas; maintaining adequate social distancing from visitors wherever possible; frequent handwashing using

soap and water; limiting the use of sharing surfaces or objects where feasible; and frequent cleaning of shared surfaces.

## Face coverings

Where social distancing is difficult to maintain or good ventilation is difficult to provide in including workshops, laboratories, offices, libraries, teaching rooms and lecture halls, we recommend that providers should adopt the use of face coverings as part of their wider COVID-secure measures, in addition to hand hygiene facilities and reduced access. This does not apply in situations where wearing a face covering would impact on the ability to take part in exercise or strenuous activity. Face coverings do not need to be worn when outdoors on the premises. More information can be found in the [face coverings guidance](#).

Transparent face coverings, which may assist communication with someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate, can also be worn. There is currently very limited evidence regarding the effectiveness or safety of transparent face coverings, but they may be effective in reducing the spread of coronavirus.

Those who rely on visual signals for communication, or communicate with or provide support to such individuals, are currently exempt from any requirement to wear face coverings.

Face visors or shields should not be worn as an alternative to face coverings. They may protect against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in reducing aerosol transmission when used without an additional face covering. They should only be used after carrying out a risk assessment for the specific situation and should always be cleaned appropriately.

## Exemptions

Some individuals are exempt from wearing [face coverings](#). This applies to those who:

- cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical impairment or disability, illness or mental health difficulties
- speak to or provide help to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expression to communicate

The same exemptions will apply in education settings and you should be sensitive to those needs, noting that some people are less able to wear face coverings and that the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

## Safe wearing and removal of face coverings

You should have a process for when face coverings are worn on your premises and how they should be removed. You should communicate this process clearly to students, staff and visitors.

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

- cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on
- safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use

Where a face covering becomes damp, it should not be worn, and the face covering should be replaced carefully. Staff and students may consider bringing a spare face covering to wear if their face covering becomes damp during the day.

## Keeping occupied spaces well ventilated

Good ventilation reduces the concentration of the virus in the air, which reduces the risk from airborne transmission. This happens when people breathe in small particles (aerosols) in the air after someone with the virus has occupied an enclosed area.

When your setting is in operation, it is important to ensure it is well ventilated and a comfortable teaching environment is maintained.

These can be achieved by a variety of measures including:

- mechanical ventilation systems – these should be adjusted to increase the ventilation rate wherever possible and checked to confirm that normal operation meets current guidance and that only fresh outside air is circulated. If possible, systems should be adjusted to full fresh air or, if not, then systems should be operated as normal as long as they are within a single room and supplemented by an outdoor air supply)
- natural ventilation – opening windows (in cooler weather windows should be opened just enough to provide constant background ventilation, and opened more fully during breaks to purge the air in the space). Opening internal doors can also assist with creating a throughput of air
- natural ventilation – if necessary external opening doors may also be used (as long as they are not fire doors and where safe to do so)

The [Health and Safety Executive guidance on air conditioning and ventilation during the coronavirus outbreak](#) and [CIBSE Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Advice](#) provides more information.

To balance the need for increased ventilation while maintaining a comfortable temperature, consider:

- opening high level windows in colder weather in preference to low level to reduce draughts
- increasing the ventilation while spaces are unoccupied
- rearranging furniture where possible to avoid direct draughts

Heating should be used as necessary to ensure comfort levels are maintained particularly in occupied spaces.

## **Students who cannot return to university because they are self-isolating**

Providers should provide guidance to students if they are self-isolating at their home address and are not returning to campus on their original planned return date, setting out what steps they should take to return as safely as possible to university when the isolation period ends and how to access learning and teaching while self-isolating.

## Testing plans for asymptomatic students

The government is working with HE providers to offer:

- two tests to all students eligible to attend their HE provider, upon their return
- twice weekly testing to all students currently eligible to attend their HE provider.

All HE providers should set an expectation that students should take up the testing on offer and inform students of how they can access asymptomatic testing.

If students are on a placement and not attending university facilities, they should follow and participate in any testing regime in place at their placement. It is not necessary to travel to university to be tested before travelling to a placement, unless this is advised by the placement provider. Students are also encouraged to test before they travel back to university, where [community testing](#) facilities are available to them.



## Testing staff

The government has also worked closely with providers to support those offering lateral flow devices (LFDs) to staff in parallel to students. HE providers are strongly encouraged to make twice weekly testing available for staff and to advise those staff that are required to be physically present at work in the university, to take part in the testing programme.

