

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

18 November 2020

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19): STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND NEW PROTECTION LEVELS

Dear student,

I am writing following the [First Minister's announcement](#) that some local authority areas will be moving into Level 4 of [Scotland's Strategic Framework](#) from 6pm on Friday 20 November.

We are planning for you to be able to travel home at the end of term, from your term-time address and join one other household (such as your family home). We will ensure that any travel restrictions in place do not prevent you travelling home at the end of your term.

I am conscious that impact of the coronavirus means this academic year has been far from normal, and I wanted to write quickly to you to explain the implications of these latest developments for you and your studies.

We have updated guidance for [colleges, universities and student accommodation](#) in relation to the strategic framework, and our guidance on end of term will be available shortly.

The key points to highlight are:

- We are determined to keep learning open and safe as far as possible, while balancing the risks of COVID-19 to our health and our society.
- As for everyone, you should continue to follow guidance and the law in relation to social gatherings and travel [in your area](#).

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- You should remain in your term-time accommodation if you are able to, in line with our [guidance](#) on visits home. It is extremely important that you, particularly those in level 3 and 4 areas, follow this advice to prevent any further spread of COVID-19 and risking the lives of loved ones.
- It is important that whatever level your institution is in, you should have the opportunity to continue with a high quality learning experience, even if more learning and teaching is moved online in Level 3 and Level 4. Our [updated guidance](#) includes definitions of restricted blended learning under these levels.
- Colleges, universities and accommodation providers have a duty of care to students, and I expect their number one priority to be to support your wellbeing and development. This includes mental health and pastoral support which is why, in Level 4, critical in person student support services can continue to be provided. This will include continued access to safe study spaces including those in college and university libraries.
- The Scottish Government remains committed to supporting students who choose to return home at the end of term to do so safely, and we will work with our institutions and student bodies to achieve this.
- We are advising any student who wants to return home for the end of term to voluntarily reduce their social mixing for two weeks before going home. This means going out only for essential reasons, such as classes, shopping for food, and exercise. This is the advice for all, but it is most vital to those of you leaving from higher level areas and those who are returning to households with vulnerable family members.
- Universities will stagger the end of in-person teaching and assessment throughout December to allow you to return home in good time and manage the number of students using public transport at any one time.
- Anyone with any of the symptoms of COVID-19 (new continuous cough, fever or loss of, or change in, sense of smell or taste) should self-isolate and book a test. If you test positive for COVID-19, develop symptoms or are identified as a close contact of a positive case, you must self-isolate in accordance with [self-isolation guidance](#).
- We strongly recommend you take up the offer of a COVID-19 test using a lateral flow device before you return home - even if you are not showing any symptoms - to help reduce the risk to your family and community. These tests produce rapid results within half an hour of the test being carried out and will be arranged through your college or university who will provide further details on how to do this.
- My officials are working hard with colleges and universities on plans for a safe start next term, learning the lessons of the start of this academic year. It is clear though that the return after the New Year will not be normal, and I will provide an update as soon as I can in the coming weeks.

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I want to thank you again for your hard work this year and ask that you please keep doing all you can to keep yourself and others safe.



RICHARD LOCHHEAD

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