



Department
for Education

Students returning to, and starting, higher education during Spring and Summer 2021

Guidance for higher education providers

April 2021

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Latest updates and reviews

On 22 February we updated this guidance. Those changes included:

- 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

On 8 March we updated this guidance to include:

- advice on students travelling home for their Easter break
- updated guidance for new and returning students travelling from overseas

On 13 April we updated this guidance to include:

- updated guidance on when students can return to campus
- guidance on educational visits and field trips
- updated advice on the opening of, and access to facilities
- updated guidance on testing students and staff
- updated advice on transparent face coverings and face visors
- updated guidance on shielding
- guidance on travelling to the devolved administrations via a connecting flight in England
- guidance on international students and coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccination

Introduction

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

Anecdotal [evidence collated by SAGE](#) suggests that there was limited evidence of transmission attributed to in-person teaching and learning environments, such as lecture theatres. Instances where transmission could be traced to in-person teaching were associated with guidance not being followed.

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

At the beginning of the spring term, we prioritised the return to in-person teaching and learning for students on courses which had to be delivered in-person and which supported the pipeline of future critical key workers. We then advised providers that they could 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. Following the review announced in the [COVID-19 Response – Spring 2021 \(Roadmap\)](#) of when all remaining higher education students can return to in-person teaching and learning, the Government confirms that these students should return no earlier than 17 May, alongside Step 3 of the Roadmap. As was announced in February, students and institutions will be given a week's notice of any reopening in accordance with the timing of Step 3.

A return at Step 3 will be coherent with the opening of more indoor facilities within Step 3 and will leave a short window for in-person teaching and cocurricular activities to boost student engagement and employability before the end of the academic year.

Wherever possible, providers should not ask students to return to their term time accommodation before they return to in-person teaching and learning. Some exceptions are set out in the detailed guidance below.

The government recognises the difficulties and disruption that this may cause for many students and their families. The Roadmap is designed to maintain a cautious approach to the easing of restrictions. Decisions on when to lift restrictions, and in which order, seek to strike a balance between the epidemiological evidence and advice, the impact lockdown is having on people's health (including mental health and disproportionate impacts on certain groups), wellbeing, and the economy.

As a result, our aim is to continue to restrict the number of students who return to university and who access university facilities at least until Step 3 of the Roadmap, when restrictions on social contact and indoor mixing will be further eased. Higher education providers can reopen facilities in line with wider government guidance for Step 2 of the

Roadmap. As always, when local or national conditions change, HE providers should check, revise and update their risk assessments.

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 provide rapid asymptomatic testing for all students on return to university, and twice weekly thereafter, to reduce and better manage outbreaks of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Students returning to campus

Providers should continue to 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.

Students are encouraged to take a test before they travel back to university, either by [home testing](#) or at a [community testing](#) facility where available. Staff or students with a positive LFD test result must self-isolate in line with the [stay-at-home guidance](#). Students should continue to test regularly on return to their HE provider.

Once students have returned to their term-time accommodation they should follow the [broader national guidance](#). After having returned to their term-time household, they must only return to their family or another household where they have a legally permitted reason to do so. If students rely on an exemption (for example if they need to move home temporarily because of illness or mental ill-health), they should ensure that they test before they travel or as soon as possible on their return to university. In addition, students will be able to travel home or to another household for their Easter break, if they choose to do so, provided they travel home before 29 April 2021 (they can return back to university at any time). However, in order to minimise transmission, we strongly advise that students remain in their term time accommodation where possible. Where students do travel home for their Easter break, they should get tested before they travel and follow [guidance](#) on how to travel safely. As above, if they test positive, they must self-isolate in line with the [stay-at-home guidance](#).

As throughout spring term, courses which require Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) assessments and /or other PRSB mandatory activity which cannot be rescheduled, should continue with in-person teaching.

Because of the changing position relating to in-person teaching and learning and occupation of accommodation, students' maintenance loan entitlements 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 remain entitled to this rate. 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. Providers should encourage students not to return until they resume in-person teaching and learning. However, some other students may also need to return to their term-time accommodation

before the resumption of their in-person teaching and learning, as set out under [Other students who may need to return to university facilities](#) below.

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

House parties

The government has introduced an £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 more than one household/support bubble. Providers should ensure that students are aware of what constitutes their designated “household”, particularly if they live within large scale student accommodation.

Educational visits and field trips

We recognise the significant benefits of educational visits for educational development as well as mental health and wellbeing and we are taking steps to unlock visits in line with the Roadmap.