Before staff get tested, they should make sure they have arrangements in place to [travel home immediately and safely](#) in the event they test positive. They should walk, cycle or drive wherever possible. If driving, they should try to be the only person in the vehicle, but can share a car with their household or support bubble if necessary. They should open windows, wear a face covering and sit far away from others if sharing a car. They should not use public transport or a taxi or private hire vehicle to [return home](#).

## Testing students using lateral flow devices (LFDs)

The government will continue to work closely with providers to support the delivery of regular testing via LFDs for all students, including providing advice on encouraging student participation where appropriate. We will continue to support smaller HE providers in partnering with neighbouring providers if they cannot provide their own asymptomatic test site. Individual HE providers may choose to offer tests to students using different testing technologies.

### How students should be tested

If providers are using LFDs, they should set an expectation that students should participate in regular testing. Students should be tested twice in their first week of return – immediately upon their return and then again three days later. Providers should offer students twice weekly testing thereafter. Some providers may be unable to provide twice weekly testing at this moment and once a week may be appropriate where students only visit campus once a week. If only one test is available, this should be done immediately before students visit campus. We will work with all HE providers to implement practical solutions, including partnering them with other providers, where appropriate

Before students get tested, they should make sure they have arrangements in place to travel home safely in the event they test positive. They should walk, cycle or drive wherever possible. If driving, they should try to be the only person in the vehicle, but can share a car with their household or support bubble if necessary. They should open windows, wear a face covering and sit far away from others if sharing a car. They should not use public transport or a taxi or private hire vehicle to return home.

While awaiting their result (typically it takes one hour), the student should not interact with other students to avoid virus transmission.

If a student has recently (within 90 days) tested positive for COVID-19, they are likely to have developed some immunity. If a student has had a positive coronavirus (COVID-19) test in the last 90 days through NHS Test and Trace and been recorded as a positive case on the national system, they do not need to be tested again within that time period if they are asymptomatic. They are still required to self-isolate if they are identified as a close contact of a positive case, even if this is within the 90 day window.

### Negative result

If upon return to their HE provider, the first LFD test result is negative, the student should limit their social contact and interaction with other students until they receive a second negative LFD test result. This is to limit the risk of transmission.

Students that test negative as part of the twice weekly testing programme should continue to follow any national or regional tier restrictions.

## Positive test result

Upon notification of a positive test result (LFD or PCR), students are legally required to self-isolate for ten days and contact tracing will be initiated. A confirmatory PCR test will not be required for LFD tests taken at HE asymptomatic test sites. This is a temporary change to procedures.

## Supporting students who need to self-isolate

For those students who do need to self-isolate at university, HE providers should take steps to ensure their students are safe and well looked after during their self-isolation period.

Universities UK have also produced a [checklist](#) for providers to support students who are required to self-isolate as well as [bespoke guidance](#) for HE providers on how to prepare for and care for students who are required to self-isolate on arrival in the UK. We encourage providers to review this guidance when considering how best to support their international and other students arriving from overseas.

## Staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) staff are advised not to attend the workplace whilst they are advised to shield. Staff who are CEV will previously have received a letter from the NHS or their GP telling them this (no new letter is required), and there is [guidance for everyone in this group](#). It provides advice on what additional measures individuals in this group can take.

Employers should talk to their staff about how they will be supported, including to work from home.

You should continue to pay CEV staff on their usual terms.

Those living with someone who is CEV can still attend work where home-working is not possible and should ensure they maintain good prevention practice in the workplace and home settings.

The shielding guidance is reviewed regularly. CEV individuals will be informed in advance of any change to the end date of the guidance.

CEV individuals (over 18) have been prioritised for vaccination in phase 1 before the general population and in line with the priority ordering set by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation.

Current DHSC guidance, informed by PHE, currently advises that CEV individuals should continue to shield even after they have been vaccinated.

## Pregnancy

Pregnant staff are advised to follow the specific [guidance for pregnant employees](#) because pregnant women are considered CV. In some cases pregnant women may also have other health conditions that mean they are considered CEV, where the advice for clinically extremely vulnerable staff will apply. [COVID-19 vaccination: a guide for women of childbearing age, pregnant or breastfeeding](#) contains vaccination advice.

Your workplace risk assessment should already consider any risks to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers. If you are notified that an employee is pregnant, breastfeeding, or has given birth within the last 6 months, you should check the workplace risk assessment to see if any new risks have arisen. An assessment may help identify any additional action that needs to be taken to mitigate risks.

Any risks identified at that point, or later during the pregnancy, in the first 6 months after birth, or while the employee is still breastfeeding, must be included and managed as part of the general workplace risk assessment. You must take appropriate sensible action to reduce, remove or control the risks.

