

June 2020 Virtual Town Hall Q&A

Thanks to all those who joined us for the June town hall meetings. Colleagues can now access recordings of the 4 June and 11 June if you missed them.

Here are the questions asked via the chat function during the meetings, and responses from the relevant senior member of staff. Responses are transcribed from the meeting, or if the question wasn't addressed during the Town Hall have been addressed subsequently.

Respondees:

IW: Professor Ian White, Vice-Chancellor and President

MW: Martin Williams, Director of Finance

BM: Professor Bernie Morley, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost

NK: Director of Policy, Planning & Compliance

CW: Dr Cassie Wilson, Vice-President (Student Experience)

PL: Professor Peter Lambert, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)

JK: Professor Jonathan Knight, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)

RB: Richard Brooks, Director of Human Resources

KZ: Keith Zimmerman, Chief Operating Officer

TI: Professor Tim Ibell, as co-chair of the Resilient Curriculum group

MN: Mike Nicholson, Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions

Category	Question	Answer
Equality & Diversity	What plans, if any, do you have to address the significant lack of diversity amongst the University's senior management?	RB: We agree that we have a significant challenge in terms of diversity amongst senior management at the University and want to address this over time. Since the Vice-Chancellor's arrival, he has appointed two women to senior roles on the University Executive Board which has helped, but not fully addressed, the issue of gender balance. However, a number of challenges remain, not least that of the lack of ethnic diversity. We have made extensive efforts, when recently recruiting for senior roles, to ensure diversity was fully addressed at long list and short list stages. We are currently considering what structures we need to put in place to ensure we tackle any barriers to progression and support colleagues in their career development.

<p>Equality & Diversity</p>	<p>On the 2 June the University released a statement on Black Lives Matter – it included: We want to hear and understand the experiences and voices of our Black students and staff, as well as taking action to address racism. What action has the university been taking, and is going to take going forward, in order to address racism, discrimination, and inequalities at Bath?</p>	<p>CW: Whilst many of us feel disgusted over recent acts of racism, both overt and covert, we might not necessarily have had the lived experience of racism directly. As a result, it can often make it hard for us to understand what racism is, and be able to support students and staff that it impacts on a daily basis. We recognise that we've not done enough but we want to learn. We can see the pain and exhaustion, and we want to work towards creating a truly inclusive University.</p> <p>As the question said, we put out a statement last week, but we know we have much to do in tackling the issues of racism, inequality, and we need to take some time to listen and to educate ourselves. Yesterday morning, we had an extremely positive and productive meeting with the SU and members of the EDI team to discuss a report that was produced following an SU led anti-racist campus forum held on Monday that Ian has referred to. We will work with colleagues, with the SU, and students to make progress with the actions proposed in this report. And just as importantly, we will monitor the progress to ensure ongoing improvements.</p> <p>We appreciate that our commitment to improving can only be seen in our actions over the next few weeks, months and years. And not simply in the statements and messages we make. We will not get everything right, but we're committed to tackling the issues of racism and inequality. And whilst we had been making progress in this area, before the recent events, this has simply not been good enough, and what the recent events have given us is a real opportunity to use the heightened awareness and strong feeling to make the real progress that we absolutely need to. I appreciate that's not giving you specific examples of what we are going to do but what we're saying is we're going to listen, learn, educate ourselves and take action along with our colleagues and students on the issue.</p>
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<p>Equality & Diversity</p>	<p>It is encouraging to hear that the university wants to educate themselves on racism and take action. What is the university doing to ensure that we understand more about our leaky pipeline in terms of women and BAME individuals, diversify the board, and understand the business case for equality, diversity and inclusion? With regard to the University's plans to tackle racism, I am sure you'll agree that timely action is essential. I'm really pleased to hear that various options are currently being considered and that the uni recognises how important this is. When can we expect an announcement about the specific actions the University will be taking?</p>	<p>RB: As the Vice-Chancellor set out in his weekly update, we want our commitment to be anti-racist to go beyond words and lead to real change across the University, including in training and awareness, representation, recruitment and wellbeing. Following her meeting with the SU to hear student perspectives, Dr Cassie Wilson will be reviewing our next steps in the coming weeks. Given EDI issues profoundly affect our staff community too, the University Executive Board has been considering what structures we need to put in place to ensure we tackle any barriers to progression and support colleagues in their career development. This needs to be discussed at Council, our governing body, and we hope more information will be available within a few weeks.</p>
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Equality & Diversity	<p>Thank you for acknowledging the issues of structural racism generally. Thinking about the university context and given the PHE report a couple of weeks ago addressing the inequality discrepancies in terms of resilience and risks related to Covid-19: What plans does the university have for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues and students?</p>	<p>KZ: So this is obviously an issue of national and global significance. And like everyone, I'm tracking the news reporting on this regularly. At the moment, the preparations that we can take for everyone that I described earlier about ensuring that the university is COVID secure, is the most important provision that we can make that is the public health measures that are applicable to everyone? I think that as we learn more about the differential impact on certain groups, I think the next response we need to make is to ensure that we are able to be flexible in the arrangements we make to people and in the assessment of individual risk, and exactly how the characteristics that the question was describing should be factored into a risk assessment is completely unclear to me at the moment, and I'm not aware of guidance from Public Health England on that question yet. But that is where we will look for information in the first instance. And we will continue to track this question closely. Given its importance, as with other matches, we're extremely keen to engage with colleagues directly on that if that's helpful.</p>
Equality & Diversity	<p>There has been discussion about student "bubbles" in the new academic year. Whilst I recognise this may be effective in terms of infection control, I am concerned there will be significant social and emotional ramifications from this for our students. If Bath is considering this approach, what advice is the university seeking around the effect of this on students' mental health and wellbeing? And how does the university plan to ensure that if this goes ahead, students from marginalised groups (e.g. LGBTQ+ students, BAME students) are not isolated within their bubbles and</p>	<p>CW: We are actively discussing how 'households' will be formed for the next academic year. We know that social isolation and loneliness can be real challenges for some students and the idea of having a household or 'bubble' will mean that the students within it are able to study or socialise together without the need for social distancing. However, we are acutely aware that this alone will not be enough and we are working with the SU and colleagues across campus to understand not only how we can best support students, but also how we can give as many opportunities for students to take part in extra-curricular activities and form friendships and connections beyond their 'bubble'.</p>

	still have the chance to connect with others from their communities?	
Equality & Diversity	What plans does the University have to become a member of Advance HE's Race Equality Charter (companion charter to Athena Swan)? For context, there are currently 62 members of the REC (including our GW4 partner institutions of Cardiff, Exeter and Bristol) and 12 award holders: https://www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charters/race-equality-charter/members-award-holders/	CW: I can just add that this was one of the actions on the report, and it's certainly one that we will be considering in the short term, and whether this is something that we can do as University.

