

STUDY UK COVID-19 MESSAGING & FAQs

V13 February 2021

MESSAGING

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MESSAGING

TEACHING IN 2020-21

1/3

Across the UK, quality teaching is taking place this academic year. Universities are providing high quality, flexible options to international students, such as studying online or facilitating later start dates.

There are some exciting and innovative examples of high-quality online learning being delivered by institutions across the UK.

For example, some universities have created virtual ward rounds with virtual patients to mimic clinical decision making for their medical students, while others have developed new ways for students to conduct field work, including the use of hi-res photographs, Google Earth and drone-scans.

If you have any questions about your course, please contact your chosen or prospective university directly.

UK degrees are of a globally high standard and are internationally valuable whatever form they take - whether they are delivered in person or have some elements online.

The UK higher education system demands high quality teaching, and any changes put in place by UK universities due to Covid-19 must adhere to the usual [high-quality standards](#). This is the case whether teaching takes place in person or online.

International students are guaranteed to learn at the same world-leading institutions, with quality teaching and great employment prospects.

MESSAGING

TEACHING IN 2020-21

2/3

Universities have been adapting by creating blended programmes of events and activities to ensure students are welcomed and to help ensure safe social interaction.

We know that studying in the UK is about so much more than what you learn in the classroom. Whether you are in the UK or undertaking your studies online – your university is there to support you.

UK universities are helping new international students to find information, feel connected and prepared to settle in. There are online platforms where regular events are hosted so students can meet each other and connect virtually. Universities are also helping to facilitate things like online book clubs, quizzes and support services.

If you have any concerns about online learning and WiFi access, please contact your university.

MESSAGING

TEACHING IN 2020-21

3/3

Universities are innovative environments and UK universities at the forefront of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Universities have never been more critical. Covid-19 has highlighted the crucial role that universities play in developing and sharing knowledge, bringing together the best minds and facilitating collaborative research to meet the challenge of the pandemic – epidemiologists are sharing their expertise and virologists are leading the development of vaccinations.

Across the world, many countries are adapting and responding to the current crisis by finding new ways of delivering services and managing our everyday lives. Education provision is also affected, and students can expect some things to be different. But universities by nature are innovative environments and they will adapt and evolve to continue to deliver world-class tuition to their students.

Making the decision to leave home and move to another country to study at a university brings challenges for international students, but it also indicates a strong commitment to embrace change and discover new ways of learning.

MESSAGING

WELLBEING

All universities are working hard to welcome international students and have action procedures in place to keep students, staff and local communities safe.

UK universities have implemented a number of Covid-19 support services that international students can access, such as airport pick up services, support through self-isolation periods and food packages. Universities are also offering increased mental health support during the pandemic, with many putting initiatives in place which support students in keeping active and that help them to socialise safely. This includes online activities that facilitate students meeting others during periods when they are required to self-isolate, or for those who are unable to travel to the UK just yet. They also have plans in place to support students if they are required to self-isolate or if local lockdowns are introduced.

If any international students are struggling or have any concerns, we would encourage them to contact their university's student support services.

A programme of mental health support for students during Covid-19, Student Space, has been created for students in England and Wales. Whether it's your mental health, your studies, money, housing or relationships, there are resources and support available to you on the [Student Space website](#).

MESSAGING

PUBLIC HEALTH

1/2

The NHS is available to international students.

The UK's NHS (National Health Service) is one of the world's most advanced healthcare systems, offering safe and modern treatment. Our amazing NHS has taken care of people from around the world during this global pandemic and will continue to do so.

The NHS is an excellent service and is available to all international students. As part of your student visa application, applicants are required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge. The Immigration Health Surcharge costs £470 per year for a student, giving students access to NHS services without further charge (subject to a few exceptions, such as prescription charges in England). Find out more about this [here](#).

International students will always be able to access treatment that clinicians consider is immediately necessary or urgent at no upfront cost.

The NHS can also provide international students with specific Covid-19 advice through a new Covid-19 [online service](#) or by calling 111. No charges apply to testing for coronavirus, even if the result is negative, or to any treatment provided in relation to coronavirus if the result is positive or up to the point that it is negatively diagnosed.

[Visit the NHS website for Covid-19 support and advice.](#)

As an international student, you should register for a GP (General Practitioner) as soon as possible on arrival to the UK. Your university will be able to advise on which practice to register with in your local area.

MESSAGING

PUBLIC HEALTH

2/2

The UK government advises that you wear a face covering over your nose and mouth in enclosed spaces.

It is now a legal requirement to wear a face covering over your nose and mouth on public transport in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. You must also wear a face covering in most indoor spaces in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, such as shops.

