

## International Q&A session 27/11/2020

### Introductions:

Francesco Masala: SU President

Freya Jackson: SU Community Officer

Chris Young: Deputy Director Safety & Wellbeing Services

Keith Zimmerman: Chief Operating Officer

Cassie Long: Vice-President (Student Experience)

Jeremy Bradshaw: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International & Doctoral)

Jane Loveys: Director of Accommodation & Hospitality Services

**Questions – these have been grouped into themes and are not in the chronological order in which they were asked.**

### TESTING BEFORE CHRISTMAS

**Can we choose tests to coincide with existing travel, will this need to be amended? What if they can't be?**

Keith - The mass testing programme and travel window are being rolled out for safe student travel for the Christmas break. Published requirements are guidelines for students to follow but there is a clear understanding that common sense and best endeavours is the university/UK approach.

We do not expect student to expensively rebook travel arrangements in order to comply with these guidelines but would encourage students to both engage in testing and travel in the student travel window, or otherwise travel as safely as you can.

We have opened our [testing booking system](#), there were some glitches yesterday which we think have been fixed. We are surprised with the level of demand, there are lots of slots and thousands of tests available. Aim to book your two tests as close to your travel arrangements as possible. You should take two tests, with the second test within 24 hours of your planned travel and the first test three days before that. Slots are expected to go quickly, and the University will do its best to provide tests for everyone who wants to participate but are limited by capacity to meet the requirements asked of universities only three weeks ago.

**Is the issue with the testing booking system now solved and can students now book tests?**

Keith – Yes students should be able to book tests now but do let us know if you experience problems.

**Where is Dartmouth Avenue (city centre testing site), and how do I get there?**

Jane – We will add a link to the [Student FAQs](#). It's near Linear Park, in Oldfield Park at the back of Moorland Avenue where the bridge crosses to Linear Park.

**What's the difference between the PCR and Randox test? Which is suitable for travel to China and Hong Kong.**

Chris – Randox is a brand that provides a form of PCR test and is an accredited laboratory linked with NHS track and trace. Tests are self-administered, sent off to a registered lab, lab does the analysis, and you will receive a result back which includes, where necessary, an international travel certificate which you can use as evidence of having had the PCR test.

The tests are accepted by most destinations, but there is a specific exemption for China which requires a blood-based antibody test that the University cannot provide or source. The lateral flow tests (the mass testing programme provided by the University) is not accepted for international travel, so you will need to follow the link in the [Student FAQs](#) to book a PCR test. Once you've registered a test you will get an automated email which means that the University will help you.

It is difficult due to shipping reasons to get results for people who are travelling on a Tuesday quickly turned around. We are working with individuals and Randox to get this sorted as soon as possible. After this week we hope to cater for all needs.

**Will PCR tests be suitable for travel to Hong Kong which requires the test to have laboratory accreditation?**

Chris – Randox tests are accepted for Hong Kong travel, checking and will confirm.

**How does the testing work (lateral flow and PCR)?**

Chris – For both tests you need to take a throat and nose swab which are self-administered. Instructions will be sent to students given and there's a YouTube video available. Randox tests are sealed and sent off to a lab for analysis. Lateral flow tests (LFT) are given to a trained operator who will apply it to a kit, and within 25 mins of doing so a result is generated. The University provides LFT results through a portal with the NHS, then the NHS will contact the student with their result.

**Are PCR travel tests free of cost?**

Chris - Yes these are being offered free of charge.

**Do international students have guaranteed access to PCR tests?**

Chris – 310 students have already requested tests. We can double this and are confident that we can provide the service to all who need it.

**Is there a guarantee that we will receive our PCR test results quickly?**

Chris – We've asked for students' travel time and requirements so that tests can be scheduled with Randox's turnaround time in mind. If this all works then students should have results in plenty of time for travel. Randox is a third-party and there may be inconclusive results so we cannot give a 100% guarantee.

**If there is an inconclusive test result close to travel, what happens?**

Chris – We will try and find a way around it if there is an inconclusive result. If the result comes back late then it will not be possible able to get a new test due to shipping abroad and turnaround times.

**I am not sure if this PCR will be approved by the government at home, how can I check?**

Chris – Go to [Foreign and Commonwealth Office website](#) where it lists the COVID requirements for each country. It's also worth checking with your airline which tests they require and if they can provide these.

**My PCR test result needs to contain my passport number – will this be included in the test results from the University?**

Chris – Yes in the Randox system there is a field for you to insert your passport number when you register the kit.