Research	<p>My question is for the VC. You have had a very distinguished research career. Suppose that you were mentoring a junior faculty at Bath who might aspire to follow in your footsteps. Would you advise this person to stay at Bath given that research is no longer a priority?</p>	<p>IW: Research remains a very serious priority for this University, and indeed an emerging focus for our next strategy will be to build on existing strengths and increase research funding. In terms of our workload allocation, the only reason this is being altered is as a temporary measure in recognition of the increase in work needed to prepare for the next Academic Year. This was intended to support our academic staff and I can assure you that research will continue to be one of the two central reasons for being for the University of Bath; both research and teaching are greatly valued.</p>
Research	<p>Would the VC like to comment on the following sentence in the e-mail from Bernie Morley to all staff which we received on Monday: 'I know that this will require a considerable amount of work over the coming months. As this needs to be a priority, it has been agreed that workloads will be adjusted accordingly, away from unfunded research towards teaching for this period.'</p> <p>It appears that this is removing institutional support for key parts of an academic role including writing grant applications for future research, collecting preliminary data, and generating papers from past grants, and has caused quite a bit of concern for some of us.</p> <p>What consultation with the UCU and academic staff was undertaken</p>	<p>BM: As I've said, it's essential that we ensure that we have this really good offer for our new students coming in and for our continuing students, and it's going to take a lot of time and thought. And we need to look at how we can deliver differently, how we might need to move our courses around within the within the academic year, or parts of our courses, as well as getting those right groups on campus; not just about lab work, or technical work, but also around mentoring and a well being. It's going to take a lot of time and effort on behalf of the staff. And I know that they've already put a lot in. And what we want to do with the announcement that I made was acknowledge that that something has to give within the workload. And the obvious thing, unfortunately, I have to give at this point is the unfunded research time. And I think the key message here I'd like to give is that as part of this, this is acknowledging that this will happen and acknowledging that that will then be taken into account for probation and promotion as we go forward, that staff will be devoting a large amount of time to developing those crucial teaching resources that we need to encourage the very encouraging picture that Mike painted for us of applications, and also to enable our students to flourish. And hopefully, this won't go on for too long. But it as Richard said, it's not possible at this point to predict what's going to happen. So it's an acknowledgment that a lot of work is going to have to be carried out. It's an acknowledgment that that's probably one of the areas that will have to give, an acknowledgement that we want to try and maintain a good work life balance for all of our staff. So we don't want to say we've just got to carry on doing everything you did before, and do all of this as well.</p> <p>IW: Just entirely to support what Bernie said. I think we received messages from a number of staff and indeed number of departments about concerns about being able to get through the work needed to be able to position ourselves to deliver education next year was going to be very challenging. And there</p>

	before deciding to reduce workload for QR-funded research time?	needed to be some way of responding that to allow the next year to be delivered. We obviously respect hugely the importance of research within the University. There's no question about this, but we are in exceptional critical times and if this makes it more possible for departments, and indeed members of staff to be able to get work done done, then there was a strong feeling that this was the right thing to do.
Research	The government indicated that, for those companies that were able to operate safely within the social distancing rules, they should be aiming to get back to work by last week. Why is the University taking so long to get research activity up and running again? The delays are damaging to contracts and to PhD students who may not be able to work beyond their normal deadlines for financial or visa reasons.	<p>JK: I sense the frustration in your question. I think it's worth saying that that frustration is shared by many at the university including in the senior management team. You've asked a specific question, which is "Why is it taking so long for our lab work to restart?" and it is true that there are some other unis which are ahead of us, although that difference should be measured in days rather than weeks. I think that one reason is that our campus has a very high occupation rate compared to some other institutions. And that requires significant additional work before we can do anything at all because of concerns about one way circulation, distancing, the use of rotas, the use of social spaces and coffee stations, cleaning provision, etc. The need to consider all of these things are a consequence of the fact that we normally operate very close to one another.</p> <p>It's also worth mentioning that not all of our researchers are equally keen to get back into the laboratories. Naturally, some individuals are concerned for their own safety and the safety of those that they live with. As Nicky mentioned, no one is being asked to come back to the lab at the moment. It's purely voluntary, but the concerns which are raised nonetheless do need to be addressed because those who are coming back are placing their trust in us to do things properly. And so we are taking the time to be sure that we do right by the guidelines and right by our colleagues. However, as Nicky mentioned, we have been running this small set of pilots in order to develop our processes and to road test and fine tune our paperwork. Several laboratories have already restarted and others including the MC2 facility (which provides vital support to many labs) are now signed off to restart in the coming days. And so with a pilot stage now mainly complete, we're confident that we can scale up the restart more widely, and that will be managed at faculty level.</p>