[View the UK government guidance on face coverings.](#)

The UK government is taking a proactive approach to sharing information with the public.

Visit the [GOV.UK website](#) for all the latest information from the UK government about Covid-19.

The UK government has provided guidance for cleaning of non-healthcare settings, which covers environments such as student accommodation and other spaces within the community. Universities will be putting measures in place to ensure campuses are clean and compliant with [government guidelines](#).

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced [guidance on self-isolation and social distancing for students living in university or college halls of residence](#).

MESSAGING

TRAVEL

Universities will support students on their arrival to the UK.

Please note that passengers from a [list of countries](#) are banned from travelling to the UK due to Covid-19 strains. If you have been in, or travelled through, any of these countries, you will be refused entry to the UK.

If you are not from one of these countries, please note that all [international arrivals to the UK](#) must currently:

- supply your contact and accommodation information
- provide proof of a negative Covid-19 test, taken up to 72 hours before departure (more information on pre-departure testing is available for passengers travelling to [England, Scotland, Wales](#) or [Northern Ireland](#))
- self-isolate in your accommodation for 10 days on arrival.

From 15 December 2020, if you're arriving into England from a country not on the travel corridor list, you can take part in the [Test to Release for International Travel scheme](#). If you opt into this scheme, you can choose to pay for a private Covid-19 test five days after arriving in the UK. If the test is negative, you can stop self-isolating. This scheme is not available for those travelling to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Remember that travel and quarantine rules are subject to change, so please continue to check the latest rules while making your plans, and stay in touch with your university.

We know how daunting moving to another country can be, and we want to reassure you that universities are working hard to ensure that you know what to expect before you travel to the UK and are welcomed and supported on arrival and throughout your time at university.

MESSAGING

LANGUAGE

TESTS

The impact of Covid-19 has affected testing centres around the world. Students should check with their university for the latest advice on how they can provide suitable evidence of their English proficiency, as universities can set their own rules.

Students should visit the [IELTS website](#) for the [latest updates on IELTS test arrangements](#).

Students may be able to take [IELTS Indicator](#), an online test, taken at home and marked by IELTS examiners. This is available in some countries for those who are unable to attend an IELTS test centre due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Students in China can also take the TOEFL English exam, more details are available on this [here](#).

Some universities are accepting the [Duolingo English Test](#) as certification of English proficiency, another online test available to international students.

[PTE Academic](#) assesses English listening, reading, speaking and writing all via computer in a single three-hour test session.

If you have been affected by the suspension of language tests, please contact your test provider with any enquiries.

MESSAGING

VISAS

The UK government is working to ensure that existing processes are as flexible as possible, so that international students who are planning to study in the UK can do so.

You only need to apply for your student visa when you can actually travel to the UK – you can study remotely without one before you travel.

For the latest information on UK Visa Application Centres please visit:

- [TLS contact](#) for Europe, Africa and parts of the Middle East
- [VFS Global](#) for all other countries
- UK service points ([UKVCAS](#))

If your local visa centre is closed due to local restrictions, you can still familiarise yourself with UK visa requirements and talk to your chosen university about evidence you may need to supply for a visa application.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK government has implemented a number of concessions to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions. This has included offering extensions of visas, relaxing the rules on switching in the UK, and enabling international students to continue existing courses or commence new courses of study by distance or blended learning for the duration of the 2020-21 academic year. Find out more about [concessions for students on GOV.UK](#).

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

If you have any immigration queries related to Covid-19, please contact the government's Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre at CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk.

MESSAGING

GRADUATE ROUTE

From summer 2021, the Graduate Route will enable you to stay in the UK and work, or look for work, at any skill level for two years (or three years for PhD students) after graduation for undergraduate and master's students.

This is a fantastic opportunity for international students that will help you to take your first steps into employment after graduation in the UK.

The Graduate Route will be available to international students who successfully complete their degree at undergraduate level or above at a UK Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance by summer 2021, or after.

If you're beginning your studies in the 2020-21 academic year, you will be able to benefit from this new Route, even if you begin your degree online in your home country due to Covid-19.

If you are due to complete your course in summer 2021 but have been unable to travel to the UK just yet, you will be eligible to apply for the Graduate Route when it launches, as long as you arrive in the UK before 6 April 2021 and complete the final semester of your studies in the UK. Please check additional entry requirements and restrictions that have been introduced before travelling to the UK, and only travel when your university has confirmed face-to-face teaching will resume for your course.

If you are starting a one-year master's course in January 2021, you will need to arrive in the UK by 27 September 2021 and complete the final semester of your studies in the UK in order to be eligible to apply for the Graduate Route.

