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This is a message from the Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) on planning being undertaken in Faculties, Departments and other institutions for teaching next term. It is for staff working in the academic university.

Dear colleagues,

This note sets out the latest position on planning for teaching and learning for the next academic year. I hope that it provides reassurance and as much clarity as possible at a time of particular uncertainty about the continued impact of pandemic.

All planning for the 2021/22 academic year is guided by key principles. First among these is our commitment to protect the health and wellbeing of students and staff at all times. While doing so, we are determined to offer students the best experience that collegiate Cambridge can offer. Fulfilling that ambition requires as much in-person teaching as possible in the circumstances.

The collegiate University's position, therefore, is to plan on the basis that in-person teaching can proceed as normal, and without any restrictions. This approach is consistent with the guidance published by the Department for Education earlier this month. However, there will be circumstances where online teaching is appropriate, such as when it is blended with in-person for pedagogical reasons. In our own updated guidance provided yesterday to heads of all university institutions we also made clear that undergraduate lectures involving cohorts of at least 100 students may be delivered online for Michaelmas Term. This is not mandatory, and a decision to do so is at the discretion of Heads of Departments or Chairs of Faculty boards.

I also want to recognise that some staff members may need to revert to online delivery of teaching for medical reasons. If this is the case, this should be discussed and agreed with their Head of Department or Chair of Faculty as part of the individual risk assessment process. Staff may also contact Occupational Health or HR to seek advice on any health-related concerns.

Contingency plans

The University must also be prepared for a less favourable public health scenario, which could trigger the implementation of contingency plans. If that happens, most lectures will move online, with practicals, seminars and supervisions prioritised for in-person teaching to the extent that this is compatible with the public health circumstances.

The University's Covid Gold Team will meet on 8 September with local public health officials to decide whether contingency plans need to be triggered for Michaelmas Term, and Faculties, Departments and staff will be informed immediately. Students will also be informed. If contingency plans do not need to be invoked at that point, the matter will be kept under regular review as it may be necessary to invoke contingency plans subsequently. The experience of the pandemic so far instructs us that circumstances can change, and relatively quickly.

I also want to reassure you that we will continue to work together as a community to keep ourselves and others as safe as possible while making the most of life at Cambridge. The Colleges, Office of External Affairs and Communications, and others are working hard to encourage students to get fully vaccinated as soon as they can. The University will also arrange testing for students on arrival, and is prepared to provide appropriate testing throughout the first term and beyond if the public health situation requires it.

As I hope you are aware [from recent communications](#), the University is currently in a transitional phase in which we have recommended the ongoing use of face coverings and social distancing in indoor work settings. We will provide more detail on the measures we will continue to adopt in our buildings closer to the start of term.

I am incredibly grateful for your forbearance, commitment and adaptability in such uncertain circumstances, and I hope that you manage to find some time over the remainder of the summer to rest and relax.

With best wishes,

Graham

Professor Graham Virgo, Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)