

UCO Coronavirus update – 1st March 2021.

Dear student,

I hope you and your families remain well. Following the government announcement on 22nd February related to the roadmap out of lockdown and the re-opening of educational settings, I wanted to update you on plans for a gradual return to face-to-face teaching at UCO. As you may know, from Monday 8th March, schools and colleges in England will be re-opening to their students. The Department for Education guidance for Higher Education Providers, including UCO, is to begin a gradual return to on-campus delivery from that date, but only for specific groups of students. I have provided an overview of our return plans below, but your tutors will be in touch with you directly to confirm precisely what the plans are for your course.

From Monday 8th March, the following courses may begin a gradual return to more face-to-face delivery on campus (subject to providing consent for asymptomatic testing):

- Construction;
- Digital Arts for 3D Games and Media;
- Graphic Design;
- Performance;
- Photography.

In addition to these courses, some specific groups of students studying other courses may also be invited onto campus, where it is required for

their course and/or to support the successful completion of assessments. In all cases, your course team will confirm precisely if and when you should come onto campus. Where teaching remains online, your course team will continue to support you remotely, as they have done since the start of the academic year.

As well as increasing the number of face-to-face classes on campus from the 8th March, we will also be re-opening the library, to cover the whole working week. It remains necessary to book a space in the library, as was the case before Christmas, but the library will be open to all students Monday to Friday, including Monday-Thursday evening, commencing on Monday 8th March. If you would like to book time in the library please email ucolrc@oldham.ac.uk or call 0161 344 8888.

I would like to reassure you that our plans for returning to face-to-face delivery on-campus continue to place the health and safety of all our students at staff at their centre. Extensive risk assessments have been undertaken and the safety measures we had in place before the Christmas break remain, including enhanced cleaning, social distancing and appropriate PPE such as hand sanitiser. There are also some important additional safety measures which I would like to make you aware of:

Asymptomatic testing:

As part of a safe return to on-campus activities, we will be asking all students and staff to take part in asymptomatic testing. This will be done by way of Lateral Flow Device (LFD), which provides a rapid result. All students and staff returning to campus will be asked to take a test immediately before their return, and then twice a week thereafter. More details on how to get a test will be provided later this week.

[Consent for testing](#)

In order to provide you with a test, it is necessary for us to have your consent. You should recently have received an SMS and email about *asymptomatic testing*. **It is important that you reply to that message to provide us with your consent.** The tests play an important role in keeping everyone on campus and indeed in the wider community safe, so we hope that all students and staff will be willing to take part.

Please provide your consent by replying to the message as soon as possible.

Face covering requirements:

Government guidance now recommends that all students and staff should wear an appropriate face covering inside all buildings, including during classes and in all common areas, unless exempt or unless the wearing of a covering impedes effective teaching. If you are coming on to campus, please make sure you wear a suitable face covering at all times when inside. Please also consider how you put on, remove and store your face covering:

Safe wearing of face coverings requires the:

- cleaning of hands before and after touching – including to remove or put them on;
- safe storage of them in individual, sealable plastic bags between use.

Return of other courses to face-to-face teaching:

The government have confirmed that they will review the guidance on the return of other HE students to on-campus teaching by the end of the Easter holidays and will provide at least one weeks' notice to HE providers. We will continue to monitor the guidance closely, and will

provide further updates on a return for other courses as soon as we are able to.

Contacting tutors and UCO support services:

Whilst there will be an increase in on-campus activities from the 8th March, the majority of UCO staff will continue to work remotely for much of the time until at least the Easter break. All tutors and support services, including academic skills, the library team, disability, health & well-being and careers, will continue to be available by email, telephone and video conference during working hours. If for any reason they are not available, they will set an 'out-of-office' message on their email to advise of alternative contacts. If you have any questions or concerns at all, please continue to contact your tutors directly. It may be possible to arrange face-to-face support on campus, but students should contact staff by phone or email in the first instance.

Support for students:

We recognise that the current situation continues to create significant pressures and additional burdens for many students and staff. Please remember that all staff at UCO are available to offer advice and support, whether that is in relation to your studies or other issues. If you are struggling with anything at all, or have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your tutors, or the UCO support services:

Service:	e-Mail:	Telephone:
Academic Skills;	asc@oldham.ac.uk	0161 344 8888.
Disability;	Laura.Macmillan@oldham.ac.uk	0161 344 8877

Service:	e-Mail:	Telephone:
Health and well-being;	Charlotte.moran@oldham.ac.uk	0161 344 8843.
Careers and employability;	Vicky.ford@oldham.ac.uk	0161 344 8800.

The Academic Skills team will be offering on-campus support from Monday 15th March, including bookable face-to-face sessions. More information about these sessions will be sent out shortly.

Hardship funding:

The challenges presented by the lockdown are varied, and for some students we appreciate that the circumstances may have a financial impact on them. UCO has a hardship fund available, to provide direct financial assistance to students. If you are experiencing any form of financial hardship, please speak to your course team or the UCO HE Student Services team, who will be able to advise on access to the UCO hardship fund.

HE Student Services:

From the 8th March, we will resume having a HE Student Services team presence on campus, but this will be limited. If at any point you need to contact HE Student Services, please continue to do so by emailing info@uco.oldham.ac.uk. This inbox will be monitored regularly by staff and they will respond as soon as possible.

Digital skills support:

If you are struggling to access relevant software platforms, lecture content and materials or need additional support in developing your digital skills then we are here to help you. You can book a session in the LRC and speak directly with a member of the team. ucolrc@oldham.ac.uk

What to do if you're unhappy:

Everyone at UCO is working hard to ensure you are supported as much as possible to continue with your studies throughout these challenging times. We all hope that we are succeeding in this, but if you feel that something has gone wrong, or you would like to raise an issue with us, you can follow our complaints procedure, which can be found on our website by following this link: [complaints policy and procedure](#).

If you are experiencing any challenges at all in relation to your studies, whether Covid-19 related or otherwise, please make sure you speak to your tutors, or the support teams at UCO. We are here to help!

Please remember to follow the national guidance and also to provide your consent for asymptomatic testing. It is important that we all follow the rules in order to suppress the virus.

Wash HANDS | Cover FACE | Make SPACE

We will continue to keep you updated.

Kind regards,

Helen Mathers

Vice Principal – HE and Higher Skills

LATEST INFORMATION:

[UK Government advice.](#)

[NHS advice.](#)