

HE Outbreak and Lockdown Plan

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to provide students with a general set of principles which will provide clear guidance on what situations are likely to require changes from planned teaching and learning. These changes may be required in response to changing health advice.

This will enable students to understand when and why the College may move more of the teaching online.

2. Scope

This plan will apply to all students studying Higher Education courses at Warrington & Vale Royal College including all delivery sites.

3. Responsibility

Responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Government, Public Health, Local Authority, QAA and the Office for Students (OfS) guidance in relation to Higher Education changes, sits with the Director of Quality & Curriculum for Adults & HE, supported by the Quality Manager.

4. College Plans in the Event of an Outbreak or a Lockdown

4.1 Outbreak Plan

The College has completed a full Covid 19 Risk Assessment of its premises, staff and students in accordance with Government and Public Health legislation. The Risk Assessment will be continually monitored, updated and aligned to the College's Outbreak process.

The College has developed a robust system for reporting and acting on staff and student absences in relation to Covid 19. There is a dedicated email address to report Covid related absences covid@wvr.ac.uk and the Absence Hotline team will also record such absences on the Colleges reporting systems. If a student tests positive for Covid 19, they must follow the current isolation advice from the NHS. A student may be absent (in relation to Covid) for any (but not exclusively) for the following reasons:

- They have Covid symptoms (cough, high temperature, loss of taste and/or smell)
- They have tested positive for Covid
- They have been advised by NHS Test and Trace to self-isolate
- They have arrived back from holidaying in a country which is on the red list

The College follows Department for Education guidance related to thresholds of positive cases, to determine when to seek Public Health advice:

- 5 students or staff, who are likely to have mixed closely, test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period; or
- 10% of students or staff who are likely to have mixed closely test positive for COVID-19 within a 10-day period

College Aims Following an Outbreak:

- To ensure that Warrington & Vale Royal College continues to provide high quality services whilst providing a safe working, studying environment for staff and students
- To aid the prevention and mitigation of the spread of Covid-19 cases through effective engagement with our community on Government, public health and College rules
- To support the health and wellbeing of students and staff who become infected, in line with current Government guidance.
- To prepare for any local community outbreaks in partnership with Warrington Borough Council's¹ and Cheshire West and Cheshire Council's² advice and guidance, in line with the NHS and PHE
- To support staff and students beyond immediate outbreak control (health and wellbeing, equality, diversity, and inclusion).
- To identify strategic ownership and leadership of the College's Outbreak processes and clear escalation protocols

The following themes are included in our plans to mitigate the spread of Covid 19:

Prevention: Ensure student, staff and visitor safety by implementing and regularly reviewing measures that prevent the spread of Covid-19 among students and staff in line with Government guidelines.

Identification and Management: Implement protocols to respond effectively to Covid-positive diagnoses among students and staff that enable rapid identification of individuals affected, mitigate the spread of Covid-19 and respond quickly to any emerging outbreaks.

High Risk Contexts: Identify and manage high risk sites/locations, individuals and situations to minimise risks and impacts.

Quarantine and Isolation: Provide clear information and advice to students and staff and enable self-isolation, as advised by NHS Test & Trace, whilst providing tutorial and academic support for those who are able to continue studying when isolating.

Contact Tracing: Integrate the College's information sources, such as room timetabling information to facilitate data sharing with PHE and the local authorities (where required) to identify close contacts of someone with a positive Covid diagnosis (Sharing such information about Covid overrides GDPR).

Health & Wellbeing: Support vulnerable staff and students by ensuring access to high quality mental health, emotional support and practical assistance as required.

Data Collection and Management: Implement secure data management systems to keep a record of who is a confirmed case. Ensure that managers recognise the sensitive

¹ <https://www.warrington.gov.uk/OutbreakPlans>

² <https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/your-council/policies-and-performance/council-plans-and-strategies/covid19-outbreak-prevention-plan/outbreak-prevention-plan.aspx>

personal nature of this information and that it is collected ethically and securely, with the appropriate governance, regulatory and security measures in place.

Communication and Engagement:

- Ensure students and staff are kept informed and up to date with Government guidance and College plans and rules.
- Ensure students and staff understand their responsibilities, including how these are vital to everyone's safety and wellbeing.
- Encourage expected behaviours at all times and make clear the consequences of unsafe behaviours
- Maintain effective working relationships and actively work with key stakeholders within PHE, NHS, WBC and CWAC Councils and other educational establishments in the North West to prepare for and manage any community or College outbreaks

The following scenarios provide examples of the potential events and the measures the College will take to prevent further spread of Covid 19.

