The scheme in general

1. **What is the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme?**

   On 20 March 2020, the Government unveiled a package of support for organisations impacted by the coronavirus (Covid-19) situation, including grants available under the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme).

   The scheme is designed to help organisations who have been severely hit by Covid-19 to continue paying employees who would otherwise be made redundant or placed on an unpaid period of lay-off. Organisations can furlough employees and apply for a grant covering 80% of their salary up to a maximum of £2500 per month. A furloughed employee is one who it's agreed will not be carrying out any work for the College.

   The College has agreed that it will cover 100% of salary of staff it furloughs.

   The scheme is currently due to run for 4 months from 1 March 2020.

   HMRC will audit organisations’ application of the scheme and can choose not to pay a grant, if it does not meet the eligibility criteria.

2. **Can the College use the scheme?**

   HMRC guidance states that ‘organisations which continue to receive government funding should not furlough staff whose salaries that funding could typically be considered to fund, and therefore will not need to access the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme’.

   This means that we are unable to access the scheme for the majority of College activities but there are some activities which can be demonstrated are not covered by public funding.

   The scheme applies to eligible staff employed by the College on or before 19 March 2020 on any employment contract including fixed term, hourly paid and zero hours. Agency staff may be eligible if paid directly by the College. The scheme does not, however, include self-employed workers.

   To be eligible for the grant, when on furlough, an employee cannot undertake any work for the College.

3. **Who can the College furlough under the Scheme?**

   The main group will be where it is not possible for staff to carry out their work as normal, either because we have closed facilities, or removed access to the work location and it is not...
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possible for the work to be carried out from home, or where the volume of work in a particular work area has reduced because of Covid-19. In all instances, it is directly because of the impact that Covid-19 has had on the work – in normal business, all of these positions are important to the College.

The College can also furlough:

• Employees who are at very high risk of severe illness from Covid-19, and who have been advised to shield themselves for at least 12 weeks and they are unable to work from home.

• Employees who are unable to work at all because they have caring responsibilities resulting from Covid-19.

Employees who are working but reduced hours are not eligible for the scheme.

The College cannot ask for a grant to cover the costs of any publicly funded posts.

4. Are casual workers and zero-hours contract workers covered?

Yes, if they are on the PAYE system as at 20 March 2020.

5. Can agency workers be placed on furlough?

Yes. This is for the agency to decide.

Individual questions answered

6. Why has my post been furloughed?

The decision to furlough roles is not by any means associated with the value put on your role by the College.

If the College's need for the work you do has reduced or stopped because of Covid-19, or you are not able to do the work from home, the College will seek to get a grant under the job retention scheme to help cover your salary costs. This will only be possible if the job is not already covered by public funds.

Where there is a need to keep a skeleton staff group working, HR will work with local managers to identify which staff will work and which will be furloughed. This will take into account any shielding or caring needs and individual's preference in deciding how to cover the work. Staff may also be rotated between furlough and working on a three-week basis to balance the preferences that staff have to either be furloughed or work.

7. How long will I be furloughed for?
The minimum amount of time that anyone can be furloughed for is three weeks, and at this time the Government scheme is available from 1 March 2020 until 30 June 2020, but it may be extended. The starting date for your furlough will be the date from which you have been unable to work for the College due to Covid-19 and the minimum period that you will be furloughed is 3 weeks.

If circumstances change and the College needs you to return to work before the end of the furlough scheme, you will be contacted and given notice that your role is no longer furloughed and when you should report to work.

Your role may remain furloughed for so long as the scheme remains available if you remain unable to carry out any work, due to caring or shielding responsibilities.

8. What happens to my pay?

Your income will not be affected by being furloughed. The Government scheme will allow the College to make an application for a grant to cover 80% of the pay of furloughed staff (up to a maximum of £2,500 per month (gross salary before tax) per individual) and subject to meeting eligibility criteria. The College will top up pay so you will still get contractual pay as normal.

The College will also continue to make employer pension contributions on your behalf.