As part of your risk assessment, you should consider whether adapting duties and/or facilitating home working may be appropriate to mitigate risks.

You should be aware that pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation, or with underlying health conditions at any point of gestation, may be at greater risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19). This is also the case for pregnant women with underlying health conditions that place them at greater risk of severe illness if they catch coronavirus (COVID-19).

Read more [guidance and advice on coronavirus \(COVID-19\) and pregnancy from the Royal College of Gynaecologists](#).

## Staff who may otherwise be at increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19)

Current evidence shows that a range of factors mean that some people may be at comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19). Those at particularly high risk from a range of underlying health conditions should now have been included in the CEV group and will be receiving a letter to confirm this.

For others who feel they may be at increased risk, where it is not possible to work from home, these staff can attend the workplace as long as the [system of controls](#) set out in this guidance are in place. You should continue with an equitable approach to risk management for your workforce, recognising that staff may have a variety of baseline risks. Work continues to build our understanding of what these baseline factors are and the increased risks they pose.

There is further [information available on who is at higher risk from coronavirus](#).

Staff who live with those who may have comparatively increased risk from coronavirus (COVID-19) can attend the workplace where it is not possible to work from home.

## Employers' health and safety obligations

Employers have a legal obligation to protect their employees, and others, including children, from harm. Employers should continue to assess and update health and safety risks in the usual way, especially in the light of any changing circumstances.

Following the system of controls will help you:

- mitigate the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) to pupils and staff
- meet your legal duties to protect employees and others from harm

The Health and Safety Executive published guidance on [first aid during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) which:

- supports local risk assessments
- provides guidance for first aiders

## **Risk assessments**

As an employer, you have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety, including from the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19). You should complete a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the workplace and identify control measures to manage that risk. Employers have a duty to consult their employees on health and safety matters. HE providers should continually check, revise and update their risk assessments, especially when there is new advice and guidance.



## Travel guidance for students arriving from within the UK

Under the 'Stay at Home' regulations, students are permitted to return to their term-time accommodation, including travel to and from the devolved administrations, subject to any local rules in place within the devolved administrations. This includes family or others within their household or support bubble who travel with the student to transport them back to their term time address. Students can travel by private vehicle or public transport but should make sure they follow safer travel advice.

HE providers should advise students using private vehicles to:

- avoid car sharing with anyone outside their household or support bubble
- rigorously follow the safer travel guidance for passengers to reduce the risk of transmission to others where this is not possible

If using public transport students should:

- plan and avoid busy times and routes
- rigorously follow the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#)

HE providers should also communicate travel guidance to all students, including how to help reduce the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) by:

- wearing a face covering unless exempt
- keeping their distance from people from other households when they travel, where possible
- washing or sanitising their hands regularly
- avoiding the busiest routes, as well as busy times like the rush hour
- downloading the [NHS COVID-19 app](#) before they travel, if possible and checking in where they see official NHS COVID-19 QR code posters

If students are travelling from areas which are undergoing [surge testing](#), different public health guidance applies and they should ensure they get tested before they travel. If they test positive, their PCR test will be sent to a laboratory for genomic sequencing and they must not travel. They must isolate with their household immediately and [follow the guidance for households with possible or confirmed coronavirus infections](#). Public Health England will carry out enhanced tracing of close contacts of confirmed cases of the variants.

## **Further actions**

HE providers should continue to work with local transport providers and ensure that they are aware of providers' plans. DfE will continue to work closely with the Department for Transport to support HE providers.

## New and returning students travelling from overseas

The government has announced that unless they are in the group of students who are able to travel back to university for in-person teaching and learning (see above), students should stay where they are at this stage, before a decision is made on further return. The government will announce this decision by the end of the Easter holidays.

International students who have already booked travel should consider delaying if travel arrangements can be rearranged without undue costs. International students are permitted to study remotely without a visa and in most circumstances will be able to begin their course via distance learning. Students on the UK courses being prioritised for return to in-person teaching and learning (see above) should do the following before making travel plans:

- check with their higher education provider in advance to confirm when in-person teaching and learning begins
- check with their higher education provider when they intend to arrive on campus so that they can be appropriately supported.

