

5 March 21

Dear All

I hope that you are all keeping safe. The Covid news is improving each day. Since I last wrote to you, the numbers in Liverpool have dropped below 100 cases per 100K population, which is a really significant milestone to pass. Hopefully this means that it won't take long now until we can get back to some sort of normality. The timescale is, as always, uncertain because we need to ensure that we don't make changes too quickly, but the signs are definitely improving.

As you will be aware we are welcoming a small number of you back to the campuses in the next few days. I think you probably know if you are in this group but if you are unsure please check with your School/Dept office or on your timetable where a room number will be indicated if you are expected onsite. If you are in a subject that is returning to campus and you are extremely clinically vulnerable or pregnant you should not attend face to face classes without advice from a medical practitioner and a conversation with your subject.

It is extremely important that you follow all safety guidelines when you are on campus. You will have received a version of the student bulletin this morning which sets these out. We have also put together '[Staying Safe on Campus](#)' which you should read in its entirety if you are intending to be on campus at all in the period before Easter. You can also find information about the opening of the library [here](#) and the schedule for the shuttle bus [here](#). Please remember that you must get tested twice a week if you are onsite. The University test centres have enhanced their [opening hours](#) to facilitate this. If you are returning from home over the next few days you should try to [get a test before you leave home](#) if possible.

Recently we have had some students who have experienced some difficulties related to their time spent online. Some of these are related to use of social media and others to do with use of zoom. We are asking you to think carefully about your online behaviour and interactions over the remaining weeks of the academic year. It is important that you keep yourself and others safe. We have put together this brief document '[Be safe, Be kind](#)' to help you. Please read it carefully.

Further good news that I know a lot of you have been waiting for, is that the gym and the outside pitches will open at the start of Term 3, on 19 April. This is of course, provided that there is no change to the Government plans in the meantime.

This seems an appropriate moment to give my congratulations to the Liverpool Hope Men's Rugby Union team who have raised more than £5,500 for for the Motor Neurone Disease Association after running 7km every single day during February. I am told that the team, led by captain Cameron Sharp, each covered around 196 km over the 28 days. If you want to help you can donate by going [here](#). A big thankyou to the whole team - well done!

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So, quite a lot of news today. Please do keep looking after yourselves and ask for help if you need it.

Have a good weekend.

Best wishes  
Penny

12 March 2021

Dear Student

After a rather gloomy week, I am writing to you looking out at the sunshine. Let's hope it stays this way for the weekend. Despite the rain, the Spring flowers continue to bloom - the sight of daffodils always cheers me up. I have also planted some seeds which are happily germinating on the windowsills - so hopefully I have the start of some Summer flowers as well.

There are quite a lot of things to draw your attention to today. Please read right through to the end of this note, because some of them are very important (you can choose to ignore the cat news at the end if you wish!)

### **Covid news:**

This week we have passed the 12 month anniversary of when we all left campus. We all expected to be gone for a few weeks - how strange that seems now. Fortunately, as we look forward to Easter 2021, the situation is greatly improved; Covid numbers in Liverpool continue to go down - the positive cases for Liverpool today are 53/100K which compares to over 700/100K not so many weeks ago. We are also really fortunate that at present there are minimal infections amongst the whole Hope community. These are very positive signs, but it is absolutely essential that we all keep to the Government guidelines and remember 'Face, Space. Place' over the next few weeks, to ensure the continued safety of our whole community. In particular, I want to remind those of you who are on campus, either in the halls or to use the facilities, that you must get tested twice a week and have proof of a negative test result to show to a member of staff if you are asked. The University test centre opening times can be found [here](#).

### **Activity on campus:**

At the present time some practical classes are taking place on campus and you all have access to the University facilities, including the library and IT suites if you need it. Over the Easter holiday we are expecting further guidance from the Government about what other activities might take place on campus in term 3. I will write to you towards the end of w/c 12 April to let you know what we have agreed. It is important to be clear that, whatever the guidance says, **this will NOT be an immediate return to the full onsite timetable on the first day of term.** For the most part, online delivery will continue at the start of Term 3 and then we might start to make changes if it is appropriate. If the guidance allows, what we will consider is a measured and gradual approach to increasing the amount of activity on campus over a period of time. We will need to wait and see what the Government says in its guidance. Our approach throughout this situation has been cautious, with the Health and Safety of the whole community as our priority and we will continue the year in this way.

Obviously, if you are clinically vulnerable, pregnant or have other specialist requirements which make a return inadvisable, we will continue to provide alternative online opportunities for the remainder of the term. If we do decide to deliver some more provision on campus, we will consult with you all about your personal situation so that we can make appropriate additional arrangements for those of you who need them.

