

Questions and Answers December 2020

COVID-19

Why were students encouraged to come to campus?

We believe that it is very important for you to receive as much face-to-face teaching as possible, as this is fundamental to the excellent University of Exeter student teaching and learning experience. The UK government also recognises the importance of universities to education, and of face-to-face teaching, which is why this was made an exception during the second England-wide lockdown in November 2020.

Prior to the start of Term 1 we worked hard to make our campuses COVID-19 compliant, so that we could continue as much in person activity as possible. It meant activities such as sport were able to take place on our campuses prior to the second lockdown and latterly in Cornwall, some Students' Union compliant social activities also took place. Unfortunately, these were stopped at the start of the second lockdown in line with UK government laws.

We recognise that it has been an extremely challenging term for all our students, particularly with severe restrictions on social activities which are a rich part of University life. As and when regulations allow, we will safely open as many social and sporting activities as we can.

Although we appreciate the disappointment of not being able to participate in face to face gatherings and events it is vital that we continue to remain cautious and follow government guidelines in order to limit the spread of Coronavirus. We are committed to providing and facilitating in-person events as soon as it is safe to do so but will continue to be led by government guidance as we enter the New Year.

What is the current policy regarding the use of space on campus, bringing places back into use and any refurbishment plans?

The health and safety of everyone within our community is our first priority and so all of our spaces were independently assessed over the summer to ensure that we could make them COVID-19 compliant, within our own health and safety requirements and the law, as set down by the UK government. This included assessing the number of people who could use each particular space, the introduction of one-way systems and hand sanitisers and also ensuring adequate ventilation. It did mean that a few spaces that were not deemed to have met these requirements are not currently available and there is provision elsewhere on campus. The numbers of people who can use any one particular space has changed during the course of term 1, to correspond with the changing national situation and UK government rules and we have acted accordingly to ensure these are followed. However, as soon as it is safe and legal to do so we look forward to being able to open spaces again.

The pandemic meant that many of the planned works and refurbishments of our spaces which would usually go ahead over the summer months were delayed, so that time and resources could be put into the enormous task of making our campuses COVID-19 secure. Our programme of continuous improvement is important to us and we will review the planned works just as soon as we are able to do so.

Will campus remain open over Christmas holidays?

Every year some campus facilities remain open over the Christmas holidays for those students who cannot, or do not wish to leave for the holiday period. You can [see our web pages](#) which detail what is open and the opening hours in the run up to this time.

An update on the University's financial priorities during COVID-19

Our first priority has been the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff and ensuring that the University has been able to support the delivery of your programmes. As a result we have deployed, and continue to deploy, significant extra resources in enhancing and expanding on-line delivery of teaching and learning so we have the capability to flex in the face of changing circumstances and Government policy. Protecting the quality of the student experience as well as protecting the quality and value of Exeter degrees is paramount. As a result the University is spending considerably more on teaching and learning, as well as on health and safety issues and wellbeing support for those on our campuses. We have funded these additional costs by reducing the level of planned capital expenditure, instigating a range of budget mitigation measures primarily focused on making savings on back office costs, diverted savings from travel and utility budgets towards the student experience and covered some of the extra costs from our own reserves (cash balances). Underpinning our ability to do all of this is also a need to maintain sound finances – ensuring we can afford the additional COVID-19 related costs whilst also being able to meet our obligations to pay staff, student scholarships, bursaries and hardship payments and to pay our suppliers.

University future plans

As a leading global education institution, the University of Exeter is always keen to seek new opportunities to improve teaching and learning and research opportunities. Any proposed expansion in terms of programmes, research capabilities or facilities is considered very carefully against what we do currently and our future ambitions. It is the role of the senior leadership team, in conjunction with the University's Council and Senate and in consultation with the Students' Guild and Students' Union to implement our strategic objectives in a way which best benefits our current and future communities, as well as contributing value to wider society.

How can I access welfare services?

We have a wide range of welfare and wellbeing services available to you, depending on your needs. Please don't be afraid to reach out as we're here to help you! You can find information on [our wellbeing pages](#) on a range of face-to-face, telephone and online services which are available for you. There's also lots of advice and support through specialist workbooks, webinars, the [24/7 Togetherall](#) online community, as well as [specific COVID-19 wellbeing information](#) and more. Don't forget you can also get support and information from your [Hub/Info Point](#) and the [Students' Guild Advice Service](#). If you are living in University accommodation [the Residence Life Team](#) is here to offer support and answer questions, or you might like to get in touch with our [Multifaith Chaplaincy team](#) which is here for students of all faiths and none. If you need support to aid your studies you might wish to [contact our Accessibility team](#). For any academic concerns you can get in touch with your personal tutor.

If you are a student in Cornwall, [check out the student support pages](#) which list all of the services available to you, including the UniWellBeing app. You can also seek support from the [Students' Union's Advice Service](#).

Please remember we are living in unprecedented times and it's OK not to feel OK and to reach out for help and support.

What is being done to support the wellbeing of postgraduates?