		<p>The Faculty of Science just on Tuesday signed off a road map showing lab restarts in several waves with the bulk of the first wave being completed within about two weeks. The Faculty of Engineering and Design has brought a hit team of technical staff back onto campus to do the preparatory work which is needed and they will likewise be working through a phased timetable including a very substantial increase over the coming couple of weeks. In parts of Humanities and Social Sciences, and particularly in Psychology and Health, restarting labs only gets us partway there because much of their research will require face to face contact with human subjects, and therefore the restart in those areas will be more gradual, but nonetheless it is underway. I'd also just like to say something specifically to our PGR community, you are a critical part of our research endeavour, and we absolutely recognize the special pressures that the situation has put you under. We're currently finalizing our communications and processes to be clearer in how the lab restart will affect you and your opportunities which will offer for you to progress your research.</p>
Research	<p>One of the proposed cost-saving measures is to remove un-funded research time from academic workloads. This research time is critical for early career researchers and especially for those still on probation, it enables them to undertake the seed work, build networks, and write papers that will lead to funded research projects. What will the University do to support its early career researchers to help them in this aspect? Especially as the University seeks to try and grow its level of research funding.</p>	<p>BM: As I've said, it's essential that we ensure that we have this really good offer for our new students coming in and for our continuing students, and it's going to take a lot of time and thought. And we need to look at how we can deliver differently, how we might need to move our courses around within the within the academic year, or parts of our courses, as well as getting those right groups on campus; not just about lab work, or technical work, but also around mentoring and a well being. It's going to take a lot of time and effort on behalf of the staff. And I know that they've already put a lot in. And what we want to do with the announcement that I made was acknowledge that that something has to give within the workload. And the obvious thing, unfortunately, I have to give at this point is the unfunded research time. And I think the key message here I'd like to give is that as part of this, this is acknowledging that this will happen and acknowledging that that will then be taken into account for probation and promotion as we go forward, that staff will be devoting a large amount of time to developing those crucial teaching resources that we need to encourage the very encouraging picture that Mike painted for us of applications, and also to enable our students to flourish. And hopefully, this won't go on for too long. But it as Richard said, it's not possible at this point to predict what's going to happen. So it's an acknowledgment that a lot of work is going to have to be carried out. It's an acknowledgment that that's probably one of the areas that will have to give, an acknowledgement that we want to try and maintain a good work life balance for all of our staff. So we don't want to say we've just got to carry on doing everything you did before, and do all of this as well.</p>

		<p>IW: Just entirely to support what Bernie said. I think we received messages from a number of staff and indeed number of departments about concerns about being able to get through the work needed to be able to position ourselves to deliver education next year was going to be very challenging. And there needed to be some way of responding that to allow the next year to be delivered. We obviously respect hugely the importance of research within the University. There's no question about this, but we are in exceptional critical times and if this makes it more possible for departments, and indeed members of staff to be able to get work done done, then there was a strong feeling that this was the right thing to do.</p>
Research	<p>There was an email from the Deputy VC a little while ago saying that as teaching needs to be a priority, it has been agreed that workloads will be adjusted accordingly, away from unfunded research towards teaching. Can you offer any clarification on what this means, when this will be implemented, and when more info will come out about this? Thanks.</p>	<p>BM: Yesterday in fact, I sent an email to heads of department to discuss that very issue. Ultimately, individual workload management falls within the responsibility of a head of department. So conversations will have to take place between individuals because not everybody will be the same. But what we were trying to do was suggest that it's the university's responsibility to try and ensure that you don't have too much to do, basically. So to give a little leeway the idea was to say okay, for this period, you can ease off on your un-funded research and focus on the enormous amount of work that we have alluded to that needs to be done to prepare everything to be digital, for small group teaching, etc. and that allowance in the un-funded research side will be taken into account by the university going forward, such that we will note that for promotion, for probation or performance for all other aspects of your life at the university, and it is to give that space to heads of department to enable them to have that conversation.</p> <p>So from this point, this is for this year to September, an acknowledgement that six months of that year has probably been spent focused on the teaching side of your job, and to allow heads of department to make that allowance when they discuss with you your workload return for this year and when that goes in.</p>

L&T	<p>Hello. My question is why has the University decided to offer a blended learning experience for the next academic year? Isn't this a high-risk strategy with respect to admissions? What happens if there is a second wave of Covid-19? Understandably some courses do not lend themselves to online learning, however Cambridge University has stated that the next academic year will be delivered online which not only gives new students certainty, but also enables the University to have global reach. Thank you.</p>	<p>PL: Thank you for the question. First of all, a slight correction - Cambridge hasn't said everything is going to be online. It has said that large lectures are going to be online, as have a number of other universities. And that is simply to do with the practicalities. Where possible, universities are going to be offering blended learning. I think first of all, you are right, we have to be prepared for a second spike. It could come in this autumn, it could come next year sometime. So we have to plan for various scenarios.</p> <p>We also have to bear in mind that a number of students will have health problems themselves, they may have caring responsibilities, they may have issues about anxiety and mental health issues and not want to return to campus if they don't feel it's safe. And we'll also have international students who might not be able to travel here at all. So for those reasons, we have to be prepared to deliver our courses digitally to those students. Having said that, obviously we want to prioritise in-person teaching and other activities where we can. This has huge benefits in terms of learning and teaching and student wellbeing. Where it's safe and practical that has to be our aim. We want to encourage students on campus for all the benefits that university offers, providing it is safe for our staff and for our students. Students haven't got experience of studying purely online. They haven't signed up to study purely online and they don't want to study purely online. They want to get the benefits of being part of a wider community.</p> <p>That is why the aim is a blended approach but we have to be prepared for online, for the reasons I've stated. If there's social distancing, we will not be able to do large scale lectures at all. That's simply going to be impossible. So we have to have a digital delivery, but where we can, we want to offer the students the best possible educational experience they can have at the university and that is face to face with lecturers, their tutors, and their fellow students.</p> <p>TI: Thanks very much, Peter, you covered the issues wonderfully. The only thing which I would add, is that in my own experience over the semester two of this academic year, it's been crystal clear to me that the peer to peer learning opportunities for students are absolutely central to the educational process. We've always known this, but it's the extent which is amazing to see in my opinion, and therefore to try and enact that peer to peer learning in small group activity, whether it's in person or online is one of our key priorities.</p>
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L&T	What about students who struggle to learn digitally for even part of the curriculum eg students with additional learning needs such as dyslexia? What support will there be for these students?	PL: This is a very important question and we have, of course, been considering those students with Disability Action Plans (DAPs) and those who may need extra support. Digital literacy is going to be crucial in this next phase of implementation and we will be investing in instructional designers to help academics ensure that their online material is as accessible and structured as possible. We have also invested in BlackBoard Ally, a tool which assists academics in pointing out accessibility issues in documents on Moodle, and which offers solutions when problems are found. We have about 2,500 students with declared disabilities and there is huge variation in their needs. Therefore the aim is to be as inclusive as possible in terms of curriculum design and then encourage students to contact Student Services or their DoS, if their needs are still not met.
L&T	Are you considering extending the teaching day with early morning and evening use of larger lecture rooms for face to face teaching for lectures/tutorials for smaller classes 50 or less. This is something that other universities are considering both in UK and overseas.	PL: We are working very closely with academic departments and Academic Registry on timetabling. It is likely that we will need to be more flexible with timings and we are exploring how we can use blocks of time with staggered starts to maximise the use of space and ease pressure on transport. This may mean some of those 'blocks' starting at 9.15am or finishing at 7.05pm. We are very keen to avoid extending the week to Saturdays, late evenings or Wednesday afternoons – which some universities have had to do.
L&T	Is there a decision as to how long we are committing to delivering the teaching online? For all of semester 1? For all of 2020/1? UG 2 nd year and final year students are struggling with 11 universities' decisions and have concerns if they start online whether they will have to try to find 11 universities' part way through the year. This also impacts our international students. Thank you.	<p>PL: We need to acknowledge that some of our students might not be able to get here for the start of term; they may be shielding or there may be travel restrictions in place for some countries in September. Therefore, we are planning on the basis that we will need to be able to deliver all courses online and as far as possible make it of the same quality as for those students who do have in-person teaching on campus.</p> <p>However, we hope as many students as possible will be able to start the term as usual, in person here in Bath. If students cannot come to Bath in person right at the start of term, we're developing a process for them to apply to come back slightly later. We hope to communicate this to staff and students by mid-August.</p>

