STUDY UK COVID-19 MESSAGING & FAQS

V27 January 2022



Teaching Wellbeing **Public health** Travel Visas Language tests **Graduate Route**

TEACHING

1/2

Universities in the UK continue to welcome students for the 2021-22 academic year.

Universities are delivering high-quality teaching this academic year. Many universities are adopting a hybrid approach to teaching, with many classes being taught in-person but with some elements remaining online.

All UK universities are regularly reviewing teaching in line with the latest public health guidance.

The UK's successful vaccination programme means that over 70 per cent of the UK population have received at least two doses of a Covid-19 vaccine.*

It is recommended that you wear a face covering in many indoor and crowded spaces in the UK, such as on public transport and in shops. In some areas (such as on public transport in London and in many indoor spaces in Scotland), it is mandatory to wear a face covering, so always check the latest guidance for your local area.

View government guidance on face coverings for <u>England</u>, <u>Scotland</u>, <u>Wales</u> or <u>Northern Ireland</u>.

If you have any questions at all, please contact your university directly. Rest assured that you will be supported at every step before, during and after you travel to the UK for your studies.

We know that the Covid-19 pandemic continues to cause a lot of uncertainty about international study, and we'd like to reassure all international students that universities in the UK are looking forward to welcoming you here.

TEACHING

2/2

UK degrees are of a globally high standard and are internationally valuable whatever form they take – whether they are delivered in person or have some elements online.

The UK higher education system demands high quality teaching, and any changes put in place by UK universities due to Covid-19 must adhere to the usual <u>high-quality</u> <u>standards</u>. This is the case whether teaching takes place in person or online.

International students are guaranteed to learn at the same world-leading institutions, with quality teaching and great employment prospects.

Universities are innovative environments and UK universities are at the forefront of responding to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Universities have never been more critical. Covid-19 has highlighted the crucial role that universities play in developing and sharing knowledge, bringing together the best minds and facilitating collaborative research to meet the challenge of the pandemic.

The UK has a global reputation for research, and its universities are on the cutting edge of new discoveries. The University of Oxford, in collaboration with AstraZeneca, have developed a Covid-19 vaccine that has been approved for use in a number of countries, marking an important milestone in the global effort to combat Covid-19.

Across the world, many countries are adapting and responding to the current crisis by finding new ways of delivering services and managing our everyday lives. Education provision is also affected, and there have been some changes to teaching over the last year. Universities are innovative environments and they continually adapt so they can continue to deliver world-class tuition to students.

WELLBEING

UK universities have student wellbeing at their heart, and all universities have plans in place to keep students, staff and local communities safe.

UK universities have implemented a number of Covid-19 support services that international students can access, such as airport pick up services, support through any self-isolation periods and food packages.

Universities are also offering increased mental health support during the pandemic, with many putting initiatives in place which support students in keeping active and that help them to socialise safely. This includes online activities that help students meet others during periods when they are required to self-isolate, or for those who are unable to travel to the UK just yet. They also have plans in place to support students if they are required to self-isolate or if local lockdowns are introduced.

If any international students are struggling or have any concerns, we would encourage them to contact their university's student support services.

A programme of mental health support for students during Covid-19, Student Space, has been created for students in England and Wales. Whether it's your mental health, your studies, money, housing or relationships, there are resources and support available to you on the <u>Student Space website</u>.

PUBLIC HEALTH

1/2

The NHS is available to international students.

The UK's NHS (National Health Service) is one of the world's most advanced healthcare systems, offering safe and modern treatment. Our amazing NHS has taken care of people from around the world during the pandemic and will continue to do so.

The NHS is an excellent service and is available to all international students. As part of your student visa application, applicants are required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge. The Immigration Health Surcharge costs £470 per year for a student, giving students access to NHS services without further charge (subject to a few exceptions, such as prescription charges in England). Find out more about this <u>here</u>.

International students will always be able to access treatment that clinicians consider is immediately necessary or urgent at no upfront cost.