The government’s roadmap is driven by data, not dates. The government will only move from one step to the next when it is safe to do so and based on 4 tests in the Roadmap.

For that reason, all dates below are indicative and subject to change.

Educational Day Visits

In line with the Roadmap, providers can resume educational day visits from 12 April. Any educational day visits should be conducted in line with relevant COVID-secure guidelines and COVID-19 regulations in place at that time, such as maintaining consistent groups, and the COVID-secure measures in place at the destination.

Providers should undertake full and thorough risk assessments in relation to all educational visits to ensure they can be undertaken as safely as possible. As part of this risk assessment, providers will need to:

- consider what control measures need to be used
- ensure you are aware of wider advice on visiting indoor and outdoor venues
- consult the [health and safety guidance](#) when considering visits

Domestic Residential Educational Visits

In line with the roadmap the department is advising against domestic residential educational visits until Step 3 (no earlier than 17 May 2021).

Existing bookings

Domestic residential education visits, **that are already booked**, may go ahead at Step 3 (no earlier than 17 May), though there are some exceptions allowed in relation to separate and self-contained premises from the start of Step 2. Any domestic residential educational visits should be conducted in line with relevant COVID-secure guidance and COVID-19 regulations in place at that time.

New bookings

Providers should only plan for new domestic residential educational visits to take place at Step 3 (no earlier than 17 May).

Providers are advised not to enter into any new financial or contractual commitments at this stage. This advice will remain under review and be updated at the earliest opportunity.

Any new domestic residential educational visits should be conducted in line with relevant COVID-secure guidance and COVID-19 regulations in place at that time.

International Visits

If an educational visit involves travel overseas, please refer to the [Guidance for international students in the UK who wish to travel overseas](#) section below.

Other students who may need to return to university facilities

Providers should support the return of students where necessary to support the continuation of their studies, for example, where students do not have access to appropriate alternative accommodation, facilities or study space, where students need to return for health or safety reasons or where there is concern for a student's mental health or wellbeing. There may also be some students who remained in their university/term-time accommodation, or have already returned, including many international students, who are not expected to return to in-person teaching and learning at this stage.

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

For these students, we would expect university libraries to stay open to provide library services, including study spaces, in a COVID-secure environment. Universities can also open their facilities in line with the wider government easing of COVID restrictions.

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.

Opening of facilities and buildings

As the government begins to ease restrictions, as outlined in the Roadmap, higher education providers should take note of the [wider reopening guidance](#) and assume that this applies to their facilities, unless exemptions apply as stated in [guidance](#). This will include the easing of restrictions with regards to organised sport, entertainment, or large events for example.

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 numbers of students accessing facilities. Facilities that providers may consider opening include:

- libraries and specialist collections, for both studying and borrowing materials
- 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. In line with wider government guidance, hospitality and catering outlets on campus will be allowed to serve people outdoors and to provide takeaway. 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.
- on site gym and leisure facilities can re-open in line with wider government guidance for gyms and leisure facilities. In addition, providers may want to designate specific outdoor areas to allow those students who live in halls, access to space for exercise

Providers should set a clear expectation that all students accessing university facilities or residing in their university halls of residence or other term-time accommodation, should participate in testing, even when they have not returned to in-person teaching. Students should access testing immediately on their return to university and on a twice weekly basis thereafter.

Accommodation

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.

The [College and University Business Officers](#) and the [Universities Safety and Health Association](#) have jointly issued a checklist for students living in shared accommodation to help minimise the risk of coronavirus transmission. This checklist includes practical advice on cleaning, food hygiene, and visitors among other aspects of co-living. This guidance also provides advice on how to minimise transmission within shared accommodation, where someone has suspected symptoms or tests positive. Providers should encourage students and visitors (where visitors are permitted) to follow this advice.

Face coverings

Where social distancing is difficult to maintain or good ventilation is difficult to provide, including in 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](#).

The use of face coverings may have a particular impact on those who rely on visual signals for communication. 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

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 (COVID-19).

Face visors or shields can be worn by those exempt from wearing a face covering but they are not an equivalent alternative in terms of source control of virus transmission. They may protect the wearer against droplet spread in specific circumstances but are unlikely to be effective in preventing the escape of smaller respiratory particles 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.

HE providers have duties to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students and staff to support them to access education and work successfully.

Exemptions

Where face coverings are recommended there are some circumstances where people may not be able to wear one.