L&T	Could you expand on the preparations being made for students expecting to begin compulsory placement years or study abroad in 20-21. Particularly if Covid restrictions mean students are unable to travel for overseas placements.	PL: Placements teams are working hard to support students to obtain placements but given the ongoing challenges of COVID19, it is very likely that not all students – especially in some disciplines -will be able to find one. We have set up an RCPT sub-group specifically on Placements which is chaired by Thalia Gjersoe and includes all key stakeholders. This group is developing alternatives for students if they cannot obtain a placement.
L&T	Are we likely to delay start or welcome week, or go ahead on planned dates?	<p>PL: I think our current thinking is very much that we want to start as normal. We want to be able to welcome as many students as we safely can onto campus for the beginning of term and from induction onwards give them the best student experience we can. We are looking at many different possibilities,, but obviously the optimal scenario is that students will be welcomed back onto campus to a welcome week, which may look very different from what we used to, will no doubt follow a blended approach but still be a joint project between Student Services, departments and the SU.</p> <p>CW: In terms of the traditional Welcome Week and what activities are on offer at the university, clearly, it will be very different this coming academic year, we are currently discussing the activities that we can put on offer and they will all be around giving opportunities to develop that sense of belonging and which is so crucial at the start of the academic year, especially for the new students, but in discussions with the SU we are looking at opportunities for putting on more typical welcome week activities later in the in the year, if / when Government guidance allows us to.</p>
L&T	Are you considering extending the teaching day with early morning and evening use of larger lecture rooms for face to face teaching for lectures/tutorials for smaller classes 50 or less. This is something that other 12niversities are considering both in UK and overseas.	PL: We are working very closely with academic departments and Academic Registry on timetabling. It is likely that we will need to be more flexible with timings and we are exploring how we can use blocks of time with staggered starts to maximise the use of space and ease pressure on transport. This may mean some of those 'blocks' starting at 9.15am or finishing at 7.05pm. We are very keen to avoid extending the week to Saturdays, late evenings or Wednesday afternoons – which some universities have had to do.

L&T	It was disappointing that the University announced the blended learning approach for 2020/21 to prospective students via email, before informing staff (especially those involved in recruitment activity). Are their plans for a mechanism to inform staff of the detail, as it becomes clear, of how Semester 1 will look on campus for instance? It could be this style of Town Hall or a dedicated staff page perhaps?	PL: Yes, we are sorry for this oversight as we usually do ensure this happens. We now have dedicated web pages with information, regular operational updates and will be ensuring information goes to Heads of Department and Directors of Studies and Teaching prior to sending to students to ensure that you are informed first.
L&T	Where is the University in considering expansions to the typical teaching week. Adding weekends to the 2020/21 teaching week would add 40% additional teaching capacity. Whilst I appreciate that there are significant challenges for those who might be asked to teach on a weekend for units or parts of units, it would allow more face-to-face teaching in total and hence enhance the overall student experience. The same can be said of extending teaching hours in 2020/21 to around 21.00.	PL: Please see the answer above about extensions to the working day. Although we haven't ruled anything out, we are hoping to make timetabling work without the need to change the working day or week – or for colleagues to deliver teaching at weekends.

L&T	Can the team explain why we are aiming for 21 September? Could opening be delayed to relieve pressure on everyone? Thank you.	PL: A delayed start would have a knock-on effect for the whole of the Academic Year and we are trying to plan for the entire year with a whole number of considerations in mind. We are looking at earlier registration and a longer induction period to spread some of the workload. We are also keen to try and preserve times for staff to take much needed breaks, for example around Christmas and Easter. Given the possibility of further spikes and the need for flexibility and agility going forward, I would prefer not to delay the start of the academic year.
Other	Can the senior team say how they are feeling? How are they coping with a very stressful situation?	Sorry not to have got to this question. It's important and we'll try to find time to reflect on this at future Town Hall meetings.
Other	Will you publish your reasonings for any decisions?	VC: I hope that I have been really clear and open with our community both about the challenges facing the University and the actions we need to prioritise over the coming months. I am grateful for the advice of colleagues on significant decisions we need to make, and we will try to explain the context and reasons behind them.
Capacity/ Operations	What planning is taking place re: Virgil Building or will this building be looked at once campus plans are finalised?	KZ: All University buildings, including the Virgil Building and Carpenter House, are being included in our planning. It is likely buildings in town will play a vital role as students who live off campus may be able to access them without getting a bus. We are also exploring other space off campus.
Capacity/ Operations	The University of Bolton issued the video below on 22 May 2020, to assure students of what plans they had put in place for the safe re-opening of campus for all students in September 2020. Has the University of Bath issued anything similar to assure staff or students of what actions it is undertaking? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=01GbPnFIKlg	KZ: We have already done one video message for students and are planning a series of videos, the next of which is for staff and doctoral students, focussed around research and the restarting of laboratories. We will also be producing video content for students and staff about plans for this summer and next year.