The NHS can also provide international students with specific Covid-19 advice through a new Covid-19 <u>online service</u> or by calling 111. No charges apply to testing for coronavirus, even if the result is negative, or to any treatment provided in relation to coronavirus if the result is positive or up to the point that it is negatively diagnosed.

Visit the NHS website for Covid-19 support and advice.

As an international student, you should register for a GP (General Practitioner) as soon as possible on arrival to the UK. Your university will be able to advise on which practice to register with in your local area.

PUBLIC HEALTH

2/2

The Covid-19 vaccine is available to international students in the UK.

Anybody aged 18 or over in the UK is eligible for the Covid-19 vaccination for free, regardless of their nationality or immigration status.

It is recommended you wear a face covering in many indoor and crowded spaces in the UK, including on public transport and in shops.

The guidance may differ depending on the part of the UK you are studying in, so always check the latest information on face coverings for <u>England</u>, <u>Scotland</u>, <u>Wales</u> or <u>Northern Ireland</u>.

The UK government has been sharing information with the public throughout the pandemic.

Visit the <u>GOV.UK website</u> for all the latest information from the UK government about Covid-19.

The UK government has continued to provide guidance for settings including campuses, accommodation and other community areas. Universities have put measures in place to ensure all campuses are clean and compliant with <u>government</u> <u>guidelines</u>.

The Department for Education (DfE) has produced <u>guidance on self-isolation and</u> <u>social distancing for students living in university or college halls of residence</u>.

TRAVEL

Universities are working hard to ensure that you know what to expect before you travel, and that you are welcomed and supported on arrival to the UK.

The UK is operating a 'vaccination status system' for international arrivals. The rules for travel from countries and territories will depend on your vaccination status.

Please note that travel and arrival advice will vary between the UK's four nations. See relevant advice for where you are travelling to below:

- <u>England</u>
- <u>Wales</u>
- <u>Scotland</u>
- Northern Ireland

Remember to also check travel advice in your own country in advance of making your travel plans.

It's important to stay in touch with your university as you make your plans.

We know how daunting moving to another country can be, and we want to reassure you that universities are working hard to ensure that you know what to expect before you travel to the UK and are welcomed and supported on arrival by your chosen university.

Get in touch with your university to find out more about how they can support you.

See FAQs for more in-depth travel advice from slide 23.

LANGUAGE TESTS

The impact of Covid-19 has affected testing centres around the world. Students should check with their university for the latest advice on how they can provide suitable evidence of their English proficiency, as universities can set their own rules.

Students should visit the <u>IELTS website</u> for the <u>latest updates on IELTS test</u> <u>arrangements.</u>

Students may be able to take <u>IELTS Indicator</u>, an online test, taken at home and marked by IELTS examiners. This is available in some countries for those who are unable to attend an IELTS test centre due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Students in China can also take the TOEFL English exam, more details are available on this <u>here</u>.

Some universities are accepting the <u>Duolingo English Test</u> as certification of English proficiency, another online test available to international students.

<u>PTE Academic</u> assesses English listening, reading, speaking and writing all via computer in a single three-hour test session.

If you have been affected by the suspension of language tests, please contact your test provider with any enquiries.

VISAS

The UK government is working to ensure that existing processes are as flexible as possible, so that international students who are planning to study in the UK can do so.

For the latest information on UK Visa Application Centres please visit:

- <u>TLS contact</u> for Europe, Africa and parts of the Middle East
- VFS Global for all other countries
- UK service points (<u>UKVCAS</u>)

If your local visa centre is closed due to local restrictions, you can still familiarise yourself with UK visa requirements and talk to your chosen university about evidence you may need to supply for a visa application.

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK government has implemented a number of concessions to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions. This includes concessions related to blended and distance learning, meaning international students have more flexibility around when to travel to the UK. Find out more about <u>concessions for students on GOV.UK</u>.

Students will not be penalised for being unable to collect their <u>Biometric Residence</u> <u>Permit</u> (BRP) while Covid-19 measures are in place.

If you have any immigration queries related to Covid-19, please contact the government's Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre at <u>CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk</u>.

GRADUATE ROUTE

The new Graduate Route, which launched on 1 July 2021, will enable you to stay in the UK and work, or look for work, at any skill level for two years (or three years for PhD students) after graduation.