Before travelling to the UK, students should:

- check entry requirements and restrictions that have been introduced due to coronavirus (COVID-19) that have been introduced due to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- ensure that prior to departing for England they have proof of a negative coronavirus (COVID-19) test result taken within three days of departure to their transport operator. More information on pre-departure testing is available;
- complete a passenger locator form
- note that all inbound UK travel corridors have been temporarily suspended to protect against new international variants. All passengers are now required to self-isolate for 10 days on arrival. More information is available on [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk)
- confirm whether you are travelling from a [red-list](#) country, there are different arrival procedures for individuals travelling from a red-list country and individuals travelling from a country not on the red-list

## Arrival procedures for students travelling from overseas

Students who have been in, or transited through, a 'red list' country in the last 10 days

Students should be aware that the UK has introduced travel bans for arrivals from some countries (otherwise referred to as 'red list' countries) as part of measures taken to protect the UK from new strands of COVID-19. The list of 'red list' countries will be regularly updated and can be found [on GOV.UK](#).

British and Irish Nationals, or third country nationals with residence rights in the UK will still be able to enter the UK if they have been in or transited through a 'red list' country in the last 10 days but they will be required to quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel on arrival for ten days without exception. Residence rights includes those with an entry clearance/visa that grants such leave e.g. students, holders of existing leave to enter or remain e.g. those students with biometric residence permits, and holders of EU Settlement Scheme ("EUSS") leave.

Individuals who have been in, or transited through, a 'red list' country in the last 10 days and who are not British and Irish Nationals, or third country nationals with residence rights will not be granted access to the UK.

The costs of quarantining in a hotel will be borne by the traveller and are currently set at £1,750. More information is [available here](#).

Students **cannot** use the Test to Release scheme if they have been in or through 'red list' countries in the 10 days before they arrive in England.

#### Students that have **not** been in or transited through a red-list country for 10 days

All international arrivals who have departed or transited through any country outside the Common Travel Area should self-isolate immediately in their own accommodation for 10 days.

When students arrive in England, they must travel directly to the place they are staying and not leave until 10 days have passed, they should:

- only use public transport if they have no other option
- follow [safer travel guidance for passengers](#)
- only leave their accommodation in limited circumstances and follow guidance on [how to self-isolate when they travel to the UK \(England only\)](#)
- All international arrivals must book a travel test package before travelling to the UK – this costs £210. They must take a COVID-19 test on or before day 2 for variant surveillance and a test on or after day 8 to check that they do not have COVID-19. Students should use the [booking portal](#) to book their travel test package
- Individuals will need to take a COVID-19 test on or before day 2 of their quarantine period. The day of arrival in England will be treated as day zero. This first test is designed to help identify any potentially harmful variants of COVID-19 at the earliest opportunity. Tests will be taken in their own accommodation.
- Individuals need to take a COVID-19 test on or after day 8, unless they received a positive result from your day 2 test.
- If they've quarantined for 10 days and received a negative result to both their day 2 and day 8 tests, they may leave the place where you're quarantining.

The 10-day period is counted from the day after they left their country of origin before returning to the UK.

Students **not** travelling from a ‘red list’ country, who do not need to quarantine in a hotel, may be able to exit self-isolation early via Test to Release:

- International arrivals have the option to reduce their self-isolation period by taking a coronavirus (COVID-19) test from a private testing provider five full days after arriving in England, with a negative result releasing them from the need to self-isolate. Read the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Test to Release for international travel](#) guidance. Look at [A list of providers of tests for Test to Release](#)
- Students planning to use the Test to Release scheme must still take a test on or before day 2 and on or after day 8, unless they are exempt. Even if individuals get a negative result from their Test to Release and are released from self-isolation, they will still need to take a test on or after day 8 to check that they do not have COVID-19
- Students who have chosen to self-isolate for ten days instead of taking a private Test to Release are not expected to take a further LFD test (administered by their University) at the end of their self-isolation period when they return to campus

After following the correct arrivals procedure, students should follow instructions on ongoing asymptomatic testing as set out by their HE provider.

We are working with the HE sector to ensure that all students are welcomed to the UK and are supported on arrival by their chosen university. Universities UK has developed a [checklist for providers to support students who are required to self-isolate](#) to use as a guide in developing that support. Further guidance is available on [entering the UK](#).

## Visas

Since the outbreak of coronavirus, the government has implemented a number of immigration concessions to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions.

International students considering study in the UK should be aware that [visa concessions](#) for those on Tier 4 visas allow for the ongoing provision of online learning for the duration of the academic year 2020/21. Many HE courses are being conducted online, so that students unable to enter the UK in the immediate term can study remotely. Government continues to keep further [visa concessions](#) under review.

Government has confirmed that international students studying by distance/blended learning who are due to complete their course in 2021 will remain eligible to apply for the [Graduate route](#) provided they are in the UK by specific dates as set out in the [student concessions guidance](#), and meet the other requirements of the route. Students should only travel to their university when their provider has confirmed the resumption of face-to-face teaching for their specific course.