**Is an NHS number required to have a PCR test? As an international student, I don't think I'm eligible for the NHS.**

Chris - For our tests, you don't need an NHS number because they're organised by the University. For general testing, no students have been turned away.

**If I've already had COVID do I still need to have a test?**

Chris – Yes, few countries have exemptions on that basis. There is a concern that if you take a PCR test within 90 days of testing positive, then there is a real risk that you will test positive even if you are not infectious. Speak to your airline about any exemptions or tests they may accept for travel.

**For PhD students who need to do experiments and will leave after the student travel window, do we have to book the test now and keep it until a few days before travel or just wait?**

Jeremy – We recognise that some PhD students will need to be on campus to conduct research. Speak to your supervisor about this and access to departments.

Keith – We will run lateral flow testing for as long as allowed to. At the moment this will finish on 14<sup>th</sup> December and we are looking to extend to 18<sup>th</sup>. For PCR tests, these are available until the 18<sup>th</sup>, but we will try to continue if there is demand. We will confirm by end of next week.

## **TRAVELLING HOME**

**Recap of the student travel window:**

Keith – The student travel window begins on 3<sup>rd</sup> December, which is the end of national lockdown and start of regional tier approach. Language from government is that students are expected to travel during the window but it is not legislation (legally enforceable). However it's an important contribution we can all make for controlling public health, especially with the lateral flow testing programme. We strongly encourage all students who are able to travel in that window to do so and to use the tests we've discussed. Where students are unable to do so due to expensive travel arrangements that cannot be easily changed, or if postgraduate work continues beyond 9<sup>th</sup> December, the restrictions are not intended to curtail these plans.

**What is the latest date you can get a test before travelling?**

Chris – PCR tests will be available up to the end of term, but if there is demand after term ends then will try to accommodate this.

Keith – The lateral flow testing programme will finish on 14<sup>th</sup> December. Universities are asking for this to be extended to 18<sup>th</sup> December (when the University closes), waiting for confirmation.

**Would free bus transfers from Heathrow still be available from campus? Regarding free transfers, if one test is positive will there still be arrangements for transportation to Heathrow at a later date?**

Jane – Yes, Student Services have organised transfers during the student travel window to Heathrow, these are [available to book](#) with plenty of availability - there's 2 buses a day to Heathrow and 1 to Bristol. We've not yet had the question about self-isolating as a result of a positive test, but we are looking at transport.

## STAYING IN THE UK OVER THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY

### **Do I have to leave the UK for the winter break?**

Cassie – Students don't need to leave for the winter break. Students who want to stay, or need to stay, in Bath or on campus are welcome to do so.

### **International restrictions don't necessarily allow students to fly back in when we want (e.g. lockdown in Belgium finishing mid-December). Would we be allowed to stay longer in the UK?**

Keith – As Jane and Cassie said, if you are staying in Bath we'd be delighted to accommodate you and will support any student in that situation.

Cassie – The government understands that it's not always possible to travel within the student travel window.

### **What will be available for students staying on campus?**

Cassie - We are finalising plans for a series of activities for winter break from 18<sup>th</sup> December to the end of Revision Week (8<sup>th</sup> January) for students who are staying. Activities will include a variety of things such as film nights, crafts, physical activities, walks/trails etc. Once finalised these will be advertised and there will be a booking system which any student can use. The activities are supplemented by provision from Accommodation & Hospitality, where food will be available throughout the period, but meals during the Christmas weekend will only be available for students living on campus as they need to be in housing bubble. Students who are not living on campus who would like to stay over the Christmas period can do so free of charge.

Jane – If you'd like to stay on campus, please email [winterbreak@bath.ac.uk](mailto:winterbreak@bath.ac.uk) and you will get up to 2 weeks free accommodation and food on campus. You will be put into a household of no more than 3 students. Sit-down meals by household will be served in the Claverton Rooms on Christmas day, Boxing day (26<sup>th</sup> December) and New Year's Day – these will need to be booked and dietary requirements included. All other meals (lunch and dinner everyday) will be available from the Lime Tree which you can pre-book.

### **For students who are in town but don't want to come up to campus, what's available to do?**

Jane – Students can join the activity programme and the meals from the Lime Tree through the booking systems.

Cassie – Support services will still be available for students (in-person and virtually) with reduced capacity, but support is there for students whether you're in Bath or at home.

Jane – Virgil Building will also be open every day apart from Christmas Day and Boxing Day (26<sup>th</sup> December) if you need somewhere to study or be with others.

