

Working to ensure a safe academic year 2020/21.

Shared statement to students from the Principals and Directors of Scotland's universities and higher education institutions:

We are so pleased to be able to welcome every student, new or returning, to our universities. It is so important that you have the chance to continue your education and to take the next positive step into your future. We want you to receive the best possible education and to offer you a supportive and engaging student experience this year but our top priority as universities, in the midst of a pandemic, is to keep you and our staff safe and to contribute to keeping everyone else in our towns and cities, across Scotland as safe as possible.

This is a shared responsibility. We're still battling a pandemic. We all have an important part to play in suppressing transmission of the virus. Students have shown incredible solidarity in fight against the pandemic and support for the most vulnerable. Students in health disciplines were amongst the first to offer to work on the NHS frontline, students made PPE when stocks were in short supply and volunteered in many community settings.

We need the whole university community to continue to look out for each other, and for the wider community, in the every-day actions we take as we start a new academic year.

Staff in universities have worked incredibly hard from the early summer to plan for the new semester and adapt our approaches to teaching and our campuses to keep you safe. We will offer you the expertise of our teachers, researchers and student services through a mix of flexible and accessible routes. Student Associations and the sabbatical teams are a valued partner in putting these plans in place and we're grateful for their energy and commitment.

Campuses will look and feel different this term. With a blended approach to teaching in the first semester there will be fewer people on campus than usual and our spaces will be reconfigured to support physical distancing, enhanced hygiene protocols and the use of tech to support NHS Scotland's Test and Protect contact tracing system. Students can support this further by downloading the [NHS Scotland Protect Scotland](#) contact tracing app.

As universities, we will continue to work tirelessly to deliver on our responsibilities to you, as our students, and to the wider communities we are proud to be a part of. We will continue to work closely with the Scottish Government and public health bodies to ensure we adhere to the latest guidance as needed.

As students, we ask you to recognise the important role and responsibility that you have, on and off campus, to keep yourself, and the wider communities around you, safe from coronavirus. Please prioritise public health so we can ensure that the new academic year is a safe and satisfying experience for everyone.

Supported by:

Professor Gerry McCormac, Principal of the University of Stirling & Convener of Universities Scotland

Professor Sally Mapstone, Principal of the University of St Andrews & Vice Convener of Universities Scotland

Professor George Boyne, Principal of the University of Aberdeen
Professor Nigel Seaton, Principal of Abertay University
Professor David Maguire, Interim Principal of the University of Dundee
Professor Peter Mathieson, Principal of the University of Edinburgh
Professor Andrea Nolan, Principal of Edinburgh Napier University
Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli, Principal of the University of Glasgow
Professor Pamela Gillies, Principal of Glasgow Caledonian University
Ms Penny McBeth, Director of the Glasgow School of Art
Professor Richard A Williams, Principal of Heriot-Watt University
Professor Crichton Lang, Principal of the University of the Highlands and Islands
Ms Susan Stewart, Director of the Open University in Scotland
Sir Paul Grice, Principal of Queen Margaret University Edinburgh
Professor Steve Olivier, Principal of Robert Gordon University
Professor Jeffrey Sharkey, Principal of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Professor Wayne Powell, Principal of Scotland's Rural College
Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Principal of the University of Strathclyde Glasgow
Professor Craig Mahoney, Principal of the University of the West of Scotland