This is a fantastic opportunity for international students that will help you to take your next steps into employment after graduation in the UK.

The Graduate Route will be available to international students who successfully complete their degree at undergraduate level or above at a UK Higher Education Provider with a track record of compliance.

If you have been studying online in your home country due to Covid-19, you can still apply for the Graduate Route, provided you meet the other requirements of the route. This is part of the UK government's Covid-19 student visa concessions. View the updated guidance on <u>GOV.UK here</u>.

For more information on the Graduate Route, visit:

- the UK government guide to the Graduate Route
- the Home Office blog and FAQs
- the Study UK website.

Universities Public health Travel Visas Other

UNIVERSITIES 1/3

What support is available to international students in the UK?

We understand this is a very difficult time for many students. We would encourage any international students who are struggling or have concerns to reach out – contact your university's international office or student support services.

UK universities have implemented a number of Covid-19 support services that international students can access, such as food packages, support through selfisolation periods and technology to support their learning. Universities are also offering increased mental health support during the pandemic, with many putting initiatives in place which support students in keeping active and that help them to socialise safely. If you're an international student in the UK, make sure your university knows about your circumstances and don't hesitate to get in touch with them if you need support.

Is there any financial support provided to existing international students?

If you are experiencing financial difficulty as a result of Covid-19, get in touch with your university as soon as possible and they will be able to support you.

Many universities and colleges have student hardship funds, and the UK government, as well as the governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, have increased the amount of funding available to universities to support students experiencing hardship as a result of Covid-19. In many cases, this funding is available to international and EU students.

Universities are on hand to support all students who are experiencing financial difficulty as a result of Covid-19, particularly in cases where students have lost their part-time jobs. Don't hesitate to get in touch if you need support – your university is there to help you. Find out more on <u>UKCISA's website</u>.

UNIVERSITIES 2/3

What is 'blended learning'?

Many universities are planning a hybrid approach to teaching in the 2021-22 academic year, also known as 'blended learning'.

In a hybrid or blended model, some teaching is delivered online. For example, large lectures may take place online, supported by online discussions. Courses that involve practical teaching sessions will be delivered in a safe way in-person, with physical distancing and personal protective equipment provided where appropriate.

Teaching through blended learning means the safety of students and staff remains top priority, and high-quality teaching can continue. All learning is being regularly reviewed in line with local public health guidelines.

Is there a possibility of relaxation of entry requirements to study by universities for students impacted by the virus?

Please contact your chosen institution for further information on entry requirements.

If I have problems with my accommodation, who do I go to?

Whether your accommodation is privately-owned or you are living in university accommodation, speak to your university in the first instance regarding any queries you may have.

UNIVERSITIES 3/3

Will there be reduction of fees with online learning?

UK universities have continued to deliver full degree programmes to their enrolled students throughout the pandemic, through a mix of online and face-to-face teaching. Therefore no universities have announced plans to reduce their tuition fees.

The UK's academic reputation is world-renowned. Our innovative teaching methods produce successful, versatile graduates who are sought-after by employers around the world. The UK higher education system <u>demands high quality teaching</u>, and any changes put in place by UK universities due to Covid-19 must to adhere to the same high-quality standards as usual. This is the case whether teaching takes place in person or online.

Are students still able to find a part time job in the UK?

Many, but not all, students on a student visa can work. This depends on the type of sponsor you have. If you are allowed to work, you will be subject to maximum weekly hours in term time.

Find out more about working in the UK on a student visa on UKCISA's website.

PUBLIC HEALTH 1/4

What should I do if I think I have coronavirus?

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness or the illness in any of your household members is worsening.

If it's not an emergency, contact NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you should call NHS 111. For any emergency conditions, if you need to call an ambulance, dial 999 and inform the call handler or operator if you or your relative have coronavirus symptoms as well as any emergency conditions.

When to get a Covid-19 test

Get a test as soon as possible if you have any symptoms of coronavirus.

The symptoms are:

- a high temperature
- a new, continuous cough
- a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste.