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I am also aware that many of you are waiting for news about plans for Graduation. Once again, we are dependent on guidance which we expect over the Easter period. I am hopeful that I will have news to share with you at the start of the new term.

**Hardship:**

Many of you have come forward to make an application for hardship assistance, both in the form of additional funds or IT equipment. If you are in need and have not yet applied, please do so. I am really pleased that this money is being spent in the way we imagined, but there is still some available if you need it. The information you need to apply is [here](#).

**PGT results:**

I had the great privilege of chairing the PGT assessment board yesterday afternoon. We confirmed a lot of degree and progression outcomes - congratulations to those of you who are now complete!. Many of you have done astonishingly well and doubly so under the current situation. The Registrar tells me that results will be released on 16 March by 2pm. Some of you have extensions on coursework which is completely understandable given the situation - keep going and ask for help if you need it.

**Online blackmail:**

This morning you will have received a special edition of the student bulletin that alerts you to issues relating to online blackmail. This is a very real issue which is being experienced by students across Merseyside. Please take special care about who you link up with through social media and particularly don't share video or images that you would not want a wide range of people to see. You might want to revisit the [information sheet](#) I drew your attention to last week. If you are concerned about this issue or have been approached by one of these individuals, please tell Student Development and Wellbeing [sdw@hope.ac.uk](mailto:sdw@hope.ac.uk), or our Personal Tutor or your Senior Resident Tutor. There are also some useful additional external contacts on the bulletin itself.

**Be kind to yourself:**

Despite the fact that all of the statistics are going in the right direction, I know that some of you are still struggling in a variety of different ways. This period has been really challenging and many of your issues and concerns are going to take time to resolve or heal. If you need help please ask someone. As always you can contact SDW or your tutor or the chaplaincy. I am always pleased to hear from any of you and I will do my best to help or to find someone that can.

Have a good weekend. I am thinking of you all.

Best wishes  
Penny

19 March 21

Dear

The figures for Liverpool continue to improve and the R number for the NW has decreased since I last wrote. These are really good signs and we are all waiting patiently for the next steps in the roadmap out of lockdown. In amongst the sadness there really does seem that a way out is becoming clearer. Let's hope that this is the case. I also think that the arrival of Spring helps us all to feel more positive. As I look out of my window today I can see the trees starting to blossom and a haze of green beginning to emerge. I also have some frogspawn in the pond in my garden which is also an indication that the year is moving forward.

It is really tempting to think that, as the numbers are better, it is now OK to start doing all those things that we have really missed - meeting our friends in person, going to parties, travelling to visit family etc. I need to be absolutely clear that at the present time the lockdown rules apply and everyone needs to abide by them. We are fortunate to be allowed some access to campus for those of you who need it, but this has to be in the context of the current rules that are in place. Please can I ask that you continue to stick to the rules. We will loosen them as soon as it is safe to do so. I am also sad that I need to remind a small number of you that you are expected to be polite and respectful to University staff who ask you to abide by these rules.

I thought it might be helpful to give a summary of the situation with regard to various issues and to clarify when you might expect to receive further information:

**Teaching of Practical sessions:** At present practical subjects are being taught face to face where this is necessary. This will continue until the end of term and at present the intention is to continue this in term 3, with additional cohorts returning for practical work as advised by your individual subjects. You will be informed of any practical sessions you are expected to attend by your subject as soon as these are agreed.

**Teaching for other subjects and for all non practical sessions:** We are waiting for guidance from the Government to find out what arrangements can be put in place for Term 3 (starting 19 April 2021). This guidance will arrive in w/c 12 April and until we have this we do not know what will be possible. I will write to you towards the end of w/c 12 April to give you an update on our thoughts regarding Term 3. At the present time you should assume that your term 3 teaching will start online. If we are able to introduce further face to face teaching in non practical subjects we will do this in a cautious and very gradual way. There will not be a sudden change in arrangements for the first week of term and we will give you good notice of any opportunity to be back on campus for sessions.

**Placements:** All placements will continue after Easter as communicated by colleagues in the Schools of Education and Social Sciences. Please be certain to check the dates of your placement requirements - some of them commence in the week before the start of term i.e. 12 April.

**Access to resources:** The Gateway, Eden, Aigburth and Creative Campus study spaces will remain open to those of you who need them over the Easter period. The library will change its opening hours for some of this period but the order and collect

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service will remain operational throughout the holiday. You should consult the [library webpages](#) for further information.

**Testing Centre:** For those of you who are staying on campus over the Easter period the testing centres will remain open, although their operating hours will be changed. If you are remaining on campus you must be tested twice a week according to the guidelines. The revised times will be available on the [academic year 2020-21 webpages](#).