Providers should be mindful and respectful of such circumstances and sensitive to those needs. Some people are less able to wear face coverings, and the reasons for this may not be visible to others.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- people who cannot put on, wear or remove a face covering because of a physical or mental illness or impairment, or disability
- where putting on, wearing or removing a face covering will cause the wearer severe distress
- people who are speaking to or providing assistance to someone who relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate
- avoiding harm or injury, or the risk of harm or injury, to yourself or others – including if it would negatively impact on your ability to exercise or participate in a strenuous activity

The same exemptions will apply in education settings and providers 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

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

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

- cleaning of hands before and after touching face coverings – including to remove or put them on

- safe storage of face coverings 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. If they cannot be adjusted to full fresh air, 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 room). 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 give 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 asymptomatic students and staff using lateral flow device tests (LFDs)

The government is working with HE providers to offer twice weekly asymptomatic testing to all students residing in their term-time accommodation, or accessing university facilities, and to all staff.

Students are encouraged to test before they travel back to university, either through their local community testing programme or by [ordering a test online](#).

On returning to university, students should take three tests at an on-site testing facility (3-4 days apart). They should then test twice a week, either using home test kits or at an on-site facility. Some students at smaller HE providers may use home test kits immediately rather than testing on site.

Staff are also encouraged to test twice a week, either at an on-site testing facility or at home as appropriate.

Universities should strongly encourage all students and staff to participate in the testing programme and, when testing at home, to report their results, whether positive, negative or void.

How students and staff should be tested

If students and staff know they are going to be tested using an LFD on site, they should consider how they will travel back home in a way that protects others in case they should test positive. They should follow the [guidance](#) on keeping themselves, other passengers and transport staff safe during their journey.

While awaiting their result (typically it takes 30 minutes), the student or staff member should not interact with other students to avoid virus transmission.

If a student or staff member has recently (within 90 days) tested positive for coronavirus (COVID-19), they are likely to have developed some immunity. If a student or staff member has had a positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test in the last 90 days, 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.

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.

Negative result

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

Positive test result

Upon notification of a positive test result, students and staff are legally required to self-isolate immediately on the day of the test and for at least the following ten full days and contact tracing will be initiated. Following a positive LFD test result, students and staff should take a follow-up polymerase chain reaction (PCR) [test](#) as soon as possible.

If a student or staff member takes a PCR test within 2 days of the LFD test and receives a negative result, they and their household can stop self-isolating. However, self-isolation must continue if:

- the PCR test result is positive
- no follow-up PCR test is taken
- the PCR test result is negative but the test was taken more than 2 days after the LFD test

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.

Some students may be eligible for a one-off payment of £500 through the [NHS Test and Trace Support Payment](#) scheme, if they are required to self-isolate.

Students and staff who are clinically extremely vulnerable

Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV) individuals are no longer advised to shield but must continue to follow the rules in place for everyone under the current national restrictions. CEV staff who were previously shielding can now attend the workplace, where they are unable to work from home. CEV students should attend their HE provider when advised by their provider, in line with this guidance. 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.

Those living with someone who is CEV can also 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.

Pregnancy

Pregnant staff are advised to follow the specific [guidance for pregnant employees](#) because pregnant women are considered clinically vulnerable. 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.

Workplace risk assessment should already consider any risks to female employees of childbearing age and, in particular, risks to new and expectant mothers. If providers are notified that an employee is pregnant, breastfeeding, or has given birth within the last 6 months, they 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. Providers must take appropriate sensible action to reduce, remove or control the risks.

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

Providers 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).

We recommend that providers follow the same principles for pregnant students, in line with their wider health and safety obligations.

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

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 principles for higher education provision will help them:

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

The Health and Safety Executive publishes [guidance on employer risk assessments](#) to support the development of local risk assessments, as well as guidance for [first aid during coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Risk assessments

As an employer, providers have a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety, including from the risks of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Providers 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 to university from within the UK

Students and staff should use private vehicles, walk or cycle wherever possible. 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 [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, unless an exception applies. 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

As set out in the introduction, in-person teaching for all students should resume no earlier than 17 May, in line with Step 3 of the Roadmap. In the meantime, international students are permitted to study remotely without a visa, and in most circumstances will be able to begin their course via distance learning.

If students are travelling to the UK from overseas because their course has been prioritised for a return to in-person teaching and learning, or if they are making plans to travel overseas for the Easter break, students will need to and comply with border measures that have been introduced to help prevent transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) on their return.