### **For students on placement who can't go home, what support is being put in place?**

Cassie – Support services will still be available remotely and there will be many activities that will be online which any student anywhere can access. If there are individuals with specific needs, they can contact Student Services and their Placement Officer.

Jane – Placement students who are stranded in the UK can also come and stay on campus for free if they can't get home.

**If we decide to stay in the UK over the Christmas break, does this mean we won't be able to travel in and out of Bath after 9<sup>th</sup> December? And do we need to stay on campus or within Bath for the whole Christmas break?**

Keith – If you're unable to travel in the student travel window, then you must follow the new [tier restrictions](#) from 2<sup>nd</sup> December announced by the government, including travelling between tiers.

## **RETURNING TO BATH & TESTING**

**The transport secretary has announced that from 15<sup>th</sup> December it will be possible to shorten quarantine after arriving from abroad by taking a private test. Would the University be willing to allow returning international students to use its testing capacity for this purpose?**

Keith – We don't know yet how the answer to this, we need further government guidance on students returning. If we're able to provide tests to enable students to shorten their quarantine we'll do so, but we need to understand better the scale of requirements and whether we can afford to do that. We will support students with quarantine just like at the start of term.

**Will we have to quarantine back in the UK? Will we get a test straightaway? Do I have to if I've already had Covid?**

Keith – We await guidance and cannot give a definitive response on any of these questions at the moment.

Chris – There is published guidance on [travel corridors](#) which is fairly universal, there's only a few places where you don't have to quarantine but for the vast majority, if you arrive back in the UK then you need to quarantine.

**Will international students be able to travel back for next term considering the situation now (tier restrictions)? What will be put in place for them if they can't travel back?**

Cassie – Teaching is happening in a blended delivery so students can do their course completely remotely. All University services and support are also available remotely.

**When do you advise international students to return to Bath for Semester 2? Should we be here for exams?**

Cassie – All exams are online in January so it's up to students if they return to take exams in Bath or elsewhere. If students are in Bath, there are spaces to take the exams outside of their study rooms. Teaching for Semester 2 starts on 1<sup>st</sup> February and we recommend that students are back for the start of Semester 2. Teaching will be the same as in Semester 1 as part of the Bath Blend again. It's entirely up to students when they want to come back.

Jane – If you are in University accommodation or using campus, we will be open from the 4<sup>th</sup> January (retail, hospitality, study spaces and accommodation) to support you. If you're in University accommodation, it's yours to return to at any point.

## IMMIGRATION

**As an EU student, if I don't come to the UK by 31<sup>st</sup> December then I'll have to pay £800 for the visa application and health surcharge. I can't travel to the UK because of Covid, so what can the University do to help?**

Keith – This is a question for the [Student Immigration Service](#). Please contact Immigration Advisors for individual advice.

**As per my CAS letter, my latest arrival date is 6<sup>th</sup> January. If I delay my travel plans, by when should I travel to Bath such that it doesn't impact me having a post-study work permit?**

Cassie – Same response in terms of contacting the [Student Immigration Service](#), these would be on a case by case basis. We do have a Hardship Fund also available for students if needed but seek advice from Student Immigration in the first instance.

**If the government encourages international students to leave the UK for the purpose of cumulating immigration days, how does this affect counting the residency period especially if I am looking at the Graduate Route that allows a further 2 year stay after study?**

Keith – this needs an individual response from the [Student Immigration Service](#)

Cassie – the email address is [studentimmigrationservice@bath.ac.uk](mailto:studentimmigrationservice@bath.ac.uk)

## OTHER

**Will there be refunds for international students considering we pay more than Home students (tuition fees)?**

Keith – The University has no policy on this, we would only consider this in response to individual cases. Students can use the student [complaints procedure](#) to make an individual complaint.

## Useful Links

- [Book your student Coronavirus test \(lateral flow\)](#)
- [National Coronavirus testing programme for students FAQ](#)
- [Student Immigration Service](#)
- [Free coach service from the University of Bath campus to Heathrow and Bristol airports](#)
- If you'd like to stay on campus during the winter holiday – email [winterbreak@bath.ac.uk](mailto:winterbreak@bath.ac.uk)
- [University student complaints policy and procedure](#)
- [UK local tier restrictions from 2<sup>nd</sup> December](#)
- [Full list of local restriction tiers by area from 2<sup>nd</sup> December](#)
- [Foreign Travel Advice](#)
- [Coronavirus travel corridors](#)