Scenario	College Measures
An adult student reports that they have symptoms of Covid 19	Student is advised to book a PCR test. If they have a positive result they should self-isolate in line with the current government and NHS guidelines. If they are well enough to continue working from home, an automatic message is sent to the teachers and managers to ensure work and support is provided to the learner whilst they are self-isolating. If they receive a negative PCR result, they can return to College.
A HE student reports that they live with someone who has tested positive for Covid 19. They don't have any of the symptoms.	<p>From 16th August, you may not be required to self-isolate if you are notified that you are a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, for example if you are fully vaccinated. There is further information on when you may not be required to self-isolate. All self-isolating learners are provided with access to online learning and support whilst self-isolating. Learner is advised to take a lateral flow test.</p> <p>If you are required to isolate, you will be informed by NHS Test and Trace. NHS Test and Trace will in these instances confirm the length of your isolation period.</p>
A HE student reports that they have tested positive for Covid 19.	The NHS Test and Trace team will contact the student to identify any close contacts. The NHS Test and Trace team will establish who needs to self-isolate and who doesn't. If you receive a text message from NHS Test and Trace informing you to self-isolate, you should follow the advice and isolate for the required time, or until they contact you again to advise that you are no longer required to isolate. Isolating learners will be provided with access to online learning materials and support whilst they are self-isolating. Advice is taken from Public Health to establish appropriate next steps. Learners return to College following the isolation periods advised.

4.2 Lockdown Plan

Under the Government operational guidance³ for Higher Education, which was last updated on 17th August 2021, the College will follow the guidance for [Further education COVID-19 operational guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/higher-education-new-national-restrictions-guidance)

The College will continuously undertake and update our risk assessments in line with Government Guidance, and may where required and appropriate to do so, move some HE provision to online learning. Where teaching moves to online delivery, the College will ensure it is in compliance with government guidelines and the HE Regulator OfS, providing our students with the assurance that we are meeting the standards set out for a quality [digital learning experience](#).

‘The government has been clear throughout the pandemic that providers must maintain the quality of their tuition. If a provider decides to move to increased online learning, they must continue to comply with registration conditions relating to quality and standards. This means ensuring that courses provide a high quality academic experience, students are supported, and achieve good outcomes, and standards are protected.’

The College’s Quality team undertake regular reviews of virtual classrooms and online learning sessions and student feedback will be sought on the learner experience via QDP surveys and Student Rep meetings.

Educational Tiers of Restriction

In certain instances, decision-making will be referred to the national level, and an area will be designated an area of intervention. The government’s Local Action Committee command structure may recommend some level of restriction to HE provision in such areas. In such a situation, restrictions will be implemented in a phased manner - the key aim being to retain face-to-face provision where it is possible to do so safely. These tiers of restriction relating to teaching provision are outlined below.

4.2.1 Explanation of the education tiers in relation to HE

Tier 1 (default position)

The College will be able to provide predominantly face-to-face tuition with potentially some elements of remote learning, following public health guidance.

Tier 2 (fallback position)

The College, following advice from public health may introduce additional measures for example; face coverings, social distancing to mitigate the risk. Providers may move to an increased level of online learning where possible. The College would prioritise the continuation of face-to-face provision based on our 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).

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses/higher-education-new-national-restrictions-guidance>

Tier 3 (where stricter measures are needed)

The College may need to increase the level of online learning to retain face-to-face provision for priority courses (for example, clinical and medical courses), and in as limited a number of situations as possible.

Students should follow government guidance published as part of any additional restrictions applied locally, including where this says that students should remain in their current accommodation and not return their family home or other residential accommodation to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus through travel. In these circumstances, providers should support students to do so by keeping services for students, such as university libraries and catering facilities, open.

Tier 4 (last resort)

We expect the majority of provision to be online, with buildings open only for essential workers and students who are required to attend because in-person teaching is essential. This should include the continuation of essential research.

The College has developed a Lockdown Plan which will accommodate each eventuality as we move through the tiers. If the country is on a National Lockdown, there is a possibility that restrictions may change dependent on local outbreaks where the level of infection is rising.

The phased approach will be implemented smoothly and learners will be made fully aware of any changes to their delivery as soon as the College receives any notification or updates from the Government, Public Health England or the Local Authority.

