An ancient university
Caring for our community

University of Aberdeen
Inspiring Community Confidence
Our priority remains the safety of our students, staff and wider community.

At the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, we established a Campus Planning Group (CPG) to ensure a coordinated response across the institution to comply with evolving Scottish Government guidelines including the Route Map through and out of the current crisis and in our planning for a safe return to campus.

This document provides an overview for our wider community partners of the plans we have in place. Measures in support of the health and safety of our community include physical distancing, enhanced hygiene procedures and adaptions to our teaching, social and accommodation spaces, alongside the launch of our flexible blended learning approach to support the delivery of our degree programmes.

We will continue to work with partners from Aberdeen City Council, community representatives, Police Scotland, NHS Grampian and Public Health, Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership and business leaders to ensure a citywide approach to the safe return of students and teaching staff to campus.

Should you have any questions, please get in touch with the Public Affairs and Stakeholder Engagement team at publicaffairs@abdn.ac.uk
Our Commitments to our students, staff, communities, partners, stakeholders and our region:

At all times, the health, safety and wellbeing of staff, students, visitors, contractors and the wider public is of paramount concern.

The University will at all times comply with Scottish Government guidance and, where applicable, local guidelines.

We will work with partners and stakeholders across the city to ensure dialogue and collaborative approaches are undertaken to ensure compliance with a citywide safe return to campus and the wider city for students and staff.

We will promote the Scottish Government’s FACTS campaign and make our student and staff community aware of their personal responsibilities in following the Scottish Government guidance to support the suppression of Covid-19.

We will remain alert and responsive to changes in local and national trends, taking prompt action and ensuring regular communication with staff, students, partners and citywide stakeholders.
Key dates

SEPTEMBER 5:
Student accommodation opens to allow two weeks quarantine for any students required to do so.

SEPTEMBER 19:
Student accommodation, shared study and social spaces opens with physical distancing and enhanced hygiene measures in place. Staggered move in dates and times along with check-in points around the site helps ensure minimum contact when checking in. Students move into their student accommodation and form a “household bubble” with flatmates.

SEPTEMBER 21:
Welcome week is a series of online events to welcome new and returning students to campus.

SEPTEMBER 28:
Teaching for the academic year 2020-21 commences. Our students receive the same high-quality Aberdeen student experience, albeit delivered differently through a flexible blended learning approach. This involves a mix of face-to-face teaching on campus, wherever that is possible and safe, as well as online learning where teaching cannot yet be in person. In addition, students are being supported to arrive in Aberdeen when they can, mindful of individual circumstances. There is an expectation that students will therefore continue to arrive throughout the first semester.
Return to Campus

BLENDED LEARNING
The academic year 2020-21 will commence with online Welcome Week on 21 September with teaching beginning on 28 September. In adherence with Scottish Government guidance, we will deliver a blended learning approach for at least the first half of the 2020/21 academic year.

Blended learning is a mix of face-to-face teaching, where safe and possible, and online learning where teaching cannot yet be in person. Our approach is guided by Phase 3 of the Scottish Government’s route map, which plans for a phased return of universities with blended learning in place.

Large lectures or large group sessions will not be possible while physical distancing remains in place and will take place online for the duration of the first semester.

LIFE ON CAMPUS
One-way systems will be used where appropriate to support physical distancing. Signage across campus will remind everyone of the need to keep their distance and wash their hands regularly. Our cafes, dining areas and shops will have physical distancing measures in place, allowing them to open and provide a safe and friendly service. Independent retailers and restaurants on campus will also be operating to national guidelines.

Where in-person teaching is possible, such as lab work and small group tutorials, robust hygiene measures will be in place. This will include access to hand sanitiser at key locations, detailed guidance for students and staff on physical distancing and personal hygiene responsibilities, as well as measures to ensure that building occupancy levels adhere to national guidance.

We are following Scottish Government guidelines on face coverings. The University will be providing all students and staff with two, 3-ply face coverings and students and staff will be expected to wear these.

On campus activities will take place in line with Scottish Government physical distancing and ‘stay safe’ guidelines. Student Society and club membership will be possible though some activities may be delayed until later in the academic year. Students will be made aware of local and national guidance on group meetings. Campus activities will adhere with local and national guidance.

Students will be asked to sign a Campus Pledge: This pledge outlines the personal responsibility of each student to adhere to national and local guidance at all times in order to keep themselves, and others, safe.
As we prepare to welcome our students back to campus, we continue to work with partners to have in place risk management and outbreak management plans.

In recognition of the critical role that Test and Protect plays in Scotland’s ability to control the spread of coronavirus and save lives, we will work with our staff and students to ensure widespread understanding of the role of the Test and Protect programme, empowering and enabling students to take part, including supporting students and staff who need to self-isolate.

**STUDENT ACCOMMODATION**

Student accommodation, shared study and social spaces will be open from 19th September with physical distancing and enhanced hygiene measures in place. Staggered move in dates and times along with check-in points around the site will help ensure minimum contact when checking in. Students will be issued with face coverings, hand sanitiser, thermometer and gloves.

Our team of Student Resident Assistants (SRAs) will be on duty 6pm - 6am, 7 nights a week and campus staff can be contacted at any time 24/7 to respond to a query and/or emergency situation.