Postgraduate students are able to access all of the services listed above. In addition, postgraduate research students have access to the full range of staff wellbeing services and they can be found on the website.

How can we get our NHS number?

If you are a UK student the easiest way is to look at any letters you've received from the NHS including prescriptions, test results, and hospital referral or appointment letters. Otherwise you can ask your health centre.

If you are an international student, you should register with the [Student Health Centre](#) (Devon) or [Penryn Surgery](#) (Cornwall) or a doctor's surgery near to where you live and they will advise you. Your eligibility for health care under the National Health Service will depend on your visa and immigration status and [you can find out more here](#). If you are an international student who will be in the UK for more than three months you will be issued with an NHS number. Please note that this does not automatically entitle you to free routine hospital treatment.

Accommodation:

The following FAQs were correct as of the end of Term 2 (Dec 2020). You can read a full list of all of the up to date [COVID-19 accommodation FAQs on our web pages](#)

I have moved out of my University accommodation. Can I receive a refund of rent for any period I am not in residence?

We have worked incredibly hard to create a flexible learning experience which can respond to changing UK government requirements during this pandemic, which includes as much face-to-face teaching and other on-campus activities as possible.

In line with current [government](#) guidelines the University remains open and students are advised to stay in their University accommodation.

Moving out of the accommodation and returning the key, key fob or key card to the Residence Reception is not sufficient to terminate your accommodation contract early and you will remain liable to comply with all your responsibilities under the [Terms and Condition of Residences](#) until the end of the Period of Residence.

I plan to on remote study for Term 2, will I get a refund of rent for this term?

If you decide to study remotely for Term 2 onwards you will not receive a refund of rent for any period you decide not to reside in your accommodation and your accommodation contract will remain in place for the full Period of Residence.

I do not need to be on campus as I have no in person teaching, so no longer require my accommodation. Can I cancel my accommodation contract with the University?

Our accommodation [Terms and Conditions of Residences](#) outlines your rights to terminate your contract which do not include leaving the accommodation due to changes in your teaching commitments. Therefore, your contract will remain in place and you will not be able to cancel the contract unless you can meet the conditions set out in the contract.

Support regarding private accommodation

There is [information on our website to help support you](#) if you are looking for private accommodation and you can find out further information here.

In addition, the Students' Guild has launched a new campaign called Move Smart, to help you navigate your way through the private rental market and you can [find out more information here](#). Please see the full list of FAQs on our web pages for the latest information on accommodation, including: <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/accommodation/students/currentstudents/coronavirus/#a1>

What is the University doing to hold perpetrators of racism accountable?

Racism is not tolerated at the University of Exeter and we take any reports extremely seriously. Sanctions can be and have been taken by the University, right up to and including, expulsions. We encourage anyone in our community who has encountered, or witnessed, racism to report it to us and you can find out how to do so by [visiting our Exeter Speaks Out web pages](#). You will also find information there on the support and advice that is available to you. The University also established the Provost Commission in May 2018. Headed by the Provost, Professor Janice Kay CBE, the commission seeks to recommend and implement new approaches, events, initiatives and policies to ensure we are an open, diverse and safe University community for all. You can [find out more about about their work here](#), including how to get involved.

Societies, socialising and the Students' Guild

What is being done to help students make friends?

We understand it's been more difficult to meet new people this year due to the guidelines that have been introduced to try and reduce the spread of coronavirus. We're working hard to ensure there are still opportunities online to meet new people, which we'd really recommend getting involved with. The [Get Connected campaign](#) in particular has seen a series of online events all about meeting people and getting involved in the more social side of university. The [Pen Pal scheme](#) has been a really popular initiative, which has allowed a lot of students to connect with new people. There's going to be a lot more in store on this which will help students make friends.

Societies have also been fantastic during these difficult times and have been doing as much as they can to put on activities for their members. Restrictions mean societies are limited in what they can physically do, but joining a society remains one of the best ways to meet new people and socialise. We remain optimistic that societies will be able to do much more in term 2, however that does depend on the guidance outlined by the University and government. We'll continue updating students and societies on this.

Can societies hold socially distanced pub quizzes?

Unfortunately, at this time societies are unable to hold in-person activities, as per University and government guidelines. We're working incredibly hard behind the scenes and with societies to get things ready and to adapt to the updated guidance as we get it. We'll continue updating you on this.

Will the University and the Students' Guild revisit their legislative stance on society and college representation for students studying in Truro following the open letter?

The Students' Guild is currently working with the Students' Union in Cornwall to review the Memorandum of Understanding that exists between the two organisations. As part of that review, we will be examining the relationships between our societies and working to create a clear and supportive environment in which they can operate. As per the Universities' Ordinances, students studying at Truro are represented by the Students' Union.

The University of Exeter said: For such a change to take place relies on the Students' Guild and Students' Union working closely together to revise their relationship and Memorandum of Understanding, as well as to reach an agreement about how students in Truro will be supported going forward. The University is committed to supporting this process in any way we can, as we are keen that it is completed as soon as possible.