The test needs to be done in the first eight days of having symptoms.

You do not need to get a test if you have no symptoms or if you have different symptoms. Find out more on the <u>NHS website</u>.

Tell people you've been in close contact with that you have symptoms.

You may want to tell people you've been in close contact with in the past 48 hours that you might have coronavirus.

PUBLIC HEALTH 2/4

Are there steps or precautions in place to ensure the safety of international students?

UK universities are going above and beyond to ensure that students' physical and mental health and wellbeing are prioritised.

The UK government has <u>provided guidance to universities</u> on how to operate safely, and universities have taken a range of measures for campuses and accommodation to be Covid-secure. This includes increases in cleaning, ventilation, handwashing facilities, social distancing and advice on rules of contact and social mixing. Universities have plans in place to support students if they are required to self-isolate. All UK universities also have plans in case of Covid-19 outbreaks.

The UK government has also supported the creation of a programme of mental health support for students, Student Space, for students in England and Wales. Find out more on the <u>Student Space website</u>, and contact your chosen university for information on what measures they are taking to ensure the safety of international students.

In case of an emergency, who do I contact?

If you have a medical emergency in the UK, dial 999 immediately. If it's not an emergency but you need medical support, contact your GP or NHS 111 online. If you have no internet access, you can call NHS 111. If you have any other problems relating to your accommodation, your studies or your life at university, contact your university's international or support offices and they will be able to help you.

PUBLIC HEALTH 3/4

Do I have access to the NHS in case of emergencies, and how soon can I access NHS services on arrival to the UK?

The NHS (National Health Service) is an excellent service and is available to all international students.

As part of your student visa application, you are required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge. The Immigration Health Surcharge costs £470 per year for a student, and it gives you access to NHS services without further charge (subject to a few exceptions, such as prescription charges in England). Find out more about this <u>here</u>.

International students will always be able to access treatment that clinicians consider is immediately necessary or urgent at no upfront cost, and this is the case as soon as you arrive in the UK. However, you should register with a GP (General Practitioner) as soon as possible on arrival to the UK. Your university will be able to advise on which practices are available in your local area.

Your GP will be your first point of contact for any medical enquiries.

If your GP is closed, or if you are in need of support before you have registered with a practice, you can still access NHS services. You can call 111 which will direct you to the best local service.

If it's an emergency, call 999 or visit your local A&E (Accident and Emergency) department, which manages life-threatening emergencies.

PUBLIC HEALTH 4/4

As an international student, will I be able to get the vaccine in the UK?

Anybody aged 18 or over in the UK is eligible for the Covid-19 vaccination for free, regardless of their nationality or immigration status.

How does an international student get a vaccine?

International students should register with a local GP (General Practitioner) and get an NHS number. An NHS number can be found on any letter the NHS has sent you, on a prescription, or by logging in to a GP practice online service. You can also find your NHS number using <u>this tool</u>.

While <u>registration with a GP</u> is encouraged to access the vaccine, you can request to book your Covid-19 vaccination appointments as an unregistered patient through a local GP practice.

Where can I find more information on getting the vaccine?

For more information on the UK's vaccination programme, visit the NHS website.

For further questions about the Covid-19 vaccination and international students in England, <u>visit the FAQs on the NHS website</u>. You can also visit <u>this page on the UK</u> <u>government's Education Hub</u>. Please note, this guidance applies to England only. Students should refer to the relevant guidance for the part of the UK they are studying in, by visiting government websites for <u>Scotland</u>, <u>Wales</u> and <u>Northern Ireland</u>.

VISAS 1/3

What visa concessions are in place for students due to Covid-19 disruption?

Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK government implemented a number of concessions to assist visa holders in the UK who have been impacted by global travel and health restrictions. This has included offering extensions of visas, relaxing the rules on switching in the UK, and enabling international students to continue existing courses or commence new courses of study by distance or blended learning

For the 2021-22 academic year, the UK government has confirmed that students are permitted to study online outside of the UK until 6 April 2022. This means students have more flexibility on when they travel to the UK. Speak to your university if you have questions about when you should travel to the UK to start, or continue, your studies.

