Dear colleagues,

This email contains important Covid-19 updates. Please take the time to read it carefully.

Local restrictions

On 30 September further restrictions came into force in seven local authority areas across the North East of England to address the increase in the number Covid-19 cases seen in recent weeks.

Residents must not socialise with other people outside of their own households or support bubble in any indoor setting, including pubs and restaurants. These regulations are legally enforceable.

Residents are also advised to adhere to the following guidance to further reduce rates of infection:

- Residents should not socialise with other people outside of their own households in all public venues.
- Residents are advised to only use public transport for essential purposes, such as travelling to school or work.
- Holidays should be taken within your own household or support bubble.
- Residents are advised against attending amateur and semi-professional sporting events as spectators.

If you are socialising with people from your household in a public place, please ensure that you limit your group to a maximum of six people, in line with national advice.

More information on local restrictions is available on the UK Government website or on Durham County Council’s Covid webpage.

Latest decisions and updates from Durham University

- Covid-19 cases within our community
- Covid-19 testing
- Installation of CO2 monitors in teaching spaces
- Video message from the Vice-Chancellor
- VC and Executive Town Hall meetings

Covid-19 cases within our community

From today, we will publish weekly updates on the total number of cases of coronavirus which have been reported to us by colleagues and students, through our own reporting systems.

Since the beginning of term, we have had a small, but growing, number of positive cases, all of which are being handled in conjunction with Durham County Council Public Health
colleagues. All affected colleagues and students are self-isolating in accordance with NHS guidance, and are receiving our full support.

More information on the number of cases within our community, and identifying and reporting cases of Covid-19 is available at [durham.ac.uk/coronavirus/cases].

**Covid-19 testing**

We’re committed to the safety and wellbeing of our staff and students and have developed an Outbreak Response Plan which combines several effective measures for reducing the risks associated with Covid-19. More information on our Outbreak Response Plan is available online. These measures include social distancing and hygiene policies, ventilation controls, household groupings, and a face covering policy.

We’re also working with Durham County Council and the Local Resilience Forum to offer additional testing facilities in Durham City, providing further capacity for both our University and local community. Colleagues and students should book a test should they become symptomatic.

The University Executive (UE) has agreed to focus our efforts on promoting the use of symptomatic testing in conjunction with the range of measures and controls contained in our Outbreak Response Plan. UE consider that these measures combined will provide a robust approach to mitigating the risk of outbreaks; a decision that was taken following thorough consideration of a variety of options for testing routes.

A number of privately supplied saliva testing kits have been purchased as a backup supply for symptomatic students, should the challenges with accessing NHS tests continue. A small number of tests have already been made available to each College, to coincide with the arrivals period. Whilst we are anticipating that this will not be necessary due to local testing capability, these tests are available should they be required by symptomatic individuals. They are not to be used as a replacement to the NHS facility if testing slots are available, nor are they to be issued asymptotically.

Saliva tests have been purchased as opposed to swab tests based on the relative ease of collecting a sample in comparison to swab tests, and the high accuracy of the tests as a result of this.

If you have symptoms of Covid-19, you must:
- Self-isolate immediately
- **Book a Covid-19 test**
- Inform your line manager
- Download the [NHS contact tracing app](https://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus/covid-19-app)

Please visit our website for more information on identifying and reporting symptoms.

**Installation of CO2 monitors in teaching spaces**

We’ve installed CO2 monitors in teaching spaces where ventilation is via openable windows. In these spaces, air quality can be improved by adjusting the window openings.

The CO2 monitor will alert the occupants to take action if the air quality, and thus the ventilation in the room is not adequate.

When the CO2 monitor displays;
• Amber light - Open windows further to improve ventilation.
• Red light - Open windows fully. If the air quality is not improved, vacate the space.

Spaces with mechanical ventilation are controlled centrally via the Building Management System and have a constant supply of fresh air. In these spaces, CO2 monitors have not been installed as there is no action to be taken by occupants.

For more information on ventilation and our holistic approach to health and safety on campus, please visit our Covid-19 webpages.

**Video message from the Vice-Chancellor**

From today onwards, each week we will be sending out a video message from the Vice-Chancellor. In these short videos, he will focus on key, topical messages for staff. You can watch the first video - a message of thanks to all staff - [here](#).

**VC and Executive Town Hall meetings**

Over the coming months, the Vice-Chancellor and other members of the University Executive (UE) will be holding Town Hall meetings for all staff on a range of topics relating to Covid-19. These will take place fortnightly and are an opportunity for staff to come with any questions they may have. The first of these meetings takes place on Wednesday this week (7th) at 4pm. To book your place or to view the dates of future Town Halls, please visit the [dedicated web page](#).

**Conclusion**

Our first teaching week is almost upon us and a lot of work has been undertaken by colleagues to ensure that face-to-face teaching and learning activity can take place in a Covid-secure manner.

All face-to-face teaching activity will be conducted in line with government guidelines and University health and safety policies and guidance. This means that no member of staff will be in close contact with a student in face-to-face activities.

Earlier this week we shared an overview of important information about [teaching and learning in Term 1](#), including information on room set up and health and safety measures.

We hope the update was informative and valuable. We look forward to seeing more of you back on campus in the coming weeks.

Best wishes,

**Claire O’Malley**
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global)

All Covid-19 communications issued to students are available on our [website](#).