Guidance for students with permission to return to College accommodation from 4th July 2020 onwards.

Introduction

This guidance is for postgraduate research or other students who have been given permission to return to Cambridge, either under the University’s protocol for the return of postgraduate research students or through other specific Departmental arrangements, and who intend to take up College accommodation or to use College facilities in coming months. It relates to the current academic year (2019-20) only. The government’s current advice is that where you cannot work at home then you may return to the workplace once ‘COVID-secure’ measures are implemented. As of 03/07/2020 this means that those working in research labs are now able to return to Cambridge. Other groups of students are expected to return over the summer (including clinical medicine) and further updates on the re-opening of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences work spaces and University libraries are expected in coming weeks. This guidance also sits alongside advice from your Department or place of teaching or research, and you should check regularly for general updates on the University’s coronavirus webpages.

Cambridge currently has a low incidence of COVID-19 but the prospect of a new and rapid spike in cases remains a very real threat, particularly as people begin to return to work from away, so it is essential you read and follow Government Public Health England (PHE) advice on social distancing: Staying alert and safe (social distancing).

Please read and align yourself with the Collegiate University’s COVID Community Statement before your return. This brief statement of purpose emphasises our individual and collective responsibility in minimising risks, and maximising support, for students, staff and visitors.

We expect you to abide by these key principles following your return to Cambridge:

- Stay alert to minimising the risks of virus transmission in all aspects of your life
- Work from home whenever you can
- Limit contact with other people outside of your household
- Observe social distance when you go out
- Wash your hands regularly, and don’t leave home if you, or anyone you live with, has symptoms (see below).

1. Important points to check before returning to Cambridge

1.1. Do you have Departmental and College approval to return?

The early return of some postgraduate research students is following a carefully managed process.

Where students are returning to work in Department buildings, this is led by Department and Institutional Heads, with the details of specific PhD students being confirmed to their Colleges by the relevant senior Departmental representative (see the University protocol here). Specific arrangements are being put in place for other groups, for example clinical medical students. If you plan to return to College accommodation you must first check that your Department and College have officially confirmed your permission to return via these processes. Your return date must be confirmed in advance and the College will confirm final arrangements with you once this has been agreed. Do not travel to Cambridge without this confirmation. Your Tutor will also be able to offer or source advice and support if needed.
Where students are not intending to return to Department buildings, but are intending to ‘work from home’ in Cambridge, they are asked to confirm with their College that they are intending to return, even if they do not require College accommodation. This will allow Colleges to offer them practical advice on matters such as COVID-19 testing and to plan for an orderly return for those who do require College accommodation, dependent on whether such accommodation is available.

1.2. Do you have symptoms?

You can check your symptoms using the NHS symptom checker. Do not travel back to Cambridge if you are currently self-isolating or isolating as a household because you, or someone you live with, or someone you have been in close contact with, has tested positive for COVID-19 or has shown symptoms of fever, new persistent cough, or a loss or change in sense of taste or smell. In this case, follow the current PHE guidance: Stay at home: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection.

1.3. Are you especially susceptible (vulnerable) to COVID-19 illness?

You should check to see if you are at higher risk of more serious COVID-19 related disease from underlying illness. Furthermore, people with certain illnesses may be at extremely high risk of serious COVID-19 disease requiring them to ‘shield’ during times of high virus circulation. If you think you might be in one of these categories then take advice from your doctor. If you are advised not to return to Cambridge please let your Tutor know; they will inform your Department/supervisor. If you are planning to come into College accommodation you should discuss your circumstances with your Tutor and the Welfare Officer. From 01/08/2020 advice for clinically extremely vulnerable people will move in line with advice to those who are clinically vulnerable, because of the low level of circulation of the virus. In practice, this means staying at home as much as possible, and if you do go out, taking particular care to minimise contact with others outside their household and robustly practising good, frequent hand washing.

1.4. Have you planned your journey to Cambridge in line with PHE guidance?

Be sure to travel in a way that presents the least risk to you, your fellow travellers, and the College and University community you are entering. Read and follow the PHE guidance on social distancing during travel in the UK, and consider all alternatives before using public transport. Note that it is a legal requirement to wear a face covering while on public transport in the UK. Finally, non-UK citizens should also check and comply with their home country’s COVID-19 travel restrictions.

2. Households and isolation

2.1. Ensure that you understand the ‘household’ system in your College.

If you are returning to College accommodation you are likely to be accommodated as part of a household group, unless you live in self-contained accommodation. If you live in College accommodation that includes a shared bathroom/shower and/or toilet and/or kitchen area, then this constitutes a ‘household’ under PHE guidance. Close and consistent adoption of this practice has helped protect students already in Cambridge in the months since lockdown, and we need your help to maintain this to minimise the risk to yourself and others. Make sure that you understand how this will be implemented (see below) and discuss this with your Tutor before you travel if you are unclear.

2.2. Identify two self-isolation supporters in Cambridge, if you can:
Identify in advance two people in Cambridge who could help you in the event that you develop symptoms of COVID-19 and need to self-isolate at any stage after your return to Cambridge; this may include assistance with food deliveries or other essentials. Contact your tutor or the tutorial office if you are unable to identify self-isolation supporters.

2.3. Have you arrived in the UK from a non-exempt country within 14 days of your planned return to Cambridge?

Check the latest government guidance on exempt and non-exempt countries and the steps required. (Coronavirus (COVID-19): travel corridors). From the 10th July 2020 you do not have to self-isolate on arrival in England if these are the only places you have been to or stopped in during the previous 14 days. If you have been to or stopped in a country that’s not on the travel corridors exemption list you will have to self-isolate according to PHE guidance until 14 days have passed since you left that country, not leaving your accommodation except for specified reasons. The guidance allows for this self-isolation to be done in your own home (if you have one in the UK), by carefully segregating within a household shared with friends or family, or in other temporary accommodation. Please consider your situation carefully and discuss your planned arrangements as early as possible with your College. Many students renting private accommodation in Cambridge will be doing so with friends and so self-isolation in that household would be possible. However, College-allocated accommodation is not always with friends so Colleges will work to offer or facilitate you finding non-shared accommodation for this 14 day period where necessary. When you finally move into your destination household, it is also essential that you protect your household from COVID transmission by following the Colleges’ guidance for students resident in Cambridge.

Arrivals from the UK, Common Travel Area (Irish Republic, Channel Islands, Isle of Man) and other exempted countries:

Check the latest government guidance on travel corridors (Coronavirus (COVID-19): travel corridors), noting that countries may change status over time. Normally, you will not need to self-isolate, but may move immediately into your former or new Cambridge household. However, it is essential that you do not travel back to Cambridge if you are currently self-isolating or isolating as a household because you, or someone you live with, or someone you have been in close contact with, has tested positive for COVID-19 or has shown symptoms of COVID (see above). In this case, follow the current PHE guidance: Stay at home: guidance for households with possible coronavirus infection. It is also essential that you protect your household from COVID transmission by following the Colleges’ guidance for students resident in Cambridge.