9. I submit a pay claim. How will the College calculate my pay?

The College will follow the guidance that is set out in the scheme which states that pay should be the larger of either:

• the same month’s earning from 2019; or
• average monthly wages from the 2019-20 tax year

Where employees have been engaged for less than 12 months before the claim, the College will use an average of the actual monthly earnings from the College since their start date.

10. The work I do can be done from home, but I have significant caring responsibilities and I am struggling to do any work.

We recognise that during the current difficult circumstances, if you have children at home or have other caring responsibilities and are working from home, you may struggle to work your normal hours, or commit to a full day of work. Guidance for carers and line managers has been added to the working well remotely hub

If you are unable to carry out any work at all you should talk in the first instance with your line manager.

We may be able to furlough your position if it is eligible under the scheme rules. If the role is not eligible, this simply means that we cannot request a grant to cover some of your salary costs. It does not change the need for you and your line manager to discuss and reach an agreement about appropriate adjustments to recognise your caring responsibilities.

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11. What happens if I have received a letter/text from the NHS to self-isolate for 12 weeks?

If you received the letter/text from the NHS about mandatory 12-weeks self-isolation, you should share this letter/text with your line manager or Human Resources. This letter confirms that you are in the high-risk group of vulnerable individuals and requires you to stay home for 12 weeks. Your line manager will work with you to establish ways in which your role can be done from your home. If the College establishes that your role cannot be undertaken from home, you will be placed on furlough for the period up until your self-isolation period ends.

12. What happens if I do not want to be furloughed?

The need to furlough a position will arise where the need for the work you do has reduced or stopped because of Covid-19, or you are not able to do the work from home.

Being confirmed as furloughed simply allows the College to request a grant under the scheme to cover some of your salary costs if the position is eligible under the scheme. As the College has committed to pay salary costs as normal to staff, there is no change to your terms and conditions of employment, if you are furloughed. You are however released from any obligation you would normally have to undertake work in return for the salary.

If you have a preference to work, and work is available for you to do, such as when a skeleton crew is needed, you should ensure that you manager is aware of your preference to work and this can be taken into account.

If you believe that you can and will be doing work for the College, and you have been advised that your role is to be furloughed, please speak to your line manager as the scheme does not allow furloughed workers to do any work for the College.

13. If I am not furloughed now, might I be later?

Yes, the College can use the Scheme any time during the initial four-month period, which began on 1 March, for those eligible PAYE employees working at the College on or before 19 March 2020.

14. Can the College alternate which employees are furloughed during the coronavirus crisis?

The Government guidelines regarding the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme state that the minimum period a worker can be furloughed for is three weeks. For this reason, it is believed that the College may move employees between periods of work and periods of furlough, providing they are furloughed for at least three weeks at a time. The practicalities and desirability of such arrangements will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis.

15. How does being furloughed impact my employment with the College?

Being furloughed doesn't have any effect on your employment status at the College or your terms and conditions of employment. As such all your contractual obligations continue to
apply during furlough. Being furloughed does mean that there is no obligation for you to do any work for the College, and indeed you must not do so.

Continuous service is also unaffected, and your rights to benefit from policies such as sick pay or the range of family policies is unchanged.

You are also remain covered by policies that offer protection from discrimination, bullying and unfair dismissal.

16. Does this suggest that my role is redundant?

The job retention scheme is about retaining jobs and avoiding redundancies being made by providing organisations with access to a grant to cover salary costs during this difficult and unprecedented time.

Responding to the Covid-19 outbreak is bringing changes to many jobs across the College. For some colleagues this means working in different ways, for some it is not possible to carry out their work at all, and for some they may be prevented from carrying out work because of significant caring or shielding needs. All of these reasons are a result of the Covid-19 outbreak and in particular the restrictions social distancing have placed on us.

17. Does this mean I’m going to be made redundant in the future?

No. Should there be a requirement to make posts redundant at some point, decisions will be based on the College’s future requirements and will be handled through the College’s Redundancy Policy including consultation with the trade unions.

