

Friday 25 September 2020

## **Preventing the spread of Coronavirus in universities:**

### **FAQs to support the extra measures published on 24 September 2020**

On Thursday 24 September, we announced a series of new measures agreed with all 19 of Scotland's universities and the Scottish Government in an effort to tackle the outbreaks of Covid-19 in student residences across Scotland. The full set of new measures can be found [here](#)

Some of the measures, are time-limited request of students. Some of the measures relate to the rules and legislation announced by the Scottish Government, such as mixing of households, and how that will be reinforced in university contexts.

We know that to request students do not socialise in bars, restaurants and cafes for this weekend (25-27 September) is a big ask and goes beyond what is being asked of the general public at the moment. It is an appeal to students' strong sense of responsibility and community-mindedness in what is a worrying time for everyone. We don't make this request lightly and we don't like having to do it. We know how tough things are for students at the moment. But given the outbreaks we are seeing in student populations across the country, we consider that these temporary, additional measures are essential for everyone's safety.

Students are not to blame for the current situation. Students are showing very high rates of compliance with the rules and guidelines already in place. We're grateful to every student making sacrifices on a daily basis to keep themselves and each other safe. We do not want these additional measures to suggest that students are to blame. The measures simply recognise that, at the moment, student populations are more likely to have been exposed to the virus, and we all owe it to each other to take every step we can to ensure it does not spread further.

#### **RESIDENCES**

**I am currently in halls of residence but in a household that does not require to self-isolate. What do these rules mean for me?**

- As is the case for everyone in Scotland, you should not visit any other household or have anyone visit your household.
- Over the coming weekend, we are asking that you go a step further and do not socialise outwith your immediate household, and do not attend hospitality venues like bars.

- Household groups in university accommodation are defined slightly differently than for other people because of the nature of many student residences. In some cases, households may be larger than six people.
- If you are in any doubt what comprises a “household” in your accommodation or how this applies to you, please contact your student accommodation provider.

### **Why are students being held to a different standard than the rest of the population?**

- Students are being asked, not required, to limit their socialisation in bars and pubs, and so to go one step further than everyone else, over the course of this weekend, because of the rising numbers of positive cases of coronavirus specific to student accommodation.
- Whenever there have been outbreaks in a specific portion of the population, measures specific to that population have been introduced. This has happened geographically and, for example, where specific groups of people have suffered an outbreak. Targeting measures makes sense.
- There are large outbreaks of Covid-19 in student residences across Scotland, and it is considered important that additional targeted measures are put in place to prevent the spread of the virus further amongst students, and into the wider community. As universities, our primary responsibility is to keep students safe, and we believe these additional measures will help do that.
- These measures are planned to be temporary and should no longer need to be in place as soon as the ongoing outbreaks in residences are under control. This is not about blaming students for the situation – it is about ensuring that you are kept safe.

### **I live off-campus/in private accommodation. Do these measures apply to me?**

- The measures have been brought into place primarily in response to the large outbreaks in student residences, under the assumption that those living in student residences and their friends and other contacts are more likely to have come into contact with the virus.
- This request also extends to you, if you are a student, studying in Scotland, who does not live in university-run residences or privately provided student residences. If you fall into these categories, we would encourage you to give serious consideration to this request, as a precaution.

## **HOSPITALITY**

### **Are students banned from going to bars, pubs and restaurants?**

- No. There is no ban, simply a request by universities and the Scottish Government that students do not attend hospitality venues over the coming weekend in an effort to stop the virus spreading further.
- Nor is this request designed to be a long-term measure – it is in place over the weekend of 25-27 September, the first after tighter rules from the Scottish Government come into force, in an attempt to stop the immediate spread of the virus among students and the wider community.

### **I work in hospitality, do these new measures apply to me?**

- No.
- These measures relate to socialising only, and do not apply to those who work in hospitality settings, who can and should go to work as normal. As an employee in those settings, extra COVID-safe measures, including use of PPE and hygiene controls, will be in place for your benefit and that of the customers.
- Clearly, if any student is required to isolate, as a result of a Covid outbreak within their household or someone they have been in contact with, they should continue to do so and should not leave their household for any purpose, including work.

### **Why does the ask to stay away from bars only apply to this weekend and why was this asked of students at such short notice?**

- The weekend of 25-27 September is viewed, by universities and by the Scottish Government, as a key opportunity to break the cycle of transmission as it is occurring in universities.
- It follows concerning rising numbers of positive cases amongst students in daily data reports earlier in the week and a desire, first and foremost, to keep students safe.
- Transmission of the virus can happen very quickly and Scotland, and the UK has seen rapidly rising rates of positive cases over recent days. Universities felt they had to act quickly in response.
- It will also be the first weekend back to university for some of Scotland's universities and we know from the first institutions to start back that socialisation outside of households in the first few days has been the point of origin for some of the clusters.

## **DISCIPLINARY ISSUES**

### **Can I face disciplinary procedures if I go to a bar this weekend?**

- No. This is not a disciplinary matter.
- Universities are only asking their students not to go to bars, pubs and other hospitality venues this weekend.
- The request that students do not attend hospitality venues like bars this weekend is not the law, nor is it a university rule. It is a request by both the University and the Scottish Government in an attempt to prevent any further spread of the virus between students or into the wider community.
- Each of us has made sacrifices in the fight against Covid over the last six months, none more so than young people – we simply ask that you make this additional sacrifice over the coming days as we attempt to stem the rise of the virus and make our residences and our communities as safe as possible.

**If I breaching the rules about mixing of households, holding or attending house parties and any other university-specific rules within student residences, could I face disciplinary action?**

- Yes.
- The overwhelming majority of students are obeying the rules around socialising, but in order to ensure everyone's safety, we need everyone to play their part.
- If anyone is found to be putting the safety of others at risk in our residences, universities will take a 'Yellow Card/Red Card' approach and will not hesitate to escalate this to serious disciplinary action. The safety of everyone in our residences is our highest priority.
- Universities will apply their non-academic disciplinary processes to handle these matters.

**CONTACT TRACING**

**What if I can't download the Protect Scotland app?**

- The Scottish Government encourages everyone who is able to do so to download and make use of the Protect Scotland, contact tracing app. You can find information [here](#) and download it in Apple and Android app stores. It is free and the app does not hold your personal data.
- So far over one million people in Scotland have already done so.
- Universities echo that encouragement. Use of the app helps to break the chains of infection, speeding up the process of identifying people at risk of catching coronavirus and reducing its ability to spread.
- Not everyone has a smartphone or is able to download due to device compatibility issues. Universities understand that exceptions will apply.