

**Email Date: 29/07/2021**

Dear Departmental Teaching Heads and NST/MVST Course Organisers

Please forward this email within your departments as necessary – in particular Senior Examiners may be rotating for 2021/22 so please do forward to planned Senior Examiners.

The landscape around teaching delivery in Michaelmas Term has continued to evolve (see attached update from Graham Virgo dated 28 July) and a communication to students will be sent out this Friday (30<sup>th</sup> July).

Of particular interest is point two:

*In the context of ongoing uncertainty about the public health environment in the autumn, and to allow the ventilation of large lecture theatres for large cohorts to be assessed during Michaelmas Term, undergraduate lectures involving cohorts of at least 100 students may be delivered on-line for Michaelmas Term. Delivery of lectures for large cohorts on-line is not mandatory, and a decision to do so is at the discretion of the Head of Department or Chair of Faculty. This discretion applies only to undergraduate and not to postgraduate teaching on the basis that undergraduate students will have in-person teaching through supervisions and, where appropriate, practicals. A decision that lectures to large cohorts will be delivered on-line will need to be reviewed after the Division of the Michaelmas Term to determine whether such delivery is required in Lent Term as well.*

And in the message to students:

*However, where there is a strong reason (for example, it improves the educational experience, or where we are assessing the safe use of lecture theatres for large cohorts of students during the first term, or where members of staff are unable to teach in person) we will use online delivery.*

In light of this and in order to provide some level of co-ordination across NST (Physical and Biological), a number of key points and resulting actions have been agreed between the two Schools, in consultation with Nick Holmes (Chair of the NST Management Committee). These are set out below to help you prepare for Michaelmas Term 2021-22:

1. Part IA lectures which would have been held in the BMS lecture theatre (Dept. of Chemistry) will go online.\*
2. In Part IB of the MVST BoD, normally held in the BMS, will also go online. Suitable alternative space has been requested centrally for MoDA, however we won't know until September if this request is successful. Space for all other MVST courses has been requested. We believe that PBS has also requested teaching space.
3. It is advisable to plan for smaller cohort Part IA and IB lectures (particularly in the NST) to be delivered at reduced audience density in order to minimise risk.\*\*

4. It is recognized that the majority of Part II and III lectures are organised locally. Where possible, please schedule Part II and III lectures during the afternoon, in order to maximise lecture theatre space for reduced-density in-person teaching for Part IA and IB (see point 6 below), where the timetable is very rigid. However, please keep in mind the BBS timetable if you propose any changes
5. Practical sessions will be held for all year groups, although in some subjects, this might still need to be done on a restricted basis, e.g. every other session or by running duplicate sessions, if the local risk assessment and common sense dictate this.

**Actions arising from the above:**

6. In order to retain flexibility, you should, for now, submit (or retain) all of your central room booking requests (booking as if it were 2019-2020) by the 2<sup>nd</sup> August deadline.\*
7. In order to help Departments find teaching space across the NST, a follow-up email will be sent by the NST administrator, which will gather information on:
  - a. local space availability in Departments (once space use has been optimised by appropriate timetabling of local teaching; see section 4)
  - b. remaining space requirements of Departments.

The administrator will then co-ordinate the two, in order that as much reduced-density, in-person teaching as possible is rendered possible across the Triposes.

8. Definite plans should be communicated to students, as recommended in Graham Virgo's email, by 30th Sept. It is probably best to avoid publishing anything on web pages now which might have to be changed at a later date. Therefore, until that point, please answer enquiries emphasizing that we do care a great deal about the student experience and are working hard to make plans which will deliver teaching in a safe and effective way, without providing details of your current plans.

Hopefully, this is helpful to you in terms of your planning in the immediate future, in light of the latest updated guidance. Please do get in touch if you need clarification on any point above and all the best with the planning.

Best wishes,

Nick Holmes, Chair of the NST Management Committee  
Deborah Longbottom, Director of Education in the School of the Physical Sciences  
David Summers, Chair of the Faculty Board of Biology  
Holly Canuto, Director of Education Pre-Clinical Medical and Veterinary Education  
Sandra Fulton, Chair of the BSC and Director of Education in the School of the Biological Sciences  
Dee Scadden, Head of Digital Learning  
Fiona Russell, Secretary to the Faculty Board of Biology  
Chad Pillinger, Administrative Officer  
Becky Ramshaw, Deputy Secretary of the School of the Physical Sciences  
Tim Weil, Deputy Head of the School of the Biological Sciences, Undergraduate Strategy

\* To help with planning, please note that current risk assessment suggests a reduced capacity of 200 for the BMS lecture theatre. BMS is now fully booked with low density lectures for next term (morning 9am-1pm and afternoons from 2pm - 6pm).

\*\* It is difficult to know for certain what the risk level will be in October (in part because the University's risk assessment tool takes into account the local infection rate). For now, every other seat used in a theatre seems to be a reasonable way to proceed. This will limit mixing and hopefully reduce the likelihood of an outbreak, or widespread self-isolation (if this is required at that point), which would make students less able to attend in-person practical sessions and supervisions.