

Coronavirus Outbreak: Guidance for Staff, Students and Visitors

Frequently Asked Questions

Reviewed: 5pm, 28 February 2020

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The University of Manchester recognises that staff, students and visitors may have concerns about the ongoing coronavirus outbreak. The risk to the UK population has been assessed as moderate.

1. What sources of information and advice is the University following?

There are a number of sources that are informing the University's approach. Principally the University is reflecting the advice from Universities UK, Public Health England and The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO):

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-information-for-the-public>

This includes a Q&A section:

<https://publichealthmatters.blog.gov.uk/2020/01/23/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-what-you-need-to-know/>

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china>

We are also being informed by staff who are based in China or who have recently returned.

2. Are there any known cases within the UK?

It has been reported that there are some confirmed cases in the UK. The University is doing everything possible to ensure the safety of our staff and students and will continue to provide guidance, based on the latest UK Government advice, to our community.

3. What are the signs/symptoms of coronavirus?

Typical symptoms of coronavirus include fever and a cough that may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. Generally, coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.

4. What should I do if I experience any of the symptoms?

- Stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with other fluviruses
- Contact NHS 111 to inform them of your symptoms and seek further advice
- If you are in Northern Ireland, call your GP

Please do not leave your home until you been given advice by a clinician.

If you are residing in University accommodation please contact the Accommodation Office on 275 2888 to update and agree any specific requirements. Alternatively, out of working hours the

Hall ResLife Team whose contact details can be found at <http://www.accommodation.manchester.ac.uk/reslife/info/contacts>

5. What can I do to protect myself from the virus?

The primary preventative measure is to follow the FCO advice and avoid travel to Hubei Province in China. If travelling elsewhere in China, then follow the local advice and restrictions in place. More generally, to reduce the risk of spreading this or other conditions with similar symptoms, such as flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20seconds.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin.

6. How is the virus transmitted?

Because it is a new illness, it is not known exactly how coronavirus spreads from person to person, but similar viruses spread by cough droplets.

7. I have just returned from Hubei Province, what should I do?

If you have returned from Hubei Province in the last 14 days:

- stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as you would with other flu viruses for a period of 14 days after your return (your return day counting as Day 0); contact your School Support Office or line manager to advise them of this. It may be that some study/work can be undertaken remotely or that you can apply for mitigating circumstances, this will depend on your programme of study
- contact NHS 111 to inform them of your recent travel to the area
- If you are in Northern Ireland, call your GP

Please follow this advice even if you do not have symptoms of the virus

8. I have just returned from travel elsewhere, what should I do?

Public Health England has [updated advice regarding returning from travel](#). It provides the most up-to-date information and guidance for different parts of the world.

We use Public Health England as the basis of advice to students and staff as to what they should do upon return from travel from any of the currently identified areas of concern.

9. Should I wear a facemask?

At various times, many of our students and colleagues from the Far East choose to wear facemasks, and some of the cultural and health reasons for this can be found in [this article](#).

Current Public Health England advice does not stipulate that you should wear a facemask. Whether you choose to do so is a matter of personal choice.

Whether or not you wear a facemask, to reduce the risk of spreading this or other conditions with similar symptoms, such as flu:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20seconds
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin

10. I am undertaking a placement, or am due to undertake a placement with the NHS. Are there any restrictions in place?

There are no current restrictions on students undertaking placement within the NHS. However, if you are feeling unwell and have returning from mainland China in the last 14 days before you became unwell OR have returned from the Hunei Province in the last 14 days, follow the advice above in Q.7 and Q8.

11. I am due to receive visitors from China/affected areas. What advice should I give them?

Visitors from outside of the UK should follow the local travel advice in their country of

departure. If they have further concerns you should refer them to the Public Health England website for the latest information.

12. I am currently in China but am unable to return to Manchester to start my classes/continue my research due to travel restrictions, what should I do?

If you are currently in China, but unable to return to Manchester for any reason, please contact your School or Faculty Support Office/Postgraduate Research Office, Academic Adviser/Supervisor (or line manager for staff) to let them know of your situation and ask for advice on best next steps. It may be that some study/work/research can be undertaken remotely or that you can apply for mitigating circumstances, this will depend upon programme of study/research project. We are developing more detailed guidance on mitigating circumstances and academic support.

13. I am a PGR Supervisor/Administrator – what advice do I give my students who are currently unable to return to China and concerned about the impact on their visa?

We expect no difficulties in maintaining sponsorship of the visa in cases where supervisory contact and support is maintained. Therefore, students must maintain at least monthly contact with their supervisors.