Capacity/ Operations	I'm pleased to hear about the work on one-way systems etc, because the only information PIs have had before is the link to the government's risk assessment advice. When will the more 'estates-level' plan be shared so that PIs know where their responsibility starts/ends and so researchers can decide whether the campus is likely to be safe?	<p>JK: A whole series of detailed processes have been carried out to ensure that laboratory practices and procedures follow approved Covid-19 safety processes. Before restarting laboratories, managers - both academic leads and technical staff – develop Covid risk assessments, operational plans and rotas, and ensure that the researchers are happy that they understand the arrangements and are content to return on this basis. These arrangements are detailed. For example, local operation plans consider how both laboratories and general spaces (corridors, toilets, stairwells) can be used in ways that are Covid-19 secure. Part of this will typically be the provision of signage, hand sanitizer at entrances and exits, and enhanced cleaning protocols for communal space and for lab space, including bench tops, keyboards and shared equipment. It may, in exceptional circumstances, include the use of personal protective equipment and Perspex screens.</p> <p>Ways of working including a protocol for essential face-to-face meetings, procuring supplies, the use of rotas and dealing with accidents or incidents also need to be defined. The restarts are happening one laboratory and research group at a time, with those involved being contacted with relevant information in a timely way.</p>
Capacity/ Operations	What steps are being put in place to keep students safe in the accommodation blocks where there are shared facilities?	KZ: Our colleagues in Ahs have done a superb job mapping out University student accommodation. Each student will have access to a wash basin which will either be in their room or labelled with their name if in a shared space. We are planning for students to form 'households' so they will have a group of fellow students with whom they can study and socialise.
Capacity/ Operations	How can colleagues not feel worried about returning on campus when no provisions to make them safe has yet been shared with us?	NK: So what we've been doing with the research pilots is we have got a set of risk assessment templates, a checklist to go through, we have got a survey questionnaire so people are prompted to think about their own circumstances, and to really think about whether they're exhibiting symptoms and are safe to come back on campus. And what we are doing is we're actually working with the research groups who are developing their own operation plans using their local knowledge of how their lab operates and how they can operate under the two-metre social distancing regime. Obviously, they are supported by central health and safety expertise and indeed, the directors of technical services from both the Faculty of Science and Faculty of Engineering and Design are part of the groups that are signing off on these approvals. But actually, our colleagues themselves are developing the risk assessments and the protocols that do then enable them to feel safe to come back onto campus.

		<p>KZ: I simply add two things to what Nikki said. The first is that we will need to undertake that kind of that level of assessment at a detailed level for every for every building and indeed all public spaces in the university and the mechanisms for doing that are being explored at the moment. The second point I would commend to everyone the document published I think the day before yesterday by UUK on principles for universities to follow when reopening, this is this is an important document and it does set out what we will be doing. And I would hope that colleagues will just have a quick review of that document and say, if my university does those things, I suggest that that should provide the confidence that the questioner was seeking and that it sets out quite clearly, I think the plan that we're working towards all over the summer, but we'll have as I said, we'll have more details on that for colleagues about what we're doing here at Bath in a few weeks' time.</p>
Capacity/ Operations	<p>There have been some concerns regarding the advice that government is providing regarding Covid-19, such as the plans to change social distancing to 1m rather than 2m. Is the University aiming to strictly follow government guidance or are there plans to evaluate that guidance locally and determine whether stricter regulations are needed within our own environment?</p>	<p>NK: So we are currently following Government guidance and the Universities UK principles that Keith referred to earlier on, actually are signposting government guidance. So in terms of the research pilots and the activity that is being brought on campus in the near future, we are working with the two metre social distancing guidelines that currently prevail.</p> <p>KZ: Perhaps two things to add. The first is the government guidance itself requires that it be localised in the way I think the questioner has in mind, that is we are expected to adapt that guidance to local circumstances and what that is, or is not, is unhelpfully not well defined in the in the guidance. But we do need to be careful because the moment that we step outside government guidance, it's very hard to know where one then draws boundaries. And this is an issue not just for us, but we are a part we are part of a still somewhat unified sector. And so I think the combination of government guidance, and UUK complimentary guidance, it seems to me at the moment to be providing the right nuancing of that. it sounds like a vague answer because it is a vague answer. Because as Richard has said, we don't know what's going to happen if government did bring in a one metre social distance rule, that would be that would be a significant change, and we would have to consider it. So anything else feels like speculation at this point.</p>

Capacity/ Operations	what is the maximum carrying capacity on campus with social distancing still required? When can we expect the level of Carrying Capacity (on campus) for Autumn to be announced?	KZ: As you can imagine, we are mapping capacity at an individual room basis to assist with planning for learning and teaching delivery, so there is a great deal of detail involved. We are also working out how many people we can safely get to campus given the carrying capacity of buses, and how people are likely to move around campus for studying, to access shops, catering and extracurricular activities. There is no one number I can give you currently as the different planning groups are still working out requirements in terms of induction, timetabling and other factors. Nevertheless, we are working together to bring a number of complex elements together.
Capacity/ Operations	Due to such future uncertainty, and the potential permanent changed preferences of students, has a Go/No Go analysis for the School of Management been done? How have the financial forecasts for this project changed?	<p>MW: In terms of all the large projects, we've reviewed whether we should pause those projects or defer those projects, with the School we are a long way down the road of building the School. So we committed well over half of the funds that we've got to build a School. We've gone through and reviewed whether we should carry on with it. And the position we are financially is that we have the funds to do it. We are one of the luckier universities in that we have sufficient cash reserves to be able to carry on with our main capital projects, and also continue sort of our routine operations.</p> <p>Notwithstanding we'll have to make some savings, but we have the funds to continue to do that. In terms of the financial forecast, it's probably a bit too early to say. The key things that will depend going forward is what the completion date is, and at the moment, it's just too early to say what the impact of the COVID-19 crisis will be on the on the likely completion date.</p>
Capacity/ Operations	Will you continue to invest in the Medium-Long Term maintenance of the 1967 campus?	MW: Yes, absolutely. The University is still committed to long term maintenance of the '67 campus and the campuses around the parade. Clearly we're investing a lot in new builds but we also invest several million pounds each year through our regular maintenance spend that goes through Estates, Ahs and other areas. We also have capital programmes that renew majority components of the original estate such as the 2W windows project that is happening currently. We've recently had the condition survey completed and so we'll be working on that with Estates colleagues to plan our LTM programme in more detail.

