Dear Colleague

I am writing regarding coronavirus (Covid-19) in the hope of addressing some of the questions that are being asked by colleagues across the College. The nature of the virus means that the situation we face may rapidly change, and so our response now may be different to our response in the coming days, weeks or even months. It is also important to acknowledge that in such a dynamic environment, we won’t always have answers to the many questions we all have.

Access to advice
College advice on the coronavirus is being posted on the staff intranet the staff intranet and is being updated regularly. The staff intranet also hosts any relevant advice from the Government and Public Health England.

In addition to the staff intranet, we are posting advice on the student intranet and are using digital display screens in public spaces across campus; for example, in the Emily Wilding Davison Building. You will notice that government advice on the virus, its symptoms and hand washing are now in places like the Senior Common Room.

Planning activity
There are no reported cases of coronavirus across the College community currently. Therefore, our response to the virus is at a ‘precautionary’ stage only. Nevertheless, the College requires plans to contain, delay and then mitigate the consequences of the virus spreading. Please be assured a number of working groups are actively considering the people-facing, academic-related, operational and financial issues that may apply. This work remains ongoing and will be shared, where appropriate, in due course.

College-related foreign travel
The College is using the government’s travel advice. In response, we have suspended all College-related travel to China and to the Lombardy and Veneto regions of Italy.

The advice for South Korea is that anyone who has travelled to Daegu or the county of Cheongdo must self-isolate on return to the UK. Similar requirements apply in the case of travel back from Iran. Any
A colleague wishing to travel to either South Korea or Iran must first discuss their proposed trip with the College’s Director of Health and Safety, Douglas Searle.

Colleagues intending to travel to Hong Kong, Macao, Cambodia, Italy, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam should be aware that specific advice has been issued.

In these cases, a few sensible precautions may be necessary. For example, a flight re-routed away from a certain city, or a decision to use a hotel in a different city. Here, again, options should be discussed with the College’s Director of Health and Safety, Douglas Searle. Any additional costs occurred to agreed changes to itineraries will be signed off by the Director of Health and Safety, on behalf of the College.

The government is not advising against travel to any other country, or territory, as a result of coronavirus. Therefore, our position is that travel outside the above listed ‘suspended countries and territories’, should continue as normal.

Travel Insurance
The following applies to all College-related foreign travel and College-related domestic travel except single day travel.

Staff and students are covered by the College’s Travel Insurance Policy when they are engaged in College-related travel provided the College’s Insurance Officer has been informed of the trip in advance, any relevant risk assessments and associated administration has been completed, and the travel is not against medical advice or advice from the government.

At this time, it is imperative that all College-related travel is planned in this way. If you are due to travel on College-related business, including research trips or conference attendance, please ensure you comply with the following:

For all business/research related trips, colleagues are required to log their trip, at least seven working days in advance, on the online travel insurance request form which can be found here on the intranet.

For all trips, the government’s travel advice must be followed and re-checked prior to departure. In addition to the implications on travel of coronavirus, the FCO provides information about travel to all overseas countries.

If the government’s advice is ‘against all travel’ or ‘against all but essential travel’ then the College’s travel insurance policy will not provide cover if the traveler has travelled against this advice. Colleagues should refer immediately to insurancequeries@rhul.ac.uk or call the 24/7 Assistance number provided, if travel is immediately imminent and the government’s advice has changed. Contact details for 24/7 Assistance can be found here: Worldwide Medical and Security Assistance advice.

Personal vacation
The College’s policy is a business travel insurance policy only - it is unable to cover a personal vacation. Any personal vacation will need to be covered by your own personal travel insurance cover.

The insurer will, however, allow incidental days on a business trip to be covered, dependent on the length. The guidelines are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Trip Duration</th>
<th>Holiday Allowance</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less than 5 working days</td>
<td>0 Days can be covered</td>
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<tr>
<td>5-12 working days</td>
<td>2 Days can be covered</td>
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<tr>
<td>13-21 working days</td>
<td>5 Days can be covered</td>
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Enforced quarantine overseas, repatriation, medical costs
Your compliance with the College’s travel insurance policy is required in order for you to be covered in the event of enforced quarantine overseas, repatriation, and any associated medical costs. You will be covered provided you have complied. For all queries on cover, please email insurancequeries@rhul.ac.uk

Returning travellers
The government has issued advice for returning travellers. As the situation develops this may change. Prior to your return, and on your return, you should check the government pages to determine if new advice has been published.

Your personal details
Given the potential spread of coronavirus, we would ask you to ensure that your personal details, including next of kin and emergency contact details, are up-to-date on MyView. If you have any questions or queries on accessing MyView please contact the HR Systems Team at hrsystems@rhul.ac.uk.

Child care commitments
One possible scenario resulting from the outbreak of the virus is that schools might close. In this event, colleagues with child care responsibilities will be asked to make any arrangements they can to manage child care so that they can continue to work as normal. We recognise that this may not be possible. If you need to stay at home because, for example, your child’s school has been closed as a result of coronavirus, you should inform your line manager who will notify the Human Resources Department. The absence from the workplace will be recorded by Human Resources for the purposes of monitoring the impact of coronavirus only. It is recognised that in some instances colleagues will be able to work from home while others, due to the nature of their roles, will not.

Colleagues who are concerned whether they should self-isolate
If you have been in contact with someone confirmed as being infected with coronavirus, or have returned from an affected area identified by the UK Chief Medical Officer as high risk, and you are feeling unwell with a cough, difficulty breathing or fever, you should stay at home and use the NHS 111 online coronavirus service or call NHS 111.

If you are required by NHS111 to self-isolate, please inform your line manager and the Human Resources Department. This information will be recorded by Human Resources for the purposes of monitoring the impact of the coronavirus only. Where colleagues are well enough to, you should work from home. It would be helpful, for those colleagues for whom it is appropriate, to consider now what arrangements you need to make to enable you to access College systems from home should you need to.

What can you do to minimise the risk of infection
The advice from the government and Public Health England is as follows:
1. Wash your hands more often than usual, for 20 seconds using soap and hot water, particularly after coughing, sneezing and blowing your nose, or after being in public areas where other people are doing so. Use hand sanitiser if that’s all you have access to.
2. To reduce the spread of germs when you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) if you don’t have a tissue, and throw the tissue away immediately. Then wash your hands or use a hand sanitising gel.
3. Clean and disinfect regularly touched objects and surfaces using your regular cleaning products to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other people.
Thank you for your support and understanding during this time. I urge all colleagues to regularly monitor our staff intranet for the latest updates, or go direct to the Government and Public Health England’s information. You may also wish to follow @RHunistaff on Twitter. I will write again as and when the situation merits.

Dr David Ashton
Deputy Principal
4 March 2020