The UK government has confirmed that it will allow student visa sponsors to adopt a blended learning approach for students who are studying in the UK until 6 April 2022. From 27 September 2021 onwards, sponsors will must provide some face-to-face learning for those students who are in the UK.

Find out the latest information about concessions for students on GOV.UK.

Students will not be penalised for being unable to collect their <u>Biometric Residence</u> <u>Permit (BRP)</u> while Covid-19 measures are in place.

If you have any immigration queries related to Covid-19, please contact the government's Coronavirus Immigration Help Centre at <u>CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk</u>.

VISAS 2/3

Will the Graduate Route be affected by students studying online?

The new Graduate Route, launching 1 July 2021, will enable you to work, or look for work in the UK, at any skill level for two years (this rises to three years for PhD graduates) after graduation.

If you have been studying online in your home country due to Covid-19, you can still apply for the Graduate Route, provided you meet the other requirements of the route. This is part of the <u>UK government's Covid-19 student visa concessions</u>. The guidance states:

- Students who began a course of 12 months or less in 2020 or 2021 via distance learning, and who have not previously entered the UK to study that course, will be able to make an application if they make a successful student visa application and arrive in the UK either before their visa ends or by 27 September 2021, whichever is sooner. Students who begin a course of 12 months or less this autumn or early next year will need to enter by 6 April 2022.
- Students who began a course of 12 months or less in 2020 or 2021 who have existing permission as a Student to study that course, and who have already travelled to the UK during that period of permission, will be able to make an application as long as they are present in the UK before the end date of their permission.
- Students sponsored for a course lasting longer than 12 months will not be prevented from being eligible for the Graduate Route as a result of any distance learning that took place either in the UK or overseas between the period of 24 January 2020 and 6 April 2022.

Visit <u>the Home Office blog</u> for more information on the Graduate Route.

VISAS 3/3

What should I do if my 30 day or 90 day visa vignette to work, study or join family has expired?

If your 90 day vignette has expired, you will need to apply for a replacement by completing this <u>online form</u>.

Only apply for a new visa, or apply to replace an expired vignette, when you are confident you can travel to the UK. The new vignette will be valid for a period of 90 days - if you cannot travel during this time, you may need to apply again to update your vignette.

For the latest advice please check <u>GOV.UK</u>.

Who should I contact in my country for UK visa enquiries and travel advice?

For specific visa enquiries, please contact your local <u>Visa Application Centre</u>. If you need to contact UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration) about a current application, <u>visit</u> <u>GOV.UK</u>.

For travel advice, contact your local **British Embassy or High Commission**.

Your <u>local British Council office</u> will be able to provide more general advice on travel and visas to the UK.

TRAVEL 1/6

What do I need to know about travelling to the UK?

This UK is operating a 'vaccination status system' for international arrivals. The rules for travel will depend on your vaccination status.

Travel advice may differ between the UK's four nations. Always check the latest arrival guidance for the part of the UK you are travelling to – <u>England</u>, <u>Scotland</u>, <u>Wales</u> or <u>Northern Ireland</u>.

Remember that travel and quarantine rules are subject to change, so please continue to check the latest rules while making your plans, and stay in touch with your university for the latest information and support.

England (if you arrive before 04.00 (GMT) on 11 February)

If you have been FULLY VACCINATED for at least 14 days before arrival, you must:

- book and pay for a day two Covid-19 test to be taken after arrival in England
- complete your <u>passenger locator form</u> any time in the 48 hours before you arrive in England
- take a Covid-19 test on or before day two after you arrive in England.

Read more information here.

To check if you qualify as fully vaccinated, visit the guidance here.

TRAVEL 2/6

England (if you arrive before 04.00 (GMT) on 11 February)

If you have NOT been fully vaccinated (or you do not qualify as <u>fully vaccinated</u> under the current requirements) for at least 14 days, you must:

- take a pre-departure Covid-19 test, to be taken in the two days before you travel to England
- book and pay for <u>day two and day eight Covid-19 tests</u> to be taken after arrival in England
- complete your <u>passenger locator form</u> any time in the 48 hours before you arrive in England.