Arrival procedure for students travelling to the UK from overseas

Students considering travelling or returning to the UK should check with their higher education provider:

- in advance to confirm when in-person teaching and learning begins
- when they intend to arrive on campus so that they can be appropriately supported

Before arriving in the UK, students should:

- check the latest information about [entering the UK](#)
- note that **all** passengers are required to quarantine for 10 days on arrival, either in a [managed quarantine hotel](#) or [in their own accommodation](#)
- check whether the country they are travelling from is on the 'red list', and whether they will need to complete their quarantine in a [managed quarantine hotel](#) or [in their own accommodation](#) (see the guidance for students who have been in, or transited through, a 'red list' country (see below) in the last 10 days and [guidance for students who have not been in or transited through a red-list country for 10 days](#))
- ensure that prior to departing for England they have proof of a negative coronavirus (COVID-19) test result taken within three days of departure - more information on [pre-departure testing](#) is available
- [book and pay for a travel test package](#) at a cost of £210, which will include coronavirus (COVID-19) tests to be taken on or before day 2 and on or after day 8 of quarantine **after** arriving in the UK - more information about [quarantine testing](#) is available
- [complete a passenger locator form](#) detailing where they will quarantine upon arrival
- while travelling, remember to follow the [safer travel guidelines](#), and plan ahead to avoid busy times
- speak to their travel insurer

Guidance for 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 coronavirus (COVID-19). The ['red list' countries](#) will be regularly updated.

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**. Residence rights includes those with an entry clearance or visa that grants such leave, for example, students, holders of existing leave to enter or remain such as 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 or Irish Nationals, or third country nationals with residence rights in the UK **will not** be granted entry to the country.

The cost of quarantining in a hotel will be borne by the traveller and is currently set at £1,750. Students should book the managed quarantine package in advance. More information on [booking and staying in a quarantine hotel](#) is available.

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.

Guidance for students who 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 they arrive in the UK.

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 \(England only\)](#)
- book a [travel test package](#) **before travelling** to the UK – this costs £210 and involves taking a coronavirus (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 coronavirus (COVID-19). Students should use the [booking portal](#) to book their travel test package

Travel test package

Students will need to take a coronavirus (COVID-19) test on or before day 2 of their quarantine period. For the purposes of counting days, 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.

Students need to take a coronavirus (COVID-19) test on or after day 8, unless they received a positive result from their 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 they're quarantining.

Students not travelling from a 'red list' country, who do not need to quarantine in a managed quarantine 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 5 full days after arriving in England, with a negative result releasing them from the need to self-isolate. Read the [Test to Release for international travel](#) guidance. Look at the [list of providers of tests for Test to Release](#).

Students planning to use the Test to Release scheme must still [book a travel test package](#) and 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 coronavirus (COVID-19).

Students who have chosen to self-isolate for 10 days instead of taking a private Test to Release are not expected to take a further LFD test (administered by their HE provider) 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](#).

Travelling to the Devolved Administration(s) via a connecting flight in England

If travellers have **not** transited through one of the red-list countries in the 10 days before arriving in England and they are getting an onward connecting flight to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland (Devolved Administration or DA) then they are **not** required to self-isolate on arrival in England. **Travellers should however self-isolate immediately on arrival at their DA destination.**

Travellers should check individual Devolved Administrations for their policy on self-isolation to ensure they are following the most up to date guidance:

Scotland: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance on travel and transport](#)

Wales: [Arriving in Wales from overseas](#)

Northern Ireland: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): international travel advice | nidirect](#)

If travellers **have** transited through one of the red-list countries in the 10 days before arriving in England then they **will be** required to quarantine in a managed quarantine hotel on arrival in England for ten days.

Travellers should refer to [the section in this guidance on managed hotel quarantine](#) for more information, including on how to book their managed hotel.

Anyone who travels via England, whether they have been through a red-list country or not, should make sure they have booked their pre-departure test, completed their passenger locator form and booked their travel test package. Please refer to the [arrival procedure for students travelling to the UK from overseas](#) above for more information.

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 Student (or Tier 4) visas allow for the ongoing provision of online learning for the entirety of the academic year 2020 to 2021. Many HE courses are being conducted online, so that students unable to enter the UK in the immediate term can study remotely. The UK government continues to keep further [visa concessions](#) under review.

The government has confirmed in [visa concessions guidance](#) that international students who began a course of 12 months or less in 2020 by distance/blended learning and who have not previously entered the UK to study that course, will remain eligible to apply for the [Graduate route](#) provided they are in the UK by 21 June 2021, and meet the other requirements of the route.

The government has also confirmed that international students who began a course of 12 months or less in 2021 via distance learning and who have not previously entered the UK to study that course, will remain eligible to apply for the Graduate route provided they are in the UK by 27 September 2021 and meet the other requirements of the route.