This is part of the UK government's concessions to students who have, or will be, applying for student visas in light of Covid-19. View the updated guidance on [GOV.UK here](#), and for more information on the Graduate Route, visit [the Study UK website](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Universities

Public health

Travel

Visas

Other

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UNIVERSITIES 1/3

What support is available to international students in the UK?

We understand this is a very difficult time for many students in the UK. We would encourage any international students who are struggling or have concerns to reach out – contact your university’s international office or student support services.

UK universities have implemented a number of Covid-19 support services that international students can access, such as food packages, support through self-isolation periods and additional technology to support their online learning. Universities are also offering increased mental health support during the pandemic, with many putting initiatives in place which support students in keeping active and that help them to socialise safely.

If you’re an international student in the UK, make sure your university knows about your circumstances and don’t hesitate to get in touch with them if you need support.

Is there any financial support provided to existing international students?

Many universities and colleges have student hardship funds, and the UK government has increased the amount of funding available to universities to support students experiencing hardship as a result of Covid-19. This funding is available to international and EU students.

Universities are on hand to support all students who are experiencing financial difficulty as a result of Covid-19, particularly in cases where students have lost their part-time jobs.

Any student who is experiencing financial difficulty as a result of Covid-19 should talk to their university directly, and in some cases, contact your accommodation provider.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UNIVERSITIES 2/3

What is 'blended learning'?

'Blended learning' is where teaching is delivered through a mix of formats. For example, lectures will be delivered online, supported by online discussions. Courses that involve practical teaching sessions will be delivered in a safe way, with physical distancing and personal protective equipment provided where appropriate.

Some face-to-face study takes place under a blended learning model, in small groups that will be made safer through the creation of 'bubbles'. This means the same group of students will be taught together throughout the term.

Teaching through blended learning means the safety of students and staff remains top priority, and high-quality teaching can continue. All learning is being regularly reviewed in line with local public health guidelines.

The UK government has confirmed that it will allow student sponsors to sponsor international students for blended learning for the 2020-21 academic year - see guidance [here](#).

Is there a possibility of relaxation of entry requirements to study by universities for students impacted by the virus?

Please contact your chosen institution for further information on entry requirements.

If I have problems with my accommodation, who do I go to?

Whether your accommodation is privately-owned or you are living in university accommodation, speak to your university in the first instance regarding any queries you may have.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

UNIVERSITIES 3/3

Will there be reduction of fees with online learning?

UK universities are delivering full degree programmes to their enrolled students this academic year, through a mix of online and face-to-face teaching. Therefore no universities have announced plans to reduce their tuition fees.

The UK's academic reputation is world-renowned. Our innovative teaching methods produce successful, versatile graduates who are sought-after by employers around the world. The UK higher education system demands high quality teaching, and any changes put in place by UK universities due to Covid-19 must adhere to the same high-quality standards as usual. This is the case whether teaching takes place in person or online.

Are students still able to find a part time job in the UK?

Many, but not all, students on a student visa can work. This depends on the type of sponsor you have. If you are allowed to work, you will be subject to maximum weekly hours in term time.

If you are eligible to work in the UK, you can apply for jobs, though it might be difficult in the current climate. However, some employers are recruiting additional staff to deal with changes in their way of working. Find out more about working in the UK on a student visa on [UKCISA's website](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH 1/3

What should I do if I think I have coronavirus?

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness or the illness in any of your household members is worsening.

If it's not an emergency, contact NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For any emergency conditions, if you need to call an ambulance, dial 999 and inform the call handler or operator if you or your relative have coronavirus symptoms as well as any emergency conditions.

When to get a Covid-19 test

Get a test as soon as possible if you have any symptoms of coronavirus.

The symptoms are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

The test needs to be done in the first eight days of having symptoms.

You do not need to get a test if you have no symptoms or if you have different symptoms. Find out more on the [NHS website](#).

Tell people you've been in close contact with that you have symptoms.

You may want to tell people you've been in close contact with in the past 48 hours that you might have coronavirus.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH 2/3

Are there steps or precautions in place to ensure the safety of international students?

UK universities are going above and beyond to ensure that students' physical and mental health and wellbeing are prioritised.

The UK government has [provided guidance to universities](#) on how to operate safely, and universities have taken a range of measures for campuses and accommodation to be Covid-secure. This includes increases in cleaning, ventilation, handwashing facilities, social distancing and advice on rules of contact and social mixing. Universities have plans in place to support students if they are required to self-isolate.

All UK universities are required to have outbreak management plans. In the event of a local outbreak of Covid-19, universities will work with local public health officials to consider moving to other modes of teaching that reduce face-to-face contact.