After you arrive in England, you must:

- quarantine at home or in the place you are staying for 10 days
- take a Covid-19 test on or before day two and on or after day eight.

You may be able to end quarantine early if you pay for a private Covid-19 test through the <u>Test to Release scheme</u> (England only).

See more information here.

TRAVEL 3/6

England (if you arrive after 04.00 (GMT) on 11 February)

If you have been FULLY VACCINATED for at least 14 days before arrival, you:

- will not need to take a Covid-19 test before you travel to England or after you arrive
- will not need to quarantine when you arrive
- will still need to complete a <u>passenger locator form</u> before you travel to England.
 To check if you qualify as fully vaccinated, <u>visit the guidance here</u>.

If you have NOT been fully vaccinated (or you do not qualify as <u>fully vaccinated</u> under the current requirements) for at least 14 days, you must:

- show proof of a negative Covid-19 test test to be taken in the two days before you travel to England
- book and pay for a Covid-19 PCR test to be taken after you arrive in England
- complete a passenger locator form before you travel to England

You will not need to quarantine, unless the result of the PCR test is positive.

TRAVEL 4/6

<u>Scotland</u>

Scotland is also following a 'vaccination status system', and so the arrival requirements depend on your vaccination status.

The full guidance can be found here.

<u>Wales</u>

Wales is also following a 'vaccination status system'. Information on travelling to Wales can be found <u>here</u>.

See guidance for international students arriving in Wales here.

Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland is also following a 'vaccination status system'. <u>Information on</u> <u>travelling to Northern Ireland can be found here</u>.

TRAVEL 5/6

My country is on the 'red list'. Am I banned from travelling to the UK?

There are not currently any countries on the UK's 'red list'.

How will I be supported on arrival to the UK?

UK universities are offering a range of options to students to ensure they are supported on arrival to the UK.

This includes airport pickup services, mental health and wellbeing support, food and grocery deliveries and virtual inductions so you can start to prepare for your studies and meet your fellow students.

Remember to stay in touch with your university as you make your travel plans, so they can ensure you are supported on arrival and throughout your time in the UK.

TRAVEL 6/6

How will I have access to banks and groceries if I'm self-isolating in the UK?

If you are quarantining in your university accommodation, there are lots of options available to you. Lots of local food supermarkets offer online delivery services. You can also order food online from local take-away restaurants to be delivered to your accommodation.

Please see the links below for more information:

<u>Asda, Iceland, Morrisons, Ocado, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Waitrose</u>

Take-away services:

Deliveroo, Just Eat, Uber Eats

We recommend arranging an international bank account or bank card before you arrive in the UK. This will make it much easier for you to buy food and other essentials on arrival. Don't bring large amounts of cash with you.

Remember that your university will have lots of measures in place to support you if you need to self-isolate, so get in touch to find out what's available to you. Some of the support on offer includes airport pickup services, mental health and wellbeing support, food and grocery deliveries and virtual inductions so you can start to prepare for your studies and meet your fellow students.

OTHER

What's the outlook for graduate employability for international students?

UK graduates are among the most employable in the world (QS Graduate Employability Rankings). 83 per cent of international graduates credit their UK degree for helping them get a job (International Graduate Outcomes, UUKI). So by gaining a prestigious UK education, you'll be respected by employers and academics from all over the world.

Across the world, many countries are adapting and responding to the Covid-19 pandemic by finding new ways of delivering services and managing our everyday lives. This inevitably impacts on the jobs market, creating opportunities in new industries and limiting opportunities in others.

Find out more about how UK universities support students' employability on our website here.

LINKS AND CONTACTS

Please see below for where the key messages in this document are reflected on the Study UK site:

- <u>Covid-19 information</u> for current students
- <u>Study in the UK in 2021-22 (information for</u> prospective students)
- <u>Covid-19 FAQs</u>
- EU student advice

For any questions, please contact: Kitty Jones, Study UK Stakeholder and Communications Manager <u>Kitty.Jones@britishcouncil.org</u>

You can also get in touch with <u>GREATteam@britishcouncil.org</u>