Students who began a course of 12 months or less in 2020 or 2021 and who have already travelled to the UK during their studies with permission as a Student, will be able to make a Graduate route application, as long as they are present in the UK before the end date of their course and meet the other requirements of the route. The [Graduate route will open for applications](#) on 1 July 2021.

Students should therefore only travel to their university when their provider has confirmed the resumption of in-person 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 not be prevented from being eligible for the Graduate route as a result of any distance learning that took place either in the UK or overseas between the period of 24 January 2020 and 27 September 2021 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 the UK nation within which they are studying, so are advised to consult the relevant coronavirus (COVID-19) guidance that applies in those nations.

Guidance for international students in the UK who wish to travel overseas while national restrictions apply – including during Easter Break

The government has announced [further action for outbound passengers](#) to minimise travel across international borders and reduce the risk of coronavirus (COVID-19) transmission. Travel advice is updated regularly.

On 29 March, the requirement to stay at home ended. However, new regulations mean students will still need to have a reasonable excuse to leave the UK. Such reasons could include moving home, travelling for compassionate reasons (for example visiting someone in hospital), travelling for study, or if they have a reasonable medical need to do so. More information on reasonable excuses for leaving the UK is available [here](#).

Similarly to domestic students, international students are also allowed to travel [home](#) once provided they travel home before 29 April 2021 (they can return back to university at any time), which includes a journey involving overseas travel outside of the Common Travel Area. However, in order to minimise transmission, and because travel restrictions could change whilst students are overseas (which might make it harder for students to get back into England) we would strongly advise students not to travel, and to instead remain in their term-time accommodation.

Prior to travel, travellers must [complete a travel declaration form](#) demonstrating that they have a legal reason to travel. Students should be aware that they may be fined up to £5,000 if they do not have a reasonable excuse to travel, such as returning home once before 29 April.

Before considering travel, students are advised to consult Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office [advice for the country they intend to visit or transit through](#). Some countries have closed their borders, and any country may further restrict travel or bring in new rules with little warning. Students should also consider the requirements on re-entry to England before travelling and must follow all the rules for [re-entering the UK](#).

International students and COVID vaccination

International students who live in the UK and are registered with a General Practitioner (GP) will be able to access the COVID-19 vaccine, just as they are currently able to access healthcare. This means that, as it stands at the time of publication, older international students or those with underlying medical conditions will fall into priority categories, in the same way as the domestic population. Individuals will be contacted by their GP to book their vaccine via an online or telephone system – there is no need for students to proactively contact their GP about the COVID-19 vaccine.

When students arrive in the UK, they should register with a local GP surgery as soon as possible. Anyone who lives in the UK is entitled to receive NHS Primary Care medical services at a general practice (GPs) surgery for free, at the point of use. There may be a GP surgery attached to their university. GPs are trained and experienced in diagnosing and treating a range of health problems.

Travel Guidance for Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps

This section of the guidance is for organisers of Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps (ESC) exchanges with participants planning to travel in the UK or overseas, and for those who have participants 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.

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.

Providers who have Erasmus+ participants who are students at non-UK providers considering entering the UK to begin or resume an exchange, or UK providers who are re-entering the UK after a period overseas participating in an exchange need to ensure all of their participants:

- review the information in the section on arrival procedures for students travelling from overseas
- comply with all quarantine and self-isolation requirements that apply to them

Providers who have Erasmus+ participants who are UK students who are considering starting an exchange overseas need to ensure all their participants review the information on [arrival procedure for students travelling to the UK from overseas](#).

Before starting a placement, providers should consult with their participants to confirm details and ensure all UK students participating in trips abroad:

- check the [Living in guide](#) and travel advice for the country they will be visiting, being clear with participants that their placement may not be able to continue as originally planned

- be ready to comply with local isolation, testing or quarantine requirements, and will need to rely on the local health system
- If they need to return early from their placement, they should contact you as their home provider to let you know of their plans

If you have any UK participants who need emergency help from the UK government while overseas because the country they are in will not allow them to travel back to the UK, or there are no commercial travel options available, you can direct them to 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.

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 or, where your participants are required to provide their own cover, ensure their cover meets your requirements.

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 Devolved Administration. Within England, students are legally permitted to return to their term-time accommodation or attend their HE provider where reasonably necessary for the purposes of a HE course of study. This includes travel to and from the Devolved Administrations. There are restrictions for [students arriving from overseas](#). Students travelling from overseas with a connecting or onward flight in England to the Devolved Administrations should follow the advice in the [Travelling to the Devolved Administration\(s\) via a connecting flight in England](#) section above.



Department
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