**Graduation:** I know that those of you whose awards are almost complete are waiting to hear about graduation. Obviously, the road map as it was laid out on 22 February gives us hope that some live events may be able to happen during the Summer months. Like you, I really want to be able to have graduation ceremonies in person - it is such an important moment in your academic journey and in the life of the University. At the moment it is simply too early to make these arrangements. We may know more from the 12 April announcements and I will certainly give you an update at the start of term 3, but I think that it will be several weeks after that before we have enough information to make a final decision about what the dates and format can be. I will update you as soon as I have further information

I hope I have clarified everything you need to know at the moment. If you have any further queries you should write to the Gateway team [gateway@hope.ac.uk](mailto:gateway@hope.ac.uk) and they will help you.

I am aware that some of you have found the last few weeks, and particularly the period since the Roadmap announcement, really challenging. Please ask [SDW](#), the SU or your tutor for support if you need it. If you don't want to approach University based support I would remind you about the wide range of external support services open to you. There is a list on the SDW pages [here](#).

and finally a bit of light relief.....

The SU are hosting a Easter Extravaganza quiz with loads of fun to be had and prizes to be won! It is in aid of comic relief and will be LIVE on ZOOM tonight (Friday) at 7pm! The zoom details are below...

<https://zoom.us/j/95015920791?pwd=NFVMbm1La2cyaTlXVEZUNUcyNkpsUT09>

Meeting ID: 950 1592 0791 Passcode: 707757

Ollie says.....See you all there!

I hope that you all have a good weekend. Try to get out in the sunshine!

Best wishes

Penny

26 March 21

Dear

The sun has come out as I write. Let's hope for a weekend where we can all enjoy some time outdoors.

As we reach the beginning of the Easter break I am in a reflective mood. It seems hardly possible that it has been a whole year since we all had to go home when the first lockdown started. A whole year of studying and working in very different ways and a whole year of missing friends and families. I hope that we are now on the road back to some sort of normality. I'm sure that you are ready to get back to studying in the ways that you expected when you joined your course. I am looking forward to seeing you all on campus and to be able to wave to you from my office and to chat to you around campus. Hopefully it won't be long now.

We are reducing activity on the campuses over Easter. This is to try to prevent any risk of transmission of the virus and to give the staff a well earned rest wherever possible. We also need you to take some time to rest before term 3 gets going after Easter. This has been a hard few months. Please take the time to stop for a while. If you have assignments that are due, the offer of extensions remains.

To support those of you who are on campus in the residences or who need access to IT or library resources, we are keeping the communal study spaces open on all three campuses. You are welcome to use these whether you are a resident student or you live in the community. Please remember that you will be expected to be able to show evidence of a recent negative covid test. The library request and collect service will continue throughout the Easter vacation ( with a short break over the bank holidays). This means that you will be able to access all the library resources you will need, either through the electronic portal or through the request and collect service.

We included travel advice from the Government in the student bulletin this week, but just in case you didn't see this: The government is asking students not to travel home for the Spring break, it is strongly advising those students who only returned to university from 8 March to not travel wherever possible. This is in order to minimise transmission of COVID-19. However it may be that some students may wish to travel home for the vacation, particularly those whose courses resumed in-person teaching from the beginning of term. It is legally permissible for higher education students to travel home for the Spring break provided you do so only once before 29 April. You can travel back to term-time accommodation at any time. You should also get tested before you travel home and then again before you travel back to university, where community testing facilities are available. If you test positive, you will be required by law to self-isolate for 10 days and should not travel.

If you need mental health support over the Easter period you can contact the residential life team or the SDW team through the normal email routes. An SDW counsellor is available over the Easter break. There are a wide range of external support services available to you. Links to these are on the website at: <https://www.hope.ac.uk/gateway/staff/studentssupportandwell-being/>

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I will be writing to you again towards the end of w/c 12 April. By this time we should have received the updated guidance from the Government and will have discussed term 3 with your Heads of School/Department. As soon as I can during that week, I will let you know what we have decided about teaching for the remainder of the academic year. Once again, this will not be a sudden return to campus for everyone on the first day of term. Your teaching will continue in its current format for the moment and if (and this is still a big if) we can bring more of you back to campus, it will be a gradual transition over the following weeks.

For those of you who are in the final stages of your award I know that you are wondering about Graduation. So am I! I love graduation, it is my favourite time of the academic year. Seeing you collecting your awards and going off to careers and further studies brings me joy, as I know it will to your families. Obviously, despite the significant positive signs over the past few weeks, we are not yet in a position to confirm large gatherings of the University community and of visitors. We will keep reviewing the guidance and when it is clear how and when we can keep you safe at such an event, we will let you know what the arrangements will be for graduation. In any case I will write to you with an update in the first week of term.

I want to take this opportunity to wish you a happy Easter. I hope that you manage to get a break and some time for reflection.

Best wishes  
Penny