Dear students,

We’re looking forward to welcoming you, or welcoming you back, to Durham. We know it will be an academic year like no other. But even as we rightly prioritise the health, safety and wellbeing of our students, staff and local community, please be assured that you can look forward to a world-class education and wider student experience with us in 2020/21.

We’re beginning a new academic year at a time when other universities around the UK are experiencing localised Covid-19 outbreaks and undertaking varying measures to prevent the virus spreading. We want to do everything possible to avoid an outbreak here in Durham – and we need your help in achieving this.

As part of the wider Durham community, we all have a part to play in keeping each other safe. The local community in Durham will give you a warm North East welcome. They are also, as we are, looking to you to be responsible citizens and observe Covid-19 legislation and guidelines at all times. In particular, please take special care to maintain at least 2m distance from elderly residents who are more likely to be vulnerable.

In joining Durham University, you committed to upholding our Student Pledge, which sets out what we mean by being a good citizen. Please take the time to read it carefully.

North East England has recently witnessed rising numbers of Covid-19 cases and this has led to a number of local restrictions being introduced, including here in Durham City. In particular, mixing between households is not permitted. This means that house parties and other social gatherings in private homes and gardens are not allowed.

As you are aware, we are taking extra precautions after arrival for the safety of you, our staff and the local community. College residents are required to remain on the College precinct for 72 hours from Sunday 27th September and College livers-out are not allowed into College from today until Monday 12th October. This is to reduce the risk of cross infection at the outset. Strict adherence to these measures will increase our chances of maintaining face-to-face teaching and the wider student experience for the remainder of the term.

To support our City and community in staying safe, we’re piloting a University Security Community Response Team. This team will be available from 8.30pm to 4.30am, seven nights a week, to support the police in engaging with you, informing you of Covid-19 legislation and guidelines and encouraging you to observe these at all times. More details of their work will be shared with you next week.

We strongly support the work of the police when it comes to handling Covid-19 breaches, including exercising their ability to issue penalties. Please also be aware that, if there are Covid-19 breaches among our community, we’ll deal with them as well – including if necessary under our Non-Academic Misconduct Disciplinary Procedure, which carries expulsion from the University as its most extreme penalty.

We hope that this will not be necessary and are sure that, as intelligent and considerate citizens, you’ll behave in a way that upholds the values that we as a University community are so proud of.
Much more information on the University’s approach to Coronavirus is available via our dedicated web pages.

We wish you a very successful start to the year.

Best wishes,

Jeremy Cook
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Colleges and Student Experience)