Capacity/ Operations	<p>What infection control measures are being considered? E.g. are there any plans to test staff for infection/resistance before returning to student contact, as they could potentially be a central hub of infection transmission between groups of students? Additionally is any form of on-campus contact recording (being considered by other universities internationally) to be able to contain any outbreaks without having to shutdown more extensively?</p>	<p>KZ: We are closely following government and advice on risk assessments and health measures. Some of the steps we are taking include social distancing, rotas (for example, in labs), hand sanitiser at exits and entrances, one-way systems where appropriate and perspex screens for some public facing services.</p> <p>We are in contact with Public Health England and local authorities on government plans to test and trace and we have existing plans on supporting students to self-isolate if necessary.</p>
Travel	<p>Some research students (and staff) reside away from Bath and are reliant on public transport to come to work. To ensure that those researchers who cannot work from home, and who are eager to get back to work and get on with their research in the lab can do so, could the University offer accommodation over the summer. This would help students meet their research deadline prior to funding running out, limit the need for commuting and also improve the mental health of student who</p>	<p>NK: While we would really like to offer additional accommodation over the summer, we still have around 300 students in University residential accommodation. We need to focus our cleaning and support staff on supporting existing students and also enhanced cleaning for laboratories and other spaces being used on campus. We are opening up laboratories for research as quickly as possible, whilst ensuring we are following our process for risk assessments and safety measures.</p>

	are anxious about the stagnation of their research.	
Travel	In common with many other staff members, I can't really afford to live in Bath. But public transport to nearby towns is poor and bad traffic means short, local commutes can take well over an hour. And I don't really want to work from home forever! As the University looks ahead, will it commit to undertaking a transport survey, and to working with the council and bus companies to deliver sustainable public transport for commuters across North East Somerset?	KZ: As it happens, I had a conversation about transport this morning. In a broad sense, the answer is a warm yes. But personally and I think we can see nationally there is a strong push for so called 'Green tinged recovery', this has been taken up by local and regional government and they have asked us to engage with them on questions of transport and I think there is an appetite for a significant fresh look at our approach to transport in this in a so called post COVID world. We are forming those connections because transport is such a huge part of how we will successfully operate next year, but also we want to be part of sustainable solutions for the wider region. And those conversations are ongoing and I would hope we'd have more information on that just as soon as local and regional governments are able to provide it.

HR	<p>For a lot of staff, there is no summer break on the horizon this year. The stretching of S2 and supplementary assessment periods, means there is no time to take any annual leave before the new academic year. What would you say to those staff and how can we support their mental health and happiness during this stressful time?</p> <p>How will you support staff wellbeing through this time of additional burdens? We (admin and academic staff) have already lost the summer due to extensions to the assessment period and moving Board meetings later into July. Given the pressure on staff to complete critical work (particularly those that have picked up the workload of furloughed colleagues) it is proving difficult to find the time to take all of this year's leave entitlement without compromising the level of service provided. Will the University think again about allowing staff to carry over any outstanding leave over and above the five days that is currently permitted?</p>	<p>RB: I think we can all fully appreciate the additional pressures staff are under at this time, as we try to deal with circumstances we have never before seen. The University has encouraged Heads of Departments and line managers to ensure staff can take regular breaks, though we understand this is not always straightforward. We also instigated a University rest day, which I know was appreciated by many colleagues. Since the June and July town halls, the University Executive Board has considered this matter and has increased the amount of annual leave staff can carry over in this year only to 10 days, or the pro-rated amount for part time staff.</p>
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HR	Any idea when the Promotions process via the Academic Staff Committee will re-open? Asking for a friend.	RB: we are in discussions about this. We are hoping to find a way to run the normal promotions process next year while still making the necessary cost savings.
HR	Following on from the comments on future considerations for promotion and progression, will the university be considering how the national lockdown is affecting those with responsibilities for child and elder care - disproportionately women?	RB: We are very aware of the disproportional impact of Covid-19 and the lockdown on different groups of people, including those with caring responsibilities which do tend to be women. We have tried to ensure we are looking out for those impacts on particular groups of staff, for example we made emergency paid leave available for those who couldn't work due to caring responsibilities, for those on furlough we topped up the 80% salary payment from Government to ensure colleagues still received their full pay. I also understand colleagues are working on understanding the impact of this period on research activity for different groups of people, including women, which would be of particular relevance to your question.
HR	<p>If and when conditions allow, does the University aspire to return to the working arrangements that were in place prior to the lockdown. For example, will increased home working become the norm, and will this require renegotiation of contractual terms and conditions.</p> <p>Do you anticipate that working at home/flexibly will become a standard part of how we do our jobs (where possible) on a permanent basis? In particular I'm thinking about helping to reach our targets to reduce Scope 3 carbon</p>	<p>RB: Interesting subject and probably about four or five questions in one there. I suppose the first thing just to say would be homeworking. We've been forced into homeworking much more rapidly and for a lot of people I know it's been quite a difficult experience because of schools being closed, worried about vulnerable relatives, perhaps not having an ideal working arrangement at home. So I think we've got to start thinking about, is this something we want to work with as part of a university and a lot of people have come back and said, there will be some real positives for them about how meetings have been more efficient when they've done them online, where they'd be able to have more flexibility about how they work.</p> <p>So I think we've got to look for the positives of this and see that if we do homeworking well, can it be a contribution to the way the university operates in the future? And Nikki said, she used the phrase earlier about the carrying capacity of campus. And of course, we were already tight for space on campus, and if we have social distancing measures in place, that reduces our carrying capacity further, so I think somebody once said 'prediction is hard, particularly about the future' so it's quite difficult to say yes, this is what it will look like but I suppose for me the point is that I think we've got to look seriously at properly established homeworking arrangements, and hybrid, where people are working sometimes on campus and sometimes at home as part of the future operating model. And of course,</p>

	emissions from commutes to campus.	we're not alone in this. Lots of companies have done this for years, and we can learn from them about the best way to do it.
HR	With the predictions of mass unemployment, will there be any consideration or attempt to keep-on colleagues on fixed term contracts (usually due to the temporary nature of projects) who have worked for the University for many years, and would have expected to have been redeployed in some way if the pandemic situation had not happened?	RB: Unlike many other Universities we have not targeted the closure of fixed-term contracts as a savings measure. However, many such contracts are externally funded and it is not always possible for the University to continue funding contracts when the work has completed.
HR	With reference to ahs, please can you detail the current thinking for the future of staff post the current end date of June 30th's furlough? Are there re-opening plans, despite the postponement of Summer business? Are redundancies anticipated? I accept all current plans you share may change.	<p>RB: So it's another of those prediction questions, isn't it? I think the first thing to say on this, you'll be aware that the furlough scheme originally started and was extended to the end of June, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has now extended that scheme to the end of October. And so as a university, as the vice chancellor said earlier, we have made significant use of that scheme, we will continue to make significant use of that scheme. It was aimed to avoid as much as possible COVID related redundancies, so we will continue to use that scheme as much as we can. And the summer period really for universities is a great period at which we will be using that.</p> <p>Then as Keith said earlier, we are starting to think about the plans for what we need to have in place for next year, and maximizing what we can deliver to students and staff on campus next year, which means that we will require a lot of those operational facilities and services when the new term starts up. So I can't make any predictions at the moment around redundancies and the size and scale of the workforce.</p>

