Hughes Hall COVID-19 FAQs for postgraduate students

Updated Thursday 19 March at 13.00

University Coronavirus (COVID-19) webpages
Please refer to the University webpages for up to date information and UK Government links relating to health, travel, visa and immigration matters, and staff working arrangements. They also contain important University statements on arrangements for teaching and learning, assessment, and research in Easter Term 2020. These webpages also include a growing set of helpful FAQs.

Those pages represent the central definitive resource for University information on COVID-19 – please check it frequently.

General College information on Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Why has the College asked as many students as possible to go home?
To the College the most important thing is that when the situation becomes truly difficult, students are at the place where they feel most at home. No student will be forced to leave the College. However, Government advice changed on Thursday 12 March as the UK has gone from the ‘contain’ to the ‘delay’ phase. The aim is to ensure that the disease does not spread fast so as to reduce pressure on the health service. The University is in now in the “red” phase and all University buildings are closing. The College is aware that a significant number of our staff will fall ill. If schools are closed, staff will also have to stay at home to look after younger children. The College may therefore not have the resources to provide the same facilities and support it can in normal times. The Pro Vice Chancellor wrote to all students on about University preparations on 16th March and updated his advice on 18th March. Follow that advice and to keep in close contact with your programme director or graduate supervisor on the action that is best for you. We believe most students will generally be better off going home for the time being where possible, because they can be better looked after if they fall ill. Already some foreign governments have closed their borders, and students are strongly advised to make their plans accordingly.

Accommodation

By when have I got to leave my College-provided accommodation?
No student will be forced to leave their College accommodation. But if you can leave please do so as soon as possible and let the Accommodation Manager know at rooms@hughes.cam.ac.uk.
Undergraduate students have been asked to leave, where possible, by Saturday 21st March. We realise this is more complicated for postgraduate students, especially research students.

The University has now advised that all University buildings are shutting. The College position is that any postgraduate student who can leave should do so.

**Can I leave my belongings in my room?**
If your plans have not allowed enough time for fully clearing and putting your belongings into storage (additional space is being made available), then please liaise directly with the Accommodation Manager. If you cannot avoid leaving some belongings in your room then these should be boxed and labelled with your name. We will put them in storage where this is requested – so that you can avoid rental charges on your room.

**If I leave now, can I return to collect my belongings from my room later?**
In principle yes, but this depends on any travel restrictions imposed by the Government. Please contact the Accommodation Manager at rooms@hughes.cam.ac.uk if you plan to do this.

**My family members are vulnerable and I am afraid of bringing the virus with me. Can I stay?**
We encourage you to discuss this matter with your tutor and your family. Steps may be possible to segregate you and them once you get home, but we recognise that each case is distinct and you will not be forced to leave College accommodation.

**What should students who are renting privately do?**
Students who are renting accommodation privately, not from a College or the University, will have a contract or licence with their landlord. They should comply with this contract; paying rent and giving notice as it requires and they should contact their landlord if they feel they need to shorten the rental period for any reason. They should still heed the advice from Public Health England on whether it is better to be in Cambridge or elsewhere for their safety and wellbeing, and should follow the public advice on self-isolation and social distancing.

Colleges remain responsible for supporting as best they can all of their students, so please do complete the census if you are anywhere in Cambridge. Anyone who is in difficulty should contact their Tutor. In particular, please inform your College immediately if you are self-isolating or are ill.
Academic matters

Will the decision to leave affect my residence requirements?
No – you can apply for Leave to Work Away or Intermission, as appropriate.

I am due to have exams in April or later, I would rather stay in Cambridge

Refer to advice dated 18th March available here

International students

What effect will leaving have on my visa?
The University’s FAQs also deal with this point. See also the Government’s own guidance.

Several countries have closed their borders to non-nationals. I come from one of those countries. Should I still return home?
No student will be forced to leave the College. However, if you can, and have a clear travel plan to get you home safely then you should do so. Students in difficult situations such as this will not be required to leave the College.

I am from a country that has imposed quarantine on my return. Should the likelihood of the need to self-quarantine on my arrival in my home country for two weeks affect my plans to return home, book flights?
Take official advice for your country and discuss this with your family. No person will be forced to leave the College.

College provision

For those still in residence what facilities will be available?
The College will maintain basic provision based on staff availability, although this might change. We do anticipate that staff absence will impact to some degree on catering, housekeeping, portering and nursing. If your tutor doesn’t reply within a reasonable time, contact tutorial@hughes.cam.ac.uk.
We have closed the MCR Clubroom, and all gatherings in other communal spaces are being strongly discouraged in line with Government advice. At present the Library remains open, but access to the computer room upstairs will be restricted. The Dining Hall also remains open, but please do not rearrange the chairs as they are spaced out to help everyone with social distancing.

**If I stay in College and fall ill what help will the College be able to provide?**
The College will not be able to provide nursing care. Students who live alone without shared facilities will have to self-isolate in their rooms for 7 days if they develop symptoms of new persistent cough and or fever. However, it is important to note that revised Public Health England guidance now also requires all ‘household’ contacts to self-isolate for a period of 14 days, starting from the day of first onset of symptoms in the group. ‘Household’ is defined by the College as those sharing the same kitchen or bathroom or toilet. Further PHE guidance is here. We shall check once a day, at minimum, on those we know are self-isolating (SI) or household isolating (HI). We encourage all remaining students to nominate two willing people – also intending to stay, who have confirmed willingness to help each other should this be needed. We are concerned about the loneliness some students may feel. Where possible we will also provide online advice/support, again assuming the staff are well enough.

**What should I do if I am self-isolating?**
You should self-isolate for 7 days if you develop a new continuous cough and or a fever (greater than 37.8C). General Public Health England Advice is available here. You must email or call the Porters Lodge (porters@hughes.cam.ac.uk) – do not go along in person.

Note that revised Public Health England guidance now requires all ‘household’ contacts to also self-isolate for a period of 14 days starting from the first onset of symptoms in the group. ‘Household’ is defined by the College as those sharing the same kitchen or bathroom or toilet.

They will provide you with a specific College information sheet. The College may ask you to self-isolate in a room different to your own, depending on availability.

**Will mental health services be available to me even when I am out of residence?**
Your tutor will be available for consultation via email. The University Counselling Service is making arrangements for counselling by telephone for existing appointments, and will be developing these plans. Do contact the college nurse if you need to discuss this.

**Financial matters**

Postgraduate COVID19 FAQs 200317
I am in a situation of financial hardship, can the College help?
If students are suffering from financial hardship as a result of travel and other arrangements made, please approach your tutor, who will forward you the University Special Hardship Fund form.

What are the financial consequences of ending my College licence agreement early?
The College is aware that the current situation has raised questions about College accommodation licences and rent. The College will aim to be sympathetic. It can’t yet make any formal decisions as these will need to be taken in consultation with student funding bodies and other authorities.

College bills for Easter Term will not be issued until these matters are resolved.