

Dear student,

As I am sure you have seen in media reports today, the UK Government published [new guidance](#) yesterday for universities in England covering testing, student travel for Christmas break, and the staggered end of in-person learning and teaching in early December.

Although we are awaiting further information from Government, we convened our Gold Emergency Management Team yesterday morning and I wanted to share with you our current understanding and emerging plans. I must stress, however, that because we are endeavouring to share as much 'real time' information with you as we are able, there is a real possibility that new or different information and guidance will emerge. Please be prepared, therefore, for a dynamic and changing situation over the coming days.

While the government are clearly encouraging students to return home during the "student travel window" lasting from 3-9 December – and you may do this – we also recognise that you may plan to continue working in Bath until closer to the Christmas break, maximising use of laboratory and other facilities. We note the specific government advice allows for this, stating that *"Those who do not return home by 9 December will be advised to undertake a further period of restricted contact either before or after returning home to minimise risk of transmission."*

You can also read [FAQs from the Office for Students](#), which answers queries about whether research students can stay on campus until the end of term to continue their research, and whether students can stay at university over Christmas if they choose to.

In-person learning and teaching

If you're involved in any demonstrating or teaching, the Government guidance states: *"HE providers should plan to have moved all teaching online by 9 December at the very latest"*. Please pay careful attention to communications from your Department about any changes this may entail to your teaching or demonstrating timetable.

Testing programme

You may have already read about UK Government plans to offer a programme to use swab antigen test in universities in England.

We are keen to take part in this programme in principle and to offer these tests to both our students and staff, not least because of the public health benefits it may bring, though we do need to see the full details of the scheme.

However, we understand that Government will be communicating individually with each University about whether or not testing will be available in their area, and that testing will be targeted to those areas that meet certain criteria, including local Covid-19 prevalence rates. We await more information about what this means for us here in Bath.

Universities have been asked to express an interest in taking part in this programme and we have done this today. If we are included in this programme, it will entail very significant logistical and communications programmes and we are already planning these in advance so we are as prepared as possible.

Looking after our students who remain in Bath

If you are staying in Bath over the Christmas break, the Student Experience Project Team is working closely with The SU on enhanced plans and Covid-secure activities for you over these weeks and into

January, as well as ensuring you have access to the services and support you may need. More details of this will be provided in the Digest over the coming weeks.

Students travelling around the UK after lockdown ends

If you are planning to leave your home and travel to family or friends for Christmas, there is a host of information on travel for students in the [Government guidance](#). Some of the key points are:

- The Government has '[Safer travel](#)' guidelines for **private cars and other vehicles**
- If you're travelling by **public transport** you're asked to book ahead where possible and to:
 - wear a face covering unless exempt
 - keep your distance from people from other households when you travel, where possible
 - wash or sanitise your hands regularly
 - avoid the busiest routes, as well as busy times like the rush hour
 - download the NHS COVID-19 app before you travel, if possible, and check in where you see official NHS COVID-19 QR code posters

I hope this information is useful and we will seek to keep you updated as further details become available.

Virtual Q&A session for students

We know this new guidance is complex and as well as updating our webpages to help you navigate the rules, we will be joining a live student Q&A this Friday, kindly facilitated by The SU, to help answer any questions you may have. Please look out for further information in an email from The SU.

With best wishes,

Dr Cassie Wilson
Vice President (Student Experience)

Professor Jeremy Bradshaw
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International and Doctoral)