18. What happens if employees have more than one job?

The government has confirmed that it is possible for someone to be furloughed from by one employer and and continue to work for another, or to be furloughed by both. Each employment should be treated separately. So, if an employee has more than one employer, they can be furloughed for each job, and the £2,500 cap will apply to each individually. If you have two jobs at Royal Holloway you cannot be furloughed for one job and stay working in another.

19. Am I allowed to work while I’m furloughed?

If the reason you have been furloughed is because the work has reduced, stopped or cannot be done from home, you cannot do any work associated with that job. You can undertake or be asked to undertake training whilst on furlough.

If you have a job at another organisation, you might continue with that work unless you are, separately, furloughed from that role too.

You would be able to work as a volunteer for another organisation while on furlough from the College and there are many national and local schemes for volunteers to support the
NHS or other front line services. You would not be permitted to volunteer for the College while furloughed from your College role.

If you have been furloughed for caring or shielding reasons, it is expected that these restrictions will mean that you are unable to do any other paid work or volunteering.

20. Can I get another job if the College furloughs me

The current protocols concerning additional employment which are part of the Conditions of Service still apply. If you have a full-time role at the College, you must seek agreement from your line manager prior to obtaining any additional employment.

Where staff want to leave the College during furlough to start another job, they can resign in the usual way.

21. How will the College stay in touch during furlough?

During any periods of furlough, your manager will maintain contact with you as appropriate. You will continue to receive updates such as the staff newsletter. When you return to work, a suitable re-induction will be completed to help you settle back into your role if necessary.

22. Can I access my emails?

The College recognises that some people may wish to stay connected with the College and receive the regular newsletters and will therefore access email for that purpose. However, you should not send or reply to any work-related emails while you are furloughed. Please discuss with your line manager or HR the wording of an out-of-office message.

The following is an example of text that can be used:

I am currently out of the office and I am unable to respond to your email as my role has been furloughed as a result of the coronavirus (COVID 19) pandemic. For further information from Royal Holloway, please visit www.RoyalHolloway.ac.uk

23. Can I continue to work on my laptop during furlough?

You are not allowed to undertake work for the College while you are furloughed from your College role. However, you can continue to use your laptop for other purposes.

24. Am I allowed to contact my colleagues?

Yes, it is important for our well being to remain socially connected whilst social distancing measures are in place. The College offers a number of social groups and activities designed to help staff who are working remotely, including book clubs and fitness sessions, which staff whether furloughed or not, may find useful. Links to these will added to the working well remotely hub.
25. What happens to my annual leave during the furlough period?

Annual leave accrues during the time you're furloughed. Many staff (furloughed or not) have been disappointed by not being able to take planned trips. The College position is that leave that had been pre-booked should still be taken as planned. Guidance has been issued to all staff extending the existing policy and practice by allowing up to 8 days of leave to carry forward into the next leave year. Line managers will work with furloughed staff to manage leave in line within the College guidance.

26. What happens to my pension while I’m furloughed?

Your pension contributions continue throughout the furlough period, and the College will maintain the employer contributions also.

27. What happens if I’m sick while I’m furloughed?

Since you are not working for the College while you are furloughed from your College role, it is not necessary to adhere to the College procedures for reporting sickness.

28. While I’m furloughed, am I expected to be available for work?

The College may ask you to return to work at relatively short notice, if circumstances relating to your role at the College change and you are needed to resume normal duties, or because Government guidance on dealing with Covid-19 has changed.

29. What will happen at the end of the furlough period?

You will return to work on your contracted hours and the working pattern you had before the Covid-19 outbreak. Your manager will arrange a re-induction programme to support you when you return to work if this is necessary.

30. What notice will you give me to return to work while I’m furloughed?

The College will provide you with as much notice as it can. However, you must be aware that the response to the Covid-19 outbreak is evolving rapidly and so you may be needed to return to work with little or no notice.

31. What involvement have the Trade Unions had in these arrangements?

The College has worked with the trade unions on this information and the unions will be fully consulted on any further College actions. Members can contact their trade union to discuss any of the issues relating to furlough.