Update to term two teaching

On 6 January we wrote to you to provide details of the national lockdown and the Government instruction for universities to move all teaching online. On Wednesday 27 January 2021, the Government instructed universities to continue to deliver classes online until at least 8 March, with an expectation this will continue to Easter for the majority of students. Due to this announcement, we have made the decision that all classes will remain online until the end of this term (Friday 26 March).

Please read the information below to find out more about term two teaching, rent removal for on-campus accommodation, campus facilities and the support available to you.

Exams and assessments

On 6 January we wrote to you with details of this term’s teaching and we committed to sharing more details on exams and assessments in early February. Next week, on Wednesday 3 February, we will send you details of our 2021 Fairness and Assurance Policy and what our no detriment approaches, implemented over the course of the pandemic, mean for you. You will also have the opportunity to attend a briefing and Q&A co-hosted with the Students’ Union on this year’s approach to assessments on Thursday 4 February, from 5.30-6.30pm, on MS Teams.

Term two teaching

Unfortunately, the demands of the pandemic have meant we have had to constantly reorganise the structure of this academic year. Because of continuing public health issues, the Government has instructed universities to continue to deliver classes online until at least 8 March, with an expectation this will continue to Easter for the majority of students.

Even were there to be the potential to return to face-to-face teaching from 8 March, with the short period remaining between 8 March and the end of term (Friday 26 March), we feel there would be limited opportunities for the whole College to return to face-to-face teaching. Therefore we have reluctantly made the decision to confirm that all classes will remain online until the end of this term. The last day of term is Friday 26 March. Although, we’re disappointed, we hope this will provide useful clarity about how and where you will complete term two.

If the public health situation improves significantly prior to 8 March, we have been advised that it may be possible to bring back face-to-face teaching for a small number of students sometime after this date. This would only apply to students in their final year or on postgraduate programmes where there is essential practical work or performance that cannot be rescheduled in term 3 due to other requirements for those courses. If the Government allows students in this group to return to face-to-face teaching after 8 March, we will contact you (this may be at short notice), but this will be exceptional and so, for now, we recommend that all students plan on the basis that you will complete your studies online until the end of term.

Rent removal for on-campus accommodation

- We will automatically extend the removal of rent until 31 March 2021 if you have a contract for on-campus accommodation, you’re not using your room and you’ve applied for rent removal.
- If, due to the extension of the Government lockdown, you decide that, for academic or wellbeing reasons, you want to leave on-campus accommodation, or have not yet, and would now like to apply for rent removal click here (form will be live from 1 February).
If you are unable to study at home, you are permitted to return to campus but cannot then return home until after lockdown ends. If you have applied to have rent removed for the lockdown period, and you wish to return before 31 March, or do not wish to extend your rent removal, you will need to notify studentservices@royalholloway.ac.uk, and give us five days’ notice, so access to your room can be arranged and your rent removal cancelled from the date you return.

**Plans for a return to campus**

Through our representative body, Universities UK, we are calling on the Government to allow all students to return to their term-time addresses over the Easter vacation (27 March to 25 April), ready for the start of term 3 (Monday 26 April). We will update you towards the end of term on plans for the summer term or once there is clearer guidance from the government on the resumption of face-to-face teaching.

**Campus facilities**

The main campus facilities, including the library, remain open for students who have a compelling reason to use them, such as lack of access to appropriate study spaces or facilities at home and students whose wellbeing could be affected unless they return to campus.

**Testing**

For all students and staff, currently on campus or returning, lateral flow testing is available and we expect everyone studying and working on campus to be tested. We also expect everyone to continue to comply with the social distancing requirements and hygiene measures which have been in place throughout this academic year.

**Studying outside of the UK**

If you are studying outside of the UK, please continue to study online and we look forward to welcoming you to campus when circumstances allow you to travel. If you have made travel plans and would like to discuss your plans, please contact internationaladvice@royalholloway.ac.uk

**Term three**

As we begin to see a path out of lockdown, I want to reaffirm our commitment to offering a mix of face-to-face and online teaching, if we are able. It’s too early to confirm details yet, particularly since the course of the pandemic is so uncertain, but we are planning an on-campus experience from Easter, if we have Government permission. We are in dialogue with Government and will update you when we know more.

**Support**

If you are concerned, please talk to your course tutor or speak to our Wellbeing team. I would also like to remind you that the Study Support Grant is available if you are struggling financially.

The specific impact on students and young people has been one of the most difficult aspects of this pandemic and we are concerned about the mental health, wellbeing, and ability of our students to remain focused in these difficult times.

I want to personally reassure you that we aim to do everything we can to support you, and all of our efforts are focused on seeking to ensure that every student at Royal Holloway successfully
 completes this academic year and that no Royal Holloway student is academically disadvantaged as a direct consequence of the pandemic.

Professor Paul Layzell
Principal