

21 April Message to students from the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)

Dear students,

Today marks the start of the Easter term. Having studied and taught at Cambridge for many years, and as a member of a College and the wider University, it saddens me that students won't be arriving back in College, settling into their rooms, continuing with their studies, and enjoying Cambridge in the summer. I know it is not the Easter term that any of us would have wanted.

In common with other educational institutions, as well as public services and private businesses, we have to find a way to continue our work, as best we can, during this worldwide pandemic. I am writing to let you know how the University has been preparing – over the Easter vacation – to support you in your remote working this term. I am of course aware of some speculation about possible changes to the government's social distancing measures in the coming weeks; the University will respond to developments, if they happen, as it can safely do so. However, we are currently working on the basis that remote learning will be required for the whole of the Easter term and that it will not be possible for students to return to Cambridge this term.

Remote teaching and learning

Cambridge staff and students are adapting to remote teaching and learning. Some already have extensive experience; many others are learning to use new tools at speed, and everyone is working under very difficult circumstances. I am aware that some students and staff may not have access to the equipment and broadband needed to fully engage with remote learning and teaching. Under physical distancing, quarantine or lockdown precautions, students and staff may well have limited quiet space of their own to work, offline and online. Students may be in different time zones and, in some instances, behind national firewalls. All of these limitations are acknowledged and have been considered carefully when thinking about arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment.

The Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL) has worked over the past few weeks with academic and professional services colleagues to develop practical introductions to remote undergraduate supervision, lecturing, classes and seminars and locating online readings. These introductions address foundational educational and technical questions; they include detailed guidance on matters including accessibility for students with disabilities and neurodiverse profiles, and how to facilitate inclusive discussions online. These introductions are published on CCTL's website, at [Teaching Remotely](#); they are works in progress and feedback on them from students is welcome: please contact enquiries@cctl.cam.ac.uk.

If it has not already done so, your Faculty or Department will let you know very soon about arrangements for teaching this term; and your College will be in touch about supervision arrangements. Any questions you may have about your own teaching, learning or assessment should be directed towards your College Tutor or Director of Studies, or the Course Director in your Faculty or Department as you would normally do.

Recording online teaching

During the remote teaching and learning period, the University is making its Panopto licence, used for the lecture capture pilot programme, available to all teaching institutions to enable teaching material to be recorded and made available via Moodle.

I am aware that students may not be able to 'attend' the lecture at the scheduled time because of time differences, illness, caring responsibilities, technical difficulties or lack of an adequate work place, and so a recording of the lecture will be made available. This is distinct from lecture capture, and utilising this service during the Easter Term does not commit you to participating in lecture capture at a future stage.

Some of the reasons why students may not be able to 'attend' lectures are pertinent to supervisions and small group teaching as well. Colleges remain responsible for the provision of undergraduate supervision, but, given the current extraordinary circumstances, it has been agreed that, in order to support the effectiveness of your learning, all students – undergraduate and postgraduate - will be able to ask for permission to record online supervisions and small group teaching. It will be for the supervisor or seminar leader to determine whether it is appropriate for teaching sessions to be recorded, having regard to the interest of all participants. It cannot be assumed that permission for a recording to be made will be granted, especially if the supervisor or seminar leader considers that recording might limit the nature of the discussion in the session.

Permission to record is governed by an End User Licence Agreement (EULA) which outlines the usage permitted, ownership and retention, and by the following conditions, which should be treated as a formal University policy subject to disciplinary and other penalties in the normal way:

1. For the recording of formal teaching sessions other than lectures, such as supervisions or small group teaching, you should ask the session leader (in advance or immediately before the session starts) to ensure that there are no objections from anyone participating in the session for a recording of the session to be made. If anyone objects to a recording being made – either the academic leading the session or any of the participants – then no recording can be made. Please be aware that some Colleges, Faculties or Departments may require recordings to be instigated and then distributed by the member of academic staff hosting the session. Please check with the session leader before making any recording.
2. Any student who is given access to a recording of a supervision or seminar must comply with the following statement: 'I agree that the recordings of any on-line seminars or supervisions made by me, or on my behalf, must be used only for my personal private study, and must not be reproduced or passed on or made available to anyone else other than for transcription purposes, including by any electronic means such as email, attachment or posting on any website or social media on any platform.'

The above procedures and conditions will remain in place until face-to-face teaching begins again, at which point they will be revoked and only students with permission to record

online supervisions and small group teaching as a reasonable adjustment will be allowed to make recordings.

Using the library remotely

Many library services are available online, including over 800,000 ebooks and over 120,000 ejournals and 400 databases. Information on using the library resources, and how to access help in doing so, is available

at: <https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/research/librarysearch/university-libraries-are-all-open-online>

For subject specific advice, you can also access the resources and support available from your Faculty and Departmental Library website. Virtual Helpdesks are in place for your subject and information enquiries and can be accessed via the Help button on the web page at <https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/news/coronavirus-faqs>. On this page is a series of FAQs on library services that will be updated regularly as changes happen. General enquiries should be addressed to: library@lib.cam.ac.uk.

Support

Working from home has its challenges – and for some it is more difficult than others. I know that throughout the collegiate University there are staff who have been working throughout the vacation, balancing caring responsibilities with a heavy workload (and I am grateful for everything they have done during these extraordinary circumstances), and I know that this will be an issue for some students too. I am aware that some of you may suffer illness, or have family members who become unwell. The collegiate University is working hard to support you to the best of our ability. We have ensured that, for the purposes of assessment, students will be permitted to self-certify illness and caring commitments and similar disruptions. Information for students is gathered on [this webpage](#). If you have specific concerns relating to your studies, or if there are circumstances that prevent you from working, please do talk to your Director of Studies, Tutor, Senior Tutor or Course Director.

Easter term is always challenging at Cambridge, and this one has unprecedented challenges. Now, more than ever, I urge you to take care of yourselves. You can find information about supporting your wellbeing on the [University's coronavirus webpages](#).

With best wishes,

Graham Virgo

Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)