		<p>What I can say is that what we're trying to do is to do everything we can to avoid redundancies in the next year, because what we want is to be able to deliver the best possible service for staff or students on campus not to prioritize making redundancies.</p> <p>KZ: Can I first just say one thing in response to the previous question about HSE we do believe we can accommodate a very significant number of our students in our accommodation and the staff who support those students who are living there will be even more important to a quality student experience. So I can only provide so much assurance but that I think that it's really important to remember the contribution that that's made there.</p>
HR	The University's reluctance to enable increased transfer of holiday days from one academic year to the following, combined with increased summers workloads in preparing online courses from scratch, means many staff will lose annual leave. Can the transfer of annual leave be increased?	RB: Since the June and July town halls, the University Executive Board has considered this matter and has increased the amount of annual leave staff who are not on furlough can carry over in this year only to 10 days, or the pro-rated amount for part time staff.
HR	Following up from the question around home working - Other organisations have already offered a WFH cost relief for employees (e.g. for set up of desks and increased energy costs). Will the university offer something similar?	RB: I know that colleagues have had to adjust rapidly to new working arrangements. We also appreciate the efforts of Heads of Department to ensure colleagues can access essential equipment and the support DDaT has provided in this area. The University is not intending to pay staff additionally for working from home, particularly given the savings many staff will have made on travel costs. However, if colleagues are expected to work from home in the medium term, we are looking at ways in which we can ensure equipment provided is to a minimum standard.

HR	Guidance on how long home working is likely to continue would be helpful.	<p>RB: This answer does vary considerably for different groups of staff and between departments. Of course, some operational colleagues have worked on campus throughout, others have been furloughed and many have worked from home. As we reopen more activities on campus, research and teaching staff will be able to return to work in person. For other departments, the Summer Restarts Group is liaising with Heads of Department to determine other priority activity on site.</p> <p>However, I think it is a fair assumption that for those staff who are able to fulfil their work responsibilities from home and in a productive way, and do not need to come onto campus, are likely to be asked to continue to do so for the rest of the calendar year. Heads of Department will play a critical role in determining this.</p>
HR	Lots of focus on campus. What about the many people continuing to work at home?	<p>RB: I think Keith gave us a very useful introduction to some of the issues around homeworking when he was speaking just now. I think we all appreciate that it was an emergency, and people would have been forced into homeworking and people have had to do an awful lot to create spaces to work to be able to create schedules within their family to work at home. And these haven't been ideal and it's been astonishing what people have managed to do, what people have managed to achieve in such a short period of time.</p> <p>But as we've heard about the carrying capacity of campus in the future, and perhaps even people recognizing some of the flexibility that homeworking has given them, we've got to recognize that this is going to be with us for a much longer term. And to do that the ad hoc arrangements that are in place we know just aren't sufficient. And it's everything to do with health and safety, to do with costs, to do with things like tax and legal treatments and insurance, there's a whole range of issues we've got to consider. So we've started a piece of work, starting in the HR team to say what can we learn from other organizations who have been doing this for many, many years, and then have some discussions with the trade unions about how do we put a policy in place that makes it sustainable for people, and it becomes an acceptable part of their working life, and can be the most effective way for them to work.</p> <p>KZ: I think I would simply add that we want to discuss with heads of department, whether there are opportunities to provide longer term clarity to colleagues about where they will be working. I think it would be helpful for people to be able to know and plan what the coming year is going to look like for</p>

		<p>them. So that's early on, but I wonder if that that ability to plan what our working lives will be like for the next few months, as opposed to beyond the next few weeks wouldn't be a very helpful step for colleagues. So we're going to consult about that.</p>
HR and finance	<p>You were talking about the financial situation. With opening the voluntary exit scheme does it mean we can expect redundancies as a next step of saving costs?</p>	<p>RB: As you know, like many in our sector, we face real financial challenges both in 2020/2021 and the next few years. We will know more in the Autumn when we can be certain about recruitment and admissions information. However, we will still need to make cost savings whether or not we recruit well. We have said we will continue to take a balanced and phased approach to cost reductions which takes into account this evolving external environment. This involves planning round budget reductions, maintaining strict controls on staff recruitment and other steps we can take like the closure of the office in Pall Mall. The voluntary exit scheme is one measure we've taken to reduce costs and we are grateful to those who have carefully considered this option and applied. Although we cannot rule out redundancies in the future, we are looking at all the ways we can save costs to try and reduce the likelihood of this becoming a necessity.</p>
HR	<p>Staff across the University are already working extremely hard to maintain activities and offer the best student experience. Chilled recruitment and VE undoubtedly places additional stress on many members of staff. What plans does the University propose to mitigate these additional demands over the coming weeks and months?</p>	<p>RB: We fully appreciate the demands on colleagues' time at the moment. This is why, for academic colleagues, workload allocation has been changed in recognition of the additional hours needed to prepare for teaching. We introduced the rest day and have now allowed colleagues to carry forward a maximum of 10 days annual leave to next year. The employee wellbeing team has also been providing lots of advice and information for staff and for line managers.</p>
HR	<p>I am an employee from the EU. I feel distressed about not seeing my parents, living in my country of birth. Will the university allow for example for me to work remotely in my country of origin for e.g. 1</p>	<p>RB: Firstly, I'm very sorry to hear that and can appreciate how difficult this is for you and others in a similar position. Please raise this with your line manager or HR contact as soon as possible, as this will largely depend on the individual circumstances relating to your job and team.</p>

