

17 March 2020

Re: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

Dear Student,
(Please also share with Parent/Carers as appropriate)

I am writing to you with a further update to the information circulated on Friday.

It is clear the nation has now reached a point in the development of COVID-19 where there is now, quite understandably, significant anxiety, not least as politicians are now referring to potential escalation in the national actions that they are considering, whilst not yet confirming these formally. Their guidance remains the same at this time and in line with that communicated in my previous update, which is that schools and colleges should continue to try to remain open and that we should remain vigilant to minimise risks through self-isolations where appropriate and promoting good hygiene. We have had a number of queries in relation to the need for and the basis of self-isolations and I seek to clarify some of these below.

The most recent official guidance is that anyone with a **raised temperature OR a new continuous cough** should self-isolate for 14 days and reassess their circumstances using the NHS111 services, if symptoms worsen. Follow link for further [COVID-19: stay at home guidance](#). It is important to note that whilst there may be are symptoms that are understood to be associated with COVID-19/Coronavirus, this does not in itself mean that an individual who is self-isolating in fact has the virus, as in most cases this is more likely to be due to other more common illnesses.

The guidance updated on the evening of Monday 16th is that those who have someone in their household with either of the two key symptoms associated with COVID-19/Coronavirus should also self-isolate for 14 days. Such household-isolation is a pragmatic response to the risks that these symptoms could be or could lead to a case of COVID-19/Coronavirus. So far, nobody at the College has, to our knowledge, had a positive diagnosis for COVID-19/Coronavirus. Please do not worry excessively or interpret self-isolations as being a signal of positive cases as that has had no firm basis so far in relation to members of this college the best of our knowledge.

In addition, we have also taken a College decision that we should extend our own position to be even more risk averse from this week and are asking that **anyone who feels generally unwell** should also consider remaining at home on the first day initially, to establish whether the related symptoms of high temperature and/or continuous cough subsequently arise. Understandably, a small number of people have been, or are now taking, steps to self-isolate as part of these types of precautionary measures and we remain broadly supportive of this approach in the interests of ensuring that the College is attended only by those staff and students who are currently feeling fully well.

I hope that this approach goes some way to addressing natural concerns of those who are also worried about attending despite being well at present, where there may be other, potentially elderly relatives or family members with underlying health concerns. We are committed to ensuring that only those who feel well are attending in college and ask that everyone else takes a very risk averse approach as described above.

We also recognise that some people may have **specific underlying health conditions** themselves and may be concerned about attending the College anyway, in favour of self-isolation. An updated guide to conditions where risk levels are considered higher is available [here](#) and this specifies those

who are directed to get a flu jab each year due to their underlying condition and those who are pregnant. We still advise that GP or health professional advice is sought in such circumstances. However, we also recognise that GPs and health professionals helping individuals with underlying conditions may be difficult to contact and therefore understand that those in this situation may want to self-isolate initially, whilst waiting for the advice of the appropriate medical professional. If you face this scenario, please do let us know and we will be understanding of that for a few days whilst you get further advice

As outlined in previous correspondence, the College is taking steps to ensure that staff can maintain contact with their students, if or when it becomes necessary for them to be working elsewhere more flexibly themselves as part of this. Please be reassured that our staff are committed to maintaining support to you even where they may need to work remotely as a precaution at certain points.

Careers Fair and Creative Industries Fair: Postponed

We have taken the decision to **postpone our upcoming Creative Industries and Careers Fair on Wednesday March 18th** as a precautionary measure. It was felt that asking contributors to make additional travel arrangements as well conducting a large scale non-essential event was not sensible at the current time and we want to ensure our priority is to support the ongoing health needs of all our community.

It is impossible for us to confirm a future date at which we will plan to do these events at this time, but they are important to us and we will seek to do in due course.

Potential Work Experience Disruptions

A number of students may be anticipating starting a period of work experience in relation to their courses. In some cases, these would have been at care homes or health settings and after consultation with placement providers and after careful consideration we have decided that it would not be appropriate for some of those placements to go ahead at this time as part of our wider social responsibility to those in the highest risk groups. Staff who lead the affected courses and placements will liaise with you if your placement might be affected and will be supporting students with the implications of not being able to attend those affected placements.

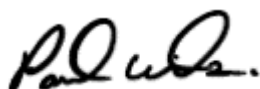
Despite the risk of disruption affecting some, we anticipate that many placements can still take place where there is support for that in the workplaces receiving students. Whilst on placement the same guidance applies, though partners may have their own expectations in relation to maintaining health in their own environment and students on placements will need to comply accordingly if asked not to attend a placement setting. The College will liaise with and support any affected students on a case by case basis.

Scheduled Sports Fixtures This Week

We have taken the decision to postpone sports fixtures and competition in light of the significant challenges relating to planning, staffing and travel which cannot be assured for all parties in such an evolving context.

Finally, I know that this is an anxious time and the College is seeking to provide as much access to information, continuity and consistency as possible, especially in relation to our final year students. Our staff are dedicated to supporting student success and I know they will work tirelessly and with flexibility over the coming weeks, which look likely to be disrupted.

Yours sincerely



Paul Wilson
PRINCIPAL