14. I am currently an undergraduate on placement elsewhere in the world – what should I do?

Questions relating to coronavirus in other parts of the world will be best addressed locally where you are studying/working and it is important that you follow local advice as well as remaining aware of UK government advice. If you have not already done so, please sign up for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel alerts for your host country so that you receive the most up to date [travel advice from the UK government](#).

28. I am planning a trip abroad and have a non-UK passport, what should I do?

If you are planning to travel to other countries please be aware that if you have a non-UK passport, some countries are adding visa restrictions in efforts to contain the virus. Please ensure your visa is valid before making any bookings.

29. Should I purchase refundable or non-refundable air/hotel fares?

Where possible, the University recommends purchasing refundable air fares/hotel rates in order to minimise the impact of the developing coronavirus situation. This additional premium rate gives some insurance against event, flight or hotel cancellations.

30. I would like to travel to China, what should I do?

Following the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19), all travel bookings to mainland China (excluding Hong Kong and Macau) are now suspended until further notice.

15. Could I be infectious before I show symptoms

Whilst this is possible, the advice remains that only those who have recently returned from travel to Hubei Province should avoid contact with others.

16. A member of my close family/one of my friends/flat mates is currently unwell with coronavirus-like symptoms, what should we do?

Support them in following the advice above to contact NHS 111 for clinical advice. Avoid close contact, but there is no need for alarm as current indications are that it is highly unlikely that they will be experiencing symptoms of coronavirus.

17. What should I do if a student attends teaching with symptoms?

Provide as much reassurance as possible without causing wider concern. Advise them to:

- Return to their accommodation
- Stay indoors and avoid contact with other people as they would with other flaviviruses
- contact NHS 111 to inform them of your symptoms and seek further advice
- Contact you or their School Support Office to keep them updated, once they have spoken to a clinician.

18. I have heard reports of those who have recently visited China being avoided or harassed by others on their return to Manchester. Surely this is not acceptable?

The University has a zero tolerance approach to any reports of behaviour likely to cause harassment or intimidation. If you are worried, or have experienced any behavior like this, you can access confidential support from a specialist member of staff through the Report and Support platform: <https://www.reportandsupport.manchester.ac.uk/>

19. What if I am pregnant, or suffer from a medical condition or a disability that could make me more vulnerable to the virus?

If you are worried, you should seek advice from your own General Practitioner.

20. I have a friend/colleague currently in China. What advice should I give them?

Members of the University can stay up to date by following the information on Staffnet or MyManchester. Anyone else should follow the information given by the FCO.

21. Does the University currently have staff or students in China?

Of the small number of staff and students in China, none are in Hubei Province, but all are in contact with the University for advice about their circumstances. We are assisting with revised travel and accommodation plans as required.

22. I am worried about my visa status. What should I do?

The UK Home Office has published detailed new guidance covering people who are unable to return to China, those who are in China, those who are in China but whose documents are lodged at the now closed UK visa application centres, and managing the reporting of absences under various tiers. It is available on the [UK Government website](#).

23. How will I receive the most up-to-date information?

Staffnet and MyManchester will be updated regularly to reflect the latest information on the virus and advice for those concerned about its spread.

24. What should I do if I am planning to go to China, Hong Kong or Singapore?

Keep up to date with the latest China advice from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/china>

There is no current FCO advice against travelling to Singapore and Hong Kong, however many business operations, particularly in the education sector, are suffering from significant disruption. We would advise staff and students planning to go to Hong Kong or Singapore to speak to their hosts in these countries for details, and make an assessment with their line manager, before making a decision to travel.

25. I am a member of staff and Key Travel is not letting me book travel to mainland China for any date in the future.

Due to current uncertainty about when the FCO will change its travel advice we have suspended travel bookings to mainland China through Key Travel. We will continue to review this situation.

26. Why are other universities taking different action?

The information given by government and the NHS is advice (rather than direction), although we have chosen to follow it exactly. This mirrors the approach being recommended by Universities UK (the sector body representing all universities). Manchester also has colleagues who are able to advise on the public health aspects of the virus spread.

27. As a first aider, should I carry out my duties as usual?

In the absence of relevant symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) respond as usual to any first aid incidents. If the person has these symptoms, contact 111 for advice.

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31. As a member of staff, can I provide a student with a letter in support of their return to the University if they are quarantined overseas?

All students located overseas and under quarantine should adhere to local in-country advice concerning quarantine or travel restrictions. If staff are asked to provide letters of support to enable students to return to their studies at Manchester, they should confirm the student's status at the University and include a statement highlighting the importance of student welfare to us and the value of their studies with us in Manchester.