	months, given that traveling is very restricted and takes up more time?	
HR	For job functions such as marketing & comms who don't always have to be on campus, will the university consider extending remote working permanently (with e.g. the requirement to come to campus every 2-3 months for say 1 week or on a project basis)?	RB: I think it is a fair assumption that for those staff who are able to fulfil their work responsibilities from home and in a productive way, and do not need to come onto campus, are likely to be asked to continue to do so for the rest of the calendar year. Heads of Department will play a critical role in determining this. Longer term, the University is already starting to consider the lessons learned from the last few months and will be exploring opportunities for ways of working longer term in the months to come.
Recruitment	Please can you update us on plans for (virtual) events to replace June open days. When do you anticipate these might be advertised to applicants for the 2020-21 cycle?	<p>MN: I think one of the things I'm most proud about is that we moved very, very quickly to not just look at the 2020 applicant pool, but also thinking about how we were going to engage with students for 2021 entry. From more or less the second or third week of lockdown we've had a virtual equivalent of an open day experience running, which colleagues in marketing teams put together very, very quickly drawing on resources that have already existed at the university, but they pulled them together in one place and then we've been adding to. https://www.bath.ac.uk/topics/undergraduate-virtual-experience/</p> <p>We've put together an outreach resource hub for schools to use with their students, and that was material not just for potential applicants for 2021, but also students at other points in their education, particularly with a view toward supporting students from widening participation backgrounds. https://www.bath.ac.uk/topics/outreach-resource-hub/</p> <p>We've been running webinars, seminars, with schools and students, much like we would have provided face-to-face. I've spent most of this morning on a UCAS international guidance advisors conference where we've had close on 500, international teachers engaging and I'm involved in moderating their</p>

		<p>questions, whilst Dr Eleanor Parker in the Skills Centre co-presented a session on supporting transition to higher education.</p> <p>I think there is a perception that because we haven't got a virtual Open Day, we're somehow at a disadvantage. My view is that actually students are not necessarily engaging in the way that they did historically. And that's backed up by my conversations with schools. Having an event that's always available for students to find out about the university is much better than having a specific day set aside, particularly for widening participation students, because we're well aware of the challenges that many of the students are facing about getting access online at a particular point in time, because of issues around bandwidth and technology access to attend specific events. We've also drawn very heavily on our existing student body. One of the things we've been able to do is continue to employ our student ambassadors to run live chat sessions with students. We've been running 1-2 live chat events each month since May with an average of 500 participants.</p> <p>Our colleagues in postgraduate admissions are running Virtual Open Day on the 10th of June. The postgraduate market is a different market to the undergraduate market, primarily because so many of their students are international. So therefore, actually a postgraduate live event on a particular day is probably quite helpful as a way to draw students in. By comparison the vast majority of students who are applying to Bath at undergraduate level they are resident in the UK, and we will be engaging with them in a slightly different way.</p>
Recruitment	We know schools basing assessment on teacher predictions is prejudicial for WP groups and that these groups may be affected by access to part time jobs to support studies and technology etc. What are we doing to keep equality issues at forefront of decision making?	<p>MN: I think we are very conscious, particularly at the minute, around the inequalities that we see between competing groups of students for places. The university has actually, probably unknown to most people, been very much in the forefront of trying to address concerns around the digital divide. Dr. Andrew Ross, who heads up our Widening Access and Participation team, has pulled together a coalition of colleagues from across the University as well as involving some of our alumni and also a number of educational charities to look at these kinds of issues.</p> <p>https://www.bath.ac.uk/campaigns/digital-divide-project/</p> <p>We've also been trying to ensure that those students who are engaging with our particular outreach programs, which we very, very successfully transferred online, have been able to get access to the right</p>

		<p>kit and technology to be able to participate fully in the online summer schools that we've been running. We have launched a range of new activities to replace our traditional residential summer schools, badged as a Summer of Outreach https://www.bath.ac.uk/campaigns/summer-of-outreach-2020/</p> <p>I think there is a significant awareness in both admissions teams and in the examining bodies around the potential for bias in the award of results this year. I'm a trustee of the AQA exam board, which is the largest of the A level boards in the UK. The moderation the exam boards are doing is specifically around trying to make sure that the school-based assessments on students are not skewed based on the school that you've attended. We know that students generally do better than their predicted grades if they are from WP backgrounds, and one of the rules that the exam board have gotten in the moderation is to try and ensure that that's then reflected in the grades that students are finally allocated this year. So if there's been a tendency for a school to overpredict performance that will be reeled back, and also where students have been under predicted in their grades, and that will be addressed based on consideration of historic trends within the schools.</p> <p>Bath has a particular interest in ensuring students are not disadvantaged because of their educational or socio-economic background, and a specialist team exists within Undergraduate Admissions to advocate on behalf of students from non-traditional backgrounds. https://www.bath.ac.uk/teams/admissions-progression/</p>
Recruitment	How can we use this period of uncertainty to radically improve our WP strategy? Last year's WP summer schools produced more quintile 5 (least deprived) students than quintile 1 (most deprived). Targeting is not working. Some programmes are hindering effort rather than helping, and at great financial expense - what is being done to rectify this?	<p>MN: We have been acutely aware of the challenges disadvantaged students face in terms of accessing the relevant technology to continue their schooling online during the Covid-19 pandemic. As you may know, we provided digital outreach activities before the lockdown, and that experience allowed us quickly to move our On Track to Bath and Discover Bath programmes online. Our Widening Access Team is also coordinating a national campaign on the Digital Divide, working with charities and partners to address these important issues.</p> <p>The University has also revamped the summer school activity over the last two years, targeting the programmes at students likely to see Bath as a potential university choice (rather than using the summer school to boost their application chances with other universities), with a greater focus on incorporating academic content that will support participants when making an application to Bath. We</p>

		<p>have also built in an opportunity for participants to undertake an academic project that will be marked by Bath tutors and provide students with an alternative offer if they apply to the University. The Discover Bath Fast Track course has been offered online for the first time this Spring and attracted over 300 students from widening participation backgrounds https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/discover-bath-fast-track/ Because it is a virtual programme we are also offering a second cohort over the summer, with the option of a third intake through the Autumn. The Widening Participation team has also developed online versions of their Be Ready programme https://www.bath.ac.uk/campaigns/be-ready-webinar-programme Historically we only had capacity to deliver this in the South West of England and South Wales, but moving it to a digital platform allows it to be offered to schools and colleges outside this area.</p> <p>Finally, we have launched our first e-mentoring programme, Find Your Way, which has over 70 participating students who have been linked to a current Bath students as a mentor https://www.bath.ac.uk/guides/find-your-way/</p>
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