

DfE Higher Education Coronavirus (COVID-19) NHS Test and Trace handbook

September 10th 2020

The DfE advice has been given to ensure Higher Education (HE) providers feel supported and aware of the COVID-19 testing channels available to students and staff before the start of the 2020/21 academic year.

Testing and contact tracing are only one part of the series of interventions including social distancing and other measures that help prevent spread and should not be the only pillar of a prevention strategy.

The document is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive but pulls together available options and provides reassurance to develop our own testing policies. The DfE have reaffirmed ***'HE providers are autonomous institutions and are best placed to work with local authorities to put in place bespoke measures to manage risk and ensure accessible testing for those who need it.'***

DfE further comment Government guidance to help universities make campuses as safe as possible has been updated ahead of students starting the new term. This is in line with the ***'latest public health advice from SAGE, which was clear that there is no scientific basis that face-to-face teaching is unsafe as long as COVID-secure plans are in place.'***

The updated guidance includes advice on what a provider should do in the event of a local lockdown, track and trace procedures, the creation of new households in student accommodation and reflects the latest social gathering restrictions coming into force.

The SAGE group has made clear that teaching in person is important and fully online provision would have an impact on students' mental health. Where practical work occurs in close contact like medicine, dentistry and performing arts, universities should follow advice for the relevant professional environment.

In areas subject to local lockdown, four tiers of restrictions have been set out for education settings:

- Tier 1: HE providers are expected to provide blended learning, with face-to-face tuition, following the provisions of this guidance, and public health guidance, including, for example, the appropriate use of face coverings.
- Tier 2: HE providers should move to an increased level of online learning where possible. Providers should prioritise the continuation of face-to-face provision based on their own risk assessment. We expect that, in the majority of cases, this will be for those courses where it is most beneficial (for example clinical or practical learning and research).
- Tier 3: HE providers should increase the level of online learning to retain face to face provision for priority courses (e.g. clinical and medical courses), and in a limited number of situations as possible. Students should follow government advice to remain in their current accommodation to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus through travel, and providers should support this by keeping services like university libraries and catering open.

- Tier 4: We expect the majority of provision to be online, with buildings open for essential workers only. This should include the continuation of essential research

Key points by Dfe	LJMU reflections and actions
Anyone with symptoms is eligible for a coronavirus (COVID-19) test. If students or staff experience coronavirus symptoms, they should self-isolate immediately and get tested as soon as possible	This is noted and is in line with existing advice on the LJMU microsite at: https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/microsites/moving-forward
We expect HE providers to work with local authorities to utilise the high level of testing infrastructure already in place for symptomatic testing and coordinate the development and implementation of clear plans for responding to local outbreak and associated guidance	<p>Extensive work has been undertaken, and LJMU are working closely within Liverpool City Council's COVID-19 Community Outbreak Control Plan. This aims to prevent clusters, outbreaks and onward transmission by rapid identification, local testing and isolation of cases.</p> <p>Along with Liverpool's other Higher Education providers, LJMU are a member of CAMPUS Shield, working with public health experts on a co-ordinated approach to the safety of students and the communities they live in across the city.</p>
Testing is available on a symptomatic basis only through the National Testing Programme.	This is noted and is stated on the LJMU microsite
Local testing sites will be expanded and be the most efficient and accessible testing option for students	<p>This is noted. Students will be provided with advice and contact addresses on the microsite the week of 14th September.</p> <p>Tracing https://contact-tracing.phe.gov.uk/</p> <p>Testing https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/testing-and-tracing/get-a-test-to-check-if-you-have-coronavirus/</p>
HE providers should ensure that students and staff are aware of national guidance on testing, contact tracing and self-isolation – and promote the importance of following that guidance to help stop the spread of the virus	<p>This is noted on the LJMU microsite. We also have an agreement in place for testing of students and staff if they display symptoms. The costs are picked up by LJMU for testing, and do not take resource away from the NHS. See: https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/microsites/moving-forward</p>

<p>As part of DfE commitment to supporting all universities to be well prepared to respond to any outbreaks, we are asking all providers to send existing outbreak plans to us at HE.CovidPlanning@education.gov.uk by Friday 11 September and to confirm to us whether these have already been agreed with your local Director of Public Health or if you are seeking to do that now.</p>	<p>This is noted, and details have been sent to the DfE. The local Director of Public Health has been consulted on LJMU plans for managing outbreaks, and we are engaging in city wide scenario planning with relevant authorities and partners.</p>
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