**QUARantine AND ISOLATION ARRANGEMENTS**

For students arriving from outside of the UK, current Scottish Government guidelines require a 14-day quarantine period for many countries. University accommodation will be open two weeks before the start of term from 5th September should students choose to arrive in Aberdeen to complete their period of quarantine before the start of term. On campus, our temporary quarantine areas will be cleaned daily and students will also receive additional cleaning materials. Arrangements for access to food and refreshments during the period of quarantine are in place.
PRIVATE ACCOMMODATION
Students residing in student accommodation are required to have accommodation booked before arriving in Aberdeen. Students are being encouraged to speak to their accommodation provider directly to plan for any quarantine measures which may be required on arrival in the UK and will be signposted to the Scottish Government Guidelines for private tenants.

STAFF RETURN TO CAMPUS
In line with the Scottish Government Route Map, the default position remains that staff who can work remotely/from home will continue to do so. As the University begins to reopen the campus, every effort is being made to limit the number of individuals on campus who need to be there for research, study or teaching purposes, or to support the safe operating of the campus. By reducing the number of individuals on campus we, in turn, can support effective physical distancing. All staff must complete safety training before they return to campus.

The University’s Campus Planning Group is responsible for overseeing the framework for the safe return of staff onto campus which includes checklists and risk assessments, as well as contingency planning in the event of the Scottish Government introducing periods of local or national lockdown.

EVENTS AND FACILITIES ACCESS
The University is following the Scottish Government Coronavirus (Covid-19) events sector guidance. Events on campus have either moved online, been postponed or rescheduled into 2021 and external parties will not be able to access campus facilities or venues at this time. Where possible the University has adapted plans to enable events to be delivered online and will continue to monitor the situation.

www.abdn.ac.uk/events
At the point of registration, prior to arrival on campus, all students will be required to complete an online health and safety training course including personal responsibilities in relation to compliance with national and local Covid-19 guidelines.

Misconduct by students that is linked, directly or indirectly, to breaching requirements in place due to Covid-19 will be managed by the terms of the University’s Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Non-Academic). Our focus will be on education and on interventions aimed at addressing misconduct and reducing repeat behaviours, supported by widespread and repeated communications around the requirements on physical distancing and specific Covid-19 measures in place.

All students will be issued with resources signposting websites, phone numbers and key guidance portals with Covid-19 information.

The Student induction will include information on hygiene, face coverings, what to do if symptoms occur, track and trace information and guidance on any specific local and national information portals regarding NHS and Covid-19.

All staff will be provided with training in preparation for a safe return to campus highlighting the conditions of Scottish Government’s directives on FACTS.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

We are very proud of the Aberdeen family and continue to be hugely reassured and proud of the response of the University community to the Covid-19 pandemic.

We do recognise that this is an anxious time for our staff, students and wider community. Throughout the pandemic we have worked hard to build the sense of community to provide mental health and wellbeing support for students and staff. For example, we have delivered the following wellbeing initiatives during the pandemic:

For our students:
- Provision of student support and advice, and counselling services online or by phone
- Enhanced hardship funds to support students in financial difficulty
- Regular updates on social media on a variety of topics such as study from home, managing stress and promoting general healthy mind and body messages
- Pivoting to online open days, recruitment fairs and support for offer holders and new potential applicants
- Assisted students to get home

For our staff:
- Provided two paid “rest days” for every member of staff to offset some of the additional stress and workload created by COVID-19
- Weekly wellbeing email
- Flexible approach to working arrangements at a local level and transition to home working for majority of staff
- Employee assistance programme
Our response to Covid-19

We recognise that the University plays an important role in the North East’s recovery, in terms of the overall health of our communities and assisting in the economic recovery.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, our experts have contributed to medical research on the virus, helped both the Scottish and UK governments develop policy, and many of our clinical staff and final year medical students now work for the NHS. We are particularly proud that a partnership between NHS Grampian, the University, and local companies has led to an extra 1,000 Covid-19 tests in the North East.

The Scottish Government has awarded almost £1 million to the University to fight Covid-19. This has funded projects that range from the development of new methods of testing for Covid-19 to creating new surveillance models to map the needs of the most vulnerable or ‘shielded’ individuals.

Our expertise will also be brought to the fore to examine the impact of the pandemic on healthcare workers, including an investigation into interventions which can support doctors’ well-being and promote resilience as they adapt to rapidly changing healthcare needs.

In addition, our academics will explore the impact social distancing has had, particularly upon the elderly, and consider strategies going forward to help mitigate the effects of loneliness, reduced physical activity and management of disease, as well as how we can protect the physical and mental health of the population.

In terms of economic recovery, we provide a range of online courses that help local business train and develop their staff. We also ensure that our undergraduate and postgraduate courses reflect the needs of the local economy, with many of our graduates living and working in the region.

Our Centre for Energy Transition works in partnership with government and industry to produce research across a range of areas that will help the region achieve a green recovery. The results of our innovative research are aiding the development and deployment of new and renewable energy technologies, particularly in bioenergy, wave and wind energy. This will ensure that our region is at the forefront of Scotland’s efforts to meet its climate change targets.
FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to collaborate with us or involve the University of Aberdeen in wider community discussions or projects, we would be delighted to speak to or hear from you.

Please contact us at publicaffairs@abdn.ac.uk

For the latest updates on the University’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic, please visit www.abdn.ac.uk/coronavirus