



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

Important information for PGR students

Dear student,

This was not the start to the Semester that any of us had hoped for and once again we find ourselves trying to ensure that we can provide the best level of support and care for you in very difficult circumstances. This email contains important information regarding learning and support in Semester Two.

On 6th January, Professor Colm Harmon, Vice-Principal (Students), [wrote to you](#) to outline the Scottish Government's new stay at home restrictions and in the same email he confirmed that these new restrictions '*do not alter the information we are providing to postgraduate research students and essential research work may continue in our laboratories and other research facilities*'.

The Scottish Government has confirmed that enabling postgraduate research students to complete their degrees in good time is a priority and regarded as critical work. As the three Deans with concern for PGR students in the University, we wanted to write now with further information about how the new restrictions may impact on you and how the University can help.

Research and Academic Work

The Scottish Government's guidance on essential work now includes any work that must be performed on-campus in order to meet the core priorities of the University to deliver education and research of high quality.

While the current advice to all staff and students is to work from home where at all possible, essential research work may continue in University laboratories and other research facilities if it cannot be undertaken away from campus. If you cannot work from home because the environment makes it impossible, then you are permitted to work in the University in a safe location. If you need to enter University premises to access materials or labs, then this is also permitted under the same conditions. Please speak with your supervisor for further information if you are unsure how the Scottish Government restrictions may impact your work.

Access to buildings, including office or study spaces and laboratories may be even more restricted now and you will be contacted by your School or Deanery with information about access. Schools and Deaneries are working hard to prioritise research students who have unsuitable home working

arrangements or have additional or specialist requirements. For those of you who can do so, there is an overview of guidance for working on-campus on our website.

[Working on-campus](#)

We believe that the measures we have put in place to make our spaces safe have been proven to be reliably safe with no University transmission being detected. Of course, we will not force anyone to come to our premises if they do not wish to and we will support interruptions or no-cost extensions as required.

Please note that there are still travel restrictions in place. You can find more information and advice on this below:

[Scottish Government travel guidance](#)

[Information on Semester 2](#)

[Notify us if you are travelling back to campus](#)

Support for Student Health and Wellbeing

We are above all very concerned about the cumulative effect the pandemic may be having on your mental health and wellbeing. Over the last 11 months we have been impressed by the resilience of many PGR students, but it is also clear that many – not least those with caring responsibilities – are struggling with an unprecedented range of new challenges which come at a time when you are already exhausted or in low spirits.

The University is providing advice and a variety of support for student Health and Wellbeing. Student Counselling (which is recruiting additional counsellors to boost availability) and Disability services are available mainly remotely. Where this is a clinical need however, students can still be seen in person with pre-arranged appointments.

[Health and Wellbeing support](#)

Of course, it is vital that you keep in contact with your supervisory team. Schools and Deaneries have been advised to ensure that supervisors and Graduate Schools make regular, proactive and personal contact with you over the next few months – please look out for those. Graduate Schools will also provide opportunities for postgraduate student ‘town halls’ or online peer support meetings over the next few months with the aim of reducing student isolation and anxiety.

In addition, the Doctoral College continues to provide updates on support, training, events, and opportunities for PGR students. This includes information about the Careers Service, Digital Research Services, Digital Skills and Training, and Edinburgh Innovations, and the extensive programme of professional and personal development training for postgraduate researchers provided by the Institute for Academic Development. We know that postgraduate students have especially appreciated these services over the last year.

[The Doctoral College](#)

Students who are also parents and carers

Many of you may now be having to home-school children, or have other vulnerable family members in your care, and face considerable challenges to your academic work as a result.

The University is currently talking to the Students' Association to ensure that these needs are understood and are being met. In the meantime, please discuss the impact this is having on your research with your supervisors and use the concessions process to take account of the impact of exceptional caring responsibilities.

Accessing our services

The Main Library is still open, but with limited services (no browsing or borrowing of print collections allowed) and reduced opening hours. Any student visits should only be for essential reasons and to access services that are not available online or digitally. The Vet, Medical Education and Royal Infirmary Libraries are also open. All other libraries will remain closed at this time.

[Information on our library services](#)

Our new 'Scan and Deliver' service is now available and allows you to request print materials (typically up to a book chapter or journal article) to be provided electronically.

[Scan & Deliver](#)

Study spaces are available in the Main Library (Floor 5) and the Holyrood Outreach Centre, however you are encouraged not to use study purposes unless it is essential (eg your circumstances make studying at home impossible). If you need to use study space, this will need to be booked in advance through the University study space app, SeatED.

[SeatED](#)

EdHelp remains open for enquiries, and laptop loans. If you don't have access to appropriate IT facilities, you can apply for a medium- or long-term laptop loan. If you have poor or inadequate WiFi services, you can also apply for assistance via EdHelp; this can include loan provision of a MiFi (mobile broadband device).

[EdHelp](#)

Further Information on Fees, Extensions, and Interruptions (with links to your relevant College offices); Fieldwork and Placements; Assessments, completion and graduation; and working as a tutor may be found at: [Semester 2 Information for Postgraduate Students](#)

We hope that this information will be useful to you, and we would like to assure you that we are receiving regular feedback from you, via monthly surveys, town halls and from your representatives, which outlines your priorities and concerns.

As members of our respective College management groups and the University groups involved in dealing with the impact of Covid-19, we are continuing to ensure that the diverse needs of research postgraduates (including those on one- or two-year research Masters) are not overlooked.

With very best wishes,

**Professor Stephen Bowd
(CAHSS)**

**Professor Antony Maciocia
(CSE)**

**Professor Patrick Hadoke
(CMVM)**

The University of Edinburgh Doctoral College

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