

Addendum to the University of Surrey Protection Plan

Contingency plan for teaching and learning for taught students 2021/22 in light of Covid-19

The University has continued to take steps throughout the period of the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure it is able to maintain continuity of study for students in a range of possible future scenarios.

Based on the current position outlined by the UK government and learning lessons from the academic year 2020/21, the University is planning to deliver enhanced hybrid education for delivery of its teaching during 2021/22. This is primarily face-to-face delivery with online sessions where it provides the best educational experience and/or risk assessment of spaces require. Most assessments will be online.

The reasons for this model are:

1. Revised Department of Education guidance (6 July 2021) sets out key principles for HE providers and these have been reflected in our Health and Safety Covid-19 Policy. Efforts should continue to reduce the risk of transmission where possible and maintain contingency plans to deal with any identified positive cases or outbreaks. There remains a legal responsibility to protect workers and others from risk to their health and safety from COVID-19.
2. The University campus spaces have be set out in accordance with a review of risk assessments undertaken on the basis of point 1. Although this means that many of our spaces have increased capacity from 2020/21, in teaching spaces, we will be working to an average of 75% capacity. In other areas we will increase this further, i.e., library, MySurrey Hive.
3. Sessions will be timetabled for delivering tutorials/workshops/lab/simulation/studio-based teaching assuming social distancing protocols are no longer required and allowing for appropriate space and ventilation, as assessed by Health and Safety.
4. Where lectures cannot be safely timetabled, they will be delivered through captured content i.e. voice over PowerPoint, podcast, vodcast etc released through SurreyLearn.
5. Summative assessments have been reduced wherever possible, primarily using coursework and/or open book take-home examinations (available over a minimum of a 24-hour window). In rare instances, timed examinations could be administered within a 24-hour window.
6. Structured SurreyLearn (Surrey's virtual learning environment) module spaces are being created that facilitate student learning, enable high quality communication and scaffold learning through directed activities.
7. Based on our continued aim for a return to a campus experience for our students, we are not providing online-only teaching for 2021/22. This will only be revisited in the case of scenarios outlined in the next section of this plan.

Scenarios and contingencies

Our experience of hybrid learning allows us to continue to plan for contingencies given the still unpredictable nature of the Covid-19 pandemic as outlined in scenarios below. While we have reasons to be optimistic, we have continued to scenario plan to deal with any outbreaks or changes to government requirements, such as local lockdowns.

In these scenarios, we are working on the assumption that any lockdown would be local rather than national. In the case of a local lockdown, we anticipate expecting students based in university-owned accommodation to remain there. We will work with our student community to facilitate options that are afforded to us.

Scenario 1 Reintroduction of restrictions affecting face to face teaching

This scenario covers a range of possibilities where the government asks educational settings to take precautions to limit the transmission of the virus, such as the reintroduction of social distancing in the classroom environment. Following a reassessment of the capacities of our teaching spaces, we would seek to maintain as much face-to-face delivery as possible while minimising disruption for students by minimising timetable changes mid-semester. Sessions that are unable to be delivered in person would be delivered online. If such restrictions allow for the delivery of practical sessions, we will continue to prioritise this form of face-to-face delivery.

Scenario 2 Lockdown for 1 – 7 weeks

We will cease all face-to-face teaching and delivery of teaching for the majority courses will take place online. Courses with more specific requirements for teaching and delivery will be reviewed to confirm whether continuity of study can be maintained during the anticipated period of lockdown. All assessments will be conducted online, which has been the plan in the hybrid education as stated above. All essential lab/simulation/studio-based teaching will be rescheduled in the second half of the semester that are necessary for the professional body requirements and cannot be delivered in an alternative online format. More blended provision would resume after the lockdown has been eased by the government.

Scenario 3 Lockdown for 8 – 15 weeks

In the case where the lockdown period was to last for 8 – 15 weeks stretching over a full semester, the University will review the impact on delivery, on a course-by-course basis. Some courses would be able to continue to be delivered for a further period utilising online approaches. Other courses may need more substantial changes to accommodate delivery of essential tutorials/workshops/lab/simulation/studio-based teaching sessions once lockdown ceased, primarily in the following semester, due to the nature of delivery required to meet learning outcomes and/or professional body requirements. This may result in a change to delivery dates and timings. In the case where lockdowns are continuing to be enacted beyond Semester 1 2021/22 we will review the timescales for delivery of hybrid learning with the possibility of extending to Semester 2.

The University's regulations would be considered to ensure that students were not disadvantaged by the impact of a further period of lockdown. Any proposed emergency amendments to the regulations would be developed in collaboration with the Students' Union and fully communicated to students once approved through the appropriate governance channels.

Scenario 3 Lockdown for 16 – 40 weeks

This is a scenario where lockdown could potentially last the whole academic year covering both semester 1 and 2. Some courses would be able to continue to be delivered for a whole academic year utilising online approaches. Other courses may need more substantial changes to accommodate delivery of essential tutorials/workshops/lab/simulation/studio-based teaching sessions once lockdown ceased, primarily in the summer period of 2022, due to the nature of delivery required to meet learning outcomes and/or professional body requirements. This may result in a change to delivery dates and timings. In the case where lockdowns are continuing to be enacted beyond Semester 1 and 2 of 2021/22, we will review the timescales for delivery of hybrid learning with the possibility of extending to summer 2021.

Scenario 4 Large scale sickness and/or isolation of teaching staff

In this Scenario the University would enact the following contingencies:

- a) Continue to offer teaching by cover from other staff
- b) Continue to offer teaching by recruiting temporary staff
- c) Pause teaching for a short period of time (i.e. 10-14 days) to allow for recovery and this would be made up through local arrangements, discussed with students e.g. concentrated hours in remaining weeks
- d) Cease teaching of the module(s) for the remainder of the Semester and restart in the next Semester to be taught alongside planned modules. This will require careful management of workload for students and staff.
- e) In the case where workloads would exceed reasonable hours for the following Semester, regulations would be reviewed to assess how progression/completion could be achieved without completion of the full number of requisite credits.
- f) In exceptional cases, courses may need to be suspended and restarted the following year.
- g) The re-introduction of emergency regulations e.g. safety net, will be considered and communicated to students.

Review

The Covid-19 pandemic remains an unstable situation, we will seek to keep up with changes as they develop but within a reasonable timeframe. This plan will be reviewed regularly.

Publish

This plan will be published alongside the Student Protection Plan. Any updates following review will be communicated to students.

Final. 06 September 2021