The UK government has also supported the creation of a programme of mental health support for students, Student Space, for students in England and Wales. Find out more on the [Student Space website](#), and contact your chosen university for information on what measures they are taking to ensure the safety of international students.

In case of an emergency, who do I contact?

If you have a medical emergency in the UK, dial 999 immediately. If it's not an emergency but you need medical support, contact your GP or NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you can call NHS 111. If you have any other problems relating to your accommodation, your studies or your life at university, contact your university's international or support offices and they will be able to help you.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH 3/3

Do I have access to the NHS in case of emergencies, and how soon can I access NHS services on arrival to the UK?

The NHS (National Health Service) is an excellent service and is available to all international students.

As part of your student visa application, you are required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge. The Immigration Health Surcharge costs £470 per year for a student, and it gives you access to NHS services without further charge (subject to a few exceptions, such as prescription charges in England). Find out more about this [here](#).

International students will always be able to access treatment that clinicians consider is immediately necessary or urgent at no upfront cost, and this is the case as soon as you arrive in the UK. However, you should register with a GP (General Practitioner) as soon as possible on arrival to the UK. Your university will be able to advise on which practices are available in your local area.

Your GP will be your first point of contact for any medical enquiries.

If your GP is closed, or if you are in need of support before you have registered with a practice, you can still access NHS services. You can call 111 which will direct you to the best local service.

If it's an emergency, call 999 or visit your local A&E (Accident and Emergency) department, which manages life-threatening emergencies.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

VISAS 1/3

Will there be any concessions for students struggling to get a student visa for 2020-21 study?

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK government has implemented a number of concessions to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions. This has included offering extensions of visas, relaxing the rules on switching in the UK, and enabling international students to continue existing courses or commence new courses of study by distance or blended learning for the duration of the 2020-21 academic year. Find out more about [concessions for students on GOV.UK](#).

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

If you have any immigration queries related to Covid-19, please contact the government's Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre at CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

VISAS 2/3

Will the Graduate Route be affected by students studying online?

The new Graduate Route will enable you to work, or look for work in the UK, at any skill level for two years (this rises to three years for PhD graduates) after graduation.

If you're beginning your studies in the 2020-21 academic year, you will be able to benefit from this new Route, even if you begin your degree online in your home country due to Covid-19.

If you are due to complete your course in summer 2021 but have been unable to travel to the UK just yet, you will be eligible to apply for the Graduate Route when it launches, as long as you arrive in the UK before 6 April 2021 and complete the final semester of your studies in the UK. Please check additional entry requirements and restrictions that have been introduced before travelling to the UK, and only travel when your university has confirmed face-to-face teaching will resume for your course.

If you are starting a one-year master's course in January 2021, you will need to arrive in the UK by 27 September 2021 and complete the final semester of your studies in the UK in order to be eligible to apply for the Graduate Route.

This is part of the UK government's concessions to students who have, or will be, applying for student visas in light of Covid-19. View the updated guidance on [GOV.UK here](#), and for more information on the Graduate Route, visit [the Study UK website](#).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

VISAS 3/3

What should I do if my 30 day or 90 day visa vignette to work, study or join family has expired?

If your 90 day vignette has expired, you will need to apply for a replacement by completing this [online form](#).

Only apply for a new visa, or apply to replace an expired vignette, when you are confident you can travel to the UK. The new vignette will be valid for a period of 90 days - if you cannot travel during this time, you may need to apply again to update your vignette.

For the latest advice please check [GOV.UK](#).

Who should I contact in my country for UK visa enquiries and travel advice?

For specific visa enquiries, please contact your local [Visa Application Centre](#). If you need to contact UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration) about a current application, [visit GOV.UK](#).

For travel advice, contact your local [British Embassy or High Commission](#).

Your [local British Council office](#) will be able to provide more general advice on travel and visas to the UK.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

TRAVEL 1/3

What do I need to know about travelling to the UK?

Please note that passengers from a [list of countries](#) are banned from travelling to the UK due to Covid-19 strains. If you have been in, or travelled through, any of these countries, you will be refused entry to the UK.

If you are not from one of these countries, please note that all [international arrivals to the UK](#) must currently:

- supply your contact and accommodation information
- provide proof of a negative Covid-19 test, taken up to 72 hours before departure (more information on pre-departure testing is available for passengers travelling to [England](#), [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) or [Northern Ireland](#))
- self-isolate in your accommodation for 10 days on arrival.