4.2.2 Continuation of Learning During Covid Restrictions 2021-2022

Tier of Restriction	Risk Level	College Measures
Tier 1 (Default Position)	Low	In line with Government guidance, the College may provide a blended learning approach which includes predominantly face-to-face delivery with some remote learning (where possible and practical to do so). Whilst we aim to ensure students and staff are safe, we also want to provide students with the ability to have access to all the physical learning resources available e.g. in practical elements. Where delivery is face-to-face, the College will ensure all public health guidance is adhered to in line with our Risk Assessment (e.g. social distancing measures, regular hand washing etc.)
Tier 2 (Fallback Position)	Medium	The College will increase the level of online learning where possible and in line with the Risk Assessment. Each HE course has been individually assessed to ascertain which parts of the learner journey are able to switch to online delivery where and when/if required. Teachers have planned in advance for such eventualities and backing up learning resources to the VLE. Practical delivery will continue face-to-face for those courses which will benefit the most and where there is an Awarding Body requirement to fulfil certain criteria to demonstrate competence in a particular skill or a set of skills.
Tier 3 (Stricter Measures)	High	Online delivery will be increased as much as is practically possible. Only HE courses with essential face-to-face requirements will continue to attend college for some of their practical delivery. The College will adhere to public health guidance in line with our Risk Assessment and ensure all measures are in place. Where possible for other HE courses, teachers will continue to deliver practical lessons from College which will be timetabled in the usual slot and accessible via the virtual classroom training tool (e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams). This will enable learners to watch live demonstrations and take part in Q&A and discussions. Theory and research elements will be supported via a structured online VLE area (e.g. Google Classroom) where learners are able to access learning resources including video tutorials, recorded webinars, reference libraries, presentations, research material etc. Where the Awarding Body stipulates, some units/assessments from certain HE courses will be adapted to ensure learners are not disadvantaged during any part of their assessment and where required, some delivery may need to be delayed, until it is safe to return to face to face learning.
Tier 4 (Last Resort)	Very High	In the event that the College enters Tier 4 restrictions, all teaching, learning and assessment will move to online (except for any extenuating circumstances for individual students, where face-to-face would be essential). As above in Tier 3, teachers will continue to provide students with a high quality learning experience which includes a mix of practical delivery via video calls (where practically possible to do so) and supported online learning via the online VLE. The College will continue to work with the Awarding Body, the OfS and QAA to ensure adaptations are applied where possible and the digital learning experience is a high quality one. In the event that any parts of the delivery are unable to take place (e.g. no access to specialist equipment), the College will delay this delivery until it is safe to return to face to face learning.

4.3 Support Available

Wellbeing Support for Students and Staff

Protecting students' mental health and wellbeing remains our priority during this period of uncertainty. We recognise that many students are facing additional mental health challenges and we will support our students with regular communication, ensuring services are accessible from a distance. We encourage students to stay in touch with our student support and welfare teams, as these services are likely to continue to be an important source of support.

Staying at home for a prolonged period can be difficult, particularly if there is no access to outside space. We understand social support is valuable for mental health and wellbeing during this challenging time. We encourage students to keep in touch with family and friends over the phone and on social media during this period of restriction. We would also strongly encourage them to engage with virtual activities we provide.

We recognise that many students and staff are facing additional mental health challenges, due to the disruption to study and working practices, and uncertainty caused by coronavirus (COVID-19). Students struggling with their mental health at this time can access support via [the NHS](#), along with support from mental health charity [Mind](#). All students can also contact the College for support, via the Welfare Team on 01925 494222.

In addition to support from the NHS, and support from the College, the OfS-funded [Student Space](#) platform bridges gaps in support for students arising from this unprecedented situation and is designed to work alongside these existing services.

Further sources of information and support are [Every Mind Matters](#) for adults, and [Young Minds](#) for young people.

Coronavirus (COVID-19) will also put increased strain on the health and wellbeing of staff. The [guidance on safer workplaces](#) acknowledges the responsibilities the College has to its staff and further support is accessible via HR where required.

Student Support and Inclusion Useful Contacts

Title	Name	Telephone Number	Email Address
Director of Safeguarding and Inclusion:	Lynsey Shearsmith	01925 494248	lshearsmith@wvr.ac.uk
Welfare Manager	Debbie Warren	01925 494392	dwarren@wvr.ac.uk
Safeguarding and Welfare Team	n/a	01924 494222	safeguarding@wvr.ac.uk
Student Support Administrator	Delyth Elliot	01925 494438	delliot@wvr.ac.uk

If staff are working remotely then landline numbers will be transferred through to staff mobiles.

Customer Complaints

In the event that students are dissatisfied with the quality of their learning experience or the support provided, initially they should raise their concerns with their tutor who will endeavor to resolve any issues.

If concerns are still not alleviated, students have the right to raise a complaint, in line with our Customer Compliments and Complaints Policy. The policy is available on the College Website at <https://www.wvr.ac.uk/policies-procedures/> in the College Section.

All policies relating to HE are also available via this link, <https://www.wvr.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/HE-Policies-Procedures-21-22.pdf> in the Higher Education section.