

London Higher Task Group: Safe Return to Work & Study

COVID-19 Secure Charter

1. London HEIs are working to ensure that our campus estates across the capital are COVID-19 Secure for staff and students, following current government guidance, legal requirements and recommendations from UUK.

For example, The University of Westminster have established a task force - the Being Safe, Feeling Safe team - to lead on planning and make preparations for the year ahead. The University of London Facilities Management Directorate has developed strategies and tools to facilitate the safe return to buildings, which include post lockdown re-entry strategy and organisational safety recovery risk assessments. UCL have been running pilot schemes in a limited number of buildings to see how staff and students can work in a safe and socially distanced environment, and will use the learning from these schemes in a phased and measured return to campus with a wide range of safety measures in place.

2. London HEIs are working to ensure that social distancing will be maintained, as reasonably practicable, throughout campus estates and are actively managing numbers of staff and students on campus. London's HEIs will offer a combination of online and face-to-face solutions to working and learning to ensure that social distancing can be maintained in all buildings. We are committed to finding innovative uses of university estates and repurposing space where possible to prioritise learning and student experience.

All universities are providing appropriate signage to assist with social distancing and directional access and progress through buildings as well as socially distanced room layouts and hand sanitisation stations. Other examples include Middlesex University who have developed a new Learning and Teaching Academic Planning Framework that provides the structure and consistency to plan for the new academic year, and which importantly is designed to be inclusive and to maximise student engagement and success. The University of Greenwich has introduced an online enrolment service and phased induction period to manage the flow of new student arrivals on campus. This includes an enhanced skills programme for new students which is split into on campus (with social distancing) and online support.

3. London HEIs are working to ensure that students receive a COVID-19 Secure learning experience both within and outside the classroom. We are working with London's business community and other delivery partners to enable safe work placements and other vital training, where applicable. London First and the wider business community are committed to welcoming London's students and graduates into the capital's workforce and are working with HEIs to enrich student experience through workplace learning.

For example, Royal Holloway, University of London, is reviewing risk assessments from placements to ensure that students are comfortable with the control measures, including any risk of commuting. The University of London is promoting the Internship Experience UK for all of its students.

4. London HEIs are working to ensure that we share best practice in staff and student wellbeing through our London Health & Wellbeing Network, to ensure that staff and students in London can access support whenever needed.

For example, Goldsmiths, University of London, is running student and staff surveys to understand their experiences to date and inform future planning. The University of Greenwich has worked with an external provider to deliver a 24/7 anonymous mental health support service which includes prospective students (offer holders), continuing students and staff. SOAS, University of London, has created a mental health and wellbeing hub for staff and are running virtual wellbeing drop-in sessions for students. SOAS has also developed an online welcome season in place of the normal on campus welcome week. The University of Westminster have teamed up with [NHS psychologists to launch an online tool](#) offering mental health support during coronavirus pandemic.

5. London HEIs are working to ensure that the different needs of London's diverse student and staff communities are recognised and are actively looking understand additional challenges faced within these communities. London HEIs are working to ensure that students and staff disproportionately affected by coronavirus, or with increased risk, are supported in their return to work and study.

For example, the Royal Veterinary College are providing specialist occupational health advice for clinically vulnerable students and staff. SOAS has developed additional specialist support for vulnerable students. The University of Roehampton has established a COVID-19 Review Board so that they can understand the impact of COVID-19 on the Roehampton community. Goldsmiths, University of London, has diverted funding for short term international placements into virtual mobility opportunities and launched a new pilot scheme with additional funding for Widening Participation students to have an international experience next year.

6. London HEIs are working to ensure that international students are actively supported to study safely in London. London HEIs are actively engaging with appropriate government bodies to ensure we comply with the latest guidance.

For example, Royal Holloway, University of London, will be providing an airport pick up, a room to quarantine in, and the SU shop can provide food delivery to the room. The University of Roehampton is providing online enrolment and induction so that quarantining students can join these. The University of Greenwich is offering personalised welcome service for international students including a bespoke visa management app, dedicated Advice Team and additional online and quarantine options on campus when they arrive in London. Goldsmiths, University of London, has moved all pre-session English teaching for international students online.

7. London HEIs are working to ensure the provision of a broad and enriching student experience in the capital, by supporting access to experiences outside of the course curriculum and creating a thriving on- and off- campus community.

For example at the University of East London all students will have to access online exercise classes. London Metropolitan University will be providing self-guided local walks, with information on buildings and history. The University of Westminster Students' Union will be running online social and engagement activities with a focus on helping students keep and build social connections. The University of Westminster are also actively contributing to online events, for example The [London Festival of Architecture Digital](#) and [London Fashion Week](#).

8. London HEIs acknowledge that many staff and students commute to our institutions and are working with TfL and within current government guidelines to ensure that they can do so safely. London HEIs endeavour to provide facilities for staff and students who are able to use alternative methods of transport to travel to institutions.

For example, The University of East London has installed additional bike storage and increased the value of loans available through the cycle to work scheme. The Royal Veterinary College and Goldsmiths, University of London, have invested in the provision of washable fabric face coverings for staff and students using public transport. The University of Roehampton will continue to provide a bus service for students. The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama are looking at extending teaching hours into the evening and weekend to allow students to travel at various times of the day and reduce numbers using public transport at the same time. The University of London has engaged with Camden and other local stakeholders to understand how to help to facilitate safe, socially distant movement around the Bloomsbury area. UCL is currently installing 600 new cycle racks and has initiated a Buddy Scheme to enable staff to support each other in cycling to UCL, as well as providing extensive resources on cycle maintenance, finding routes and cycling confidently.

9. London HEIs are working to ensure that staff and students are supported in accessing online provisions to enable them to perform to their best abilities and enjoy a richer digital experience and are investing in digital solutions where appropriate.

For example, The University of East London has made investment in digital infrastructure to support the dual delivery model, including live-streaming from digitally connected seminar rooms, labs, simulation suites and practical spaces. Goldsmiths, University of London, will be launching an Online Access to Learning Fund for students in hardship to apply for funding for a basic laptop and broadband access. SOAS, University of London, has made changes to digital platforms to improve access for international students and are implementing a new reading list system to focus on ensuring resources are accessible. They are also running small sessions with all academic colleagues to ensure their remote working set up is appropriate for online learning and teaching. Middlesex University have rolled out their student laptop loan provision to support those without access to technology and have increased their hardship funds and extended eligibility criteria. The University of Greenwich has extended its financial support for students from low income backgrounds to include funding for additional IT equipment and internet access.

10. London's HEIs are working to ensure the provision of COVID-19 Secure accommodation for students, including innovative approaches to campus residences across the city and supporting student community building.

The University of London is detailing "Safe to Stay" provisions for students in accommodation.