If you're arriving into England, you can take part in the [Test to Release for International Travel scheme](#). If you opt into this scheme, you can choose to pay for a private Covid-19 test five days after arriving in the UK. If the test is negative, you can stop self-isolating. This scheme is not available for those travelling to Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

Remember that travel and quarantine rules are subject to change, so please continue to check the latest rules while making your plans, and stay in touch with your university.

We know how daunting moving to another country can be, and we want to reassure you that universities are working hard to ensure that you are welcomed and supported on arrival, and throughout your time at university.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

TRAVEL 2/3

How will I have access to banks and groceries if I'm under lockdown restrictions or self-isolating on arrival to the UK?

We recommend arranging an international bank account or bank card before you arrive in the UK, as you may be unable to open a bank account in your first two weeks. This will make it much easier for you to buy food and other essentials in case you need to self-isolate for 10 days on arrival. Don't bring large amounts of cash with you.

Lots of local food supermarkets offer online delivery services. You can also order food online from local take-away restaurants to be delivered to your accommodation.

Please see the links below for more information:

- [Asda, Iceland, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose](#)

Take-away services:

- [Deliveroo, Just Eat, Uber Eats](#)

Remember that your university will have lots of measures in place to support you if you need to self-isolate, so get in touch for more information.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

TRAVEL 3/3

I'm studying in an area that's in lockdown. Can I return home?

The current guidance in the UK encourages everyone to stay at home unless you need to leave for essential reasons – such as exercise, food shopping or for medical reasons. International students in the UK should stay at their term-time address and should not leave to travel, either abroad or within the UK, unless for a legally-permitted reason. Such reasons would include moving home permanently or if you have a medical need to do so – which would include for mental health reasons.

Please note that there are additional measures in place to minimise travel across international borders and reduce Covid-19 transmission. Everyone travelling out of England will need to declare their purpose of travel in a form which will be checked before departure. Anyone without a valid reason for travel will be directed to return home and may face a fine.

If you wish to return home, you should also consider [restrictions in your home country](#) as you may be required to self-isolate when you return, or there may be other measures in place at the border.

[Find out more on GOV.UK](#), and remember to contact your university for advice on your current situation.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

OTHER
1/3

What's the outlook for graduate employability for international students?

UK graduates are among the most employable in the world (QS Graduate Employability Rankings). 83 per cent of international graduates credit their UK degree for helping them get a job (International Graduate Outcomes, UUKI). So by gaining a prestigious UK education, you'll be respected by employers and academics from all over the world.

The global economic impact of Covid-19 is not yet known. Across the world, many countries are adapting and responding to the crisis by finding new ways of delivering services and managing our everyday lives. This will inevitably impact on the jobs market, creating opportunities in new industries and making others obsolete.

How does the UK leaving the European Union affect students from the EU?

Please visit the Study UK [EU student advice](#) page for the latest information.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

OTHER 2/3

As an international student, will I be able to get the vaccine in the UK?

The UK's NHS (National Health Service) is currently offering the Covid-19 vaccination to people most at risk from coronavirus. The vaccine will be offered more widely as soon as possible, to people in order of age and risk.

International students who live in the UK and are registered with a GP (general practitioner) will be able to access the Covid-19 vaccination in the UK, just as they are currently able to access healthcare. This means that older international students or those with underlying medical conditions will fall into priority categories, in the same way as anyone else in the UK.

The NHS will let you know when it's your turn to have the vaccine. [Find out more on the NHS website.](#)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

OTHER 3/3

What is the current situation in the UK?

The UK is currently in a period of tighter national restrictions. Most UK universities are teaching online for the first part of the spring term, and students are advised not to return to campus (with some [exceptions for certain courses](#) which cannot take place online).

Any international students travelling from overseas for the spring term should carefully consider when to travel, particularly if your course does not require you to be on campus until later in the term. Stay in touch with your university for advice on what the latest guidance means for your studies.

There will be continued support available to international students who are already in the UK, as well as any students who are due to arrive in the UK in the coming months. Regular Covid-19 testing is being made available to students across UK campuses.

Universities are prepared to deliver high-quality teaching as the spring term begins, whether through online learning, face-to-face or a blend of teaching methods.

Remember to check [advice on entering the UK](#), and the travel advice in your own country, as you make your travel plans.

View the relevant guidance for the spring term 2021 below:

- [England](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)

LINKS AND CONTACTS

Please see below for where the key messages in this document are reflected on the Study UK site:

- [Covid-19 information for current students](#)
- [Study in the UK in 2021-22](#) (information for prospective students)
- [Covid-19 FAQs](#)
- [EU student advice](#)

For any questions, please contact:
Kitty Jones, Study UK Stakeholder and Communications Manager Kitty.Jones@britishcouncil.org

You can also get in touch with
GREATteam@britishcouncil.org