Students who are studying courses lasting longer than a year in length, which are not due to be completed in 2021, will still be eligible for the Graduate route even if they have studied all or part of the 2020/21 academic year via distance learning due to the pandemic.

Students will not be penalised for being unable to collect their [Biometric Residence Permit](#) (BRP) while coronavirus (COVID-19) measures are in place.

Students should be aware that rules may differ depending on which UK nation they are studying in, so are advised to consult relevant COVID-19 guidance that applies to them. Students studying in England should see [Higher education providers: coronavirus \(COVID-19\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#).

## **Guidance for students in the UK who wish to travel overseas while national restrictions apply**

Government has also announced further action for outbound passengers to minimise travel across international borders and reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission. More information about these measures can found [here](#), and the latest travel advice is updated regularly [on GOV.UK, this will be updated with more information, including when the measures below will come into force.](#) For those wishing to travel out of the UK these measures include:

Increased police enforcement: There will be an increased police presence at ports and airports, fining those in breach of the 'Stay at Home' regulations. Anyone without valid reason for travel will be directed to return home and may face a fine.

Reviewing travel exemptions: The list of travel exemptions will be urgently reviewed so that only the most important and exceptional reasons are included.

As has always been the case under the national lockdown, foreign nationals resident in England, including international students, are subject to the 'Stay at Home' regulations.

International students should therefore remain at their term time accommodation, and must not leave it to travel abroad or within the UK, unless they are leaving home to travel for a [legally permitted reason](#). Such reasons would include moving home permanently, or if they have a medical need to do so – which would include for mental health reasons.

# Travel Guidance for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps

This section of the guidance is for participants (students, staff and children) and organisers of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) exchanges planning to travel in the UK or overseas, and for those who are already overseas. As part of the Withdrawal Agreement legacy activity involving UK-based students on Erasmus+ and the European Solidarity Corps agreed ahead of the end of the Transition Period will continue.

Erasmus+ participants who are:

- Students at non-UK providers considering entering the UK to begin or resume an exchange, or
- Students at UK providers who are re-entering the UK after a period overseas participating in an exchange

need to review the information in the section “Arrival procedures for students travelling from overseas” and comply with all quarantine and self isolation requirements that apply to them.

UK students who are considering starting an exchange overseas need to review the information in this document on “Guidance for students in the UK who wish to travel overseas while national restrictions apply”

Before starting a placement, participants should consult with their provider to confirm details and check the [Living in guide](#) and travel advice for the country they will be visiting, being conscious that their placement may not be able to continue as originally planned. There may be opportunities for it to start at a later date if the situation changes and this is feasible.

Participants should be ready to comply with local isolation, testing or quarantine requirements, and will need to rely on the local health system.

If participants need to return early from their placement, they should contact their provider to let them know of their plans.

We suggest anyone whose international educational mobility is affected discuss their placement with their provider, being conscious that their placement may not be able to continue as originally planned, but there may be opportunities for it to start at a later date if the situation changes and this is feasible.

UK participants who need emergency help from the UK government while overseas as the country they are in will not allow them to travel back to the UK, or there are no commercial travel options available, can contact the [nearest British embassy, consulate or high commission](#) or the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ([FCDO](#)) in [London](#) on 0207 008 1500 for help or advice 24/7.

For UK beneficiaries managing Erasmus+ mobilities, you should utilise any Erasmus+ funding to the best of your ability, while ensuring participants remain as safe as possible. We expect all universities, colleges, schools and other organisers managing international educational mobilities to follow the relevant FCDO travel advice for the destination country and highlight this to their participants, being aware the situation can change rapidly.

We expect all providers to explore alternative options for mobilities and study, whether blended or fully virtual, if appropriate and to be flexible in their approach and be conscious of the potentially rapidly changing situation on a country by country basis. Providers should be ready to make quick changes to projects and mobilities, consider delaying mobilities and amending start and end dates if feasible as restrictions may change over time.

The FCDO provides information and advice to help British nationals make their own informed decisions about foreign travel. Their guidance on how they develop travel advice is at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-the-foreign-commonwealth-office-puts-together-travel-advice>.

## **Travel insurance**

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has produced [information on travel insurance implications](#) following the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. If you have any further questions about your cover or would like further reassurance, you should contact your travel insurance provider.



## **Students studying in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland**

DfE has been working closely with the Devolved Administrations. Students at HE institutions in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland should follow any guidance issued by their HE institution and the relevant government. There is no restriction within England on students travelling to or from the devolved administrations for the purposes of returning to their term-time accommodation or where reasonably necessary for the purposes of a HE course of study.



Department  
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