

Submission to CYC Outbreak Management Advisory Board

Outbreak Planning for Universities and Colleges

Preparing for the return of students

Extensive work is already underway in all of York's Higher & Further Education providers to prepare our campuses for the arrival/return of our full cohort of students in September (many students are already back on campus). In the current year some 34,000 students were present across all institutions, including residential students at the University of York, York St John University and Askham Bryan College, and daily commuting students at all institutions but in large numbers at York College, Askham Bryan College and York St John University. Though there is some uncertainty on numbers, especially of international students, we expect a broadly similar number in the coming academic year.

This combination of residential and commuting students brings significant risks in the context of Covid-19, which all four institutions are mitigating by implementing Covid Secure guidelines to minimise the risk of an infection spreading. This includes preparing labs, workshops and teaching spaces for physical distancing, working closely with our Students' Unions to ensure we can run successful and safe initial welcome and continuing recreational activities, and supporting our research activity, much of which has continued throughout the crisis. We aim to provide as much face to face teaching as possible in the coming academic year.

Outbreak management & working with CYC

Alongside preparing for the return of the bulk of our students, we are also planning carefully for how we handle both suspected and confirmed Covid infections amongst our student body and our staff. We are keen to coordinate this work across HE & FE institutions in the City, ideally as a sub-group of the Outbreak Advisory Board made up of relevant specialists from each institution who can coordinate planning and information sharing, and ensure we all have effective approaches in responding to suspected and confirmed cases. Any planned communications would also be developed in collaboration with the CYC-led heads of communications fora.

Within this effort, it will be important to build clarity on how best to interact with both local and national test and trace efforts - specifically with the data we capture (e.g timetabling, attendance at events), and how we can share it in order to help NHS Test and Trace to track student contacts where needed.

Finally, we are also keen that we ensure there is suitable testing capability - within Pillar One, and therefore within NHS provision locally - for students to be able to be rapidly tested at locations convenient and accessible to students and staff across our campuses. This is critical both to provide reassurance to the entire community across York, to ensure we can rapidly

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isolate and contain potential outbreaks, and to make sure we can distinguish from non-Covid related symptoms caused by seasonal flu or other illnesses (and therefore avoid unnecessary self-isolations).

The University of York is keen to put its capabilities in virus testing at the service of the City outbreak control effort through an on-campus testing facility. The aim is to ensure that we can respond rapidly to deal with any cases or outbreaks. The University already cooperates with the local NHS on testing and has both the in-house testing capability and the requisite level of laboratory facilities. With that aim in mind, the University is carrying out a rapid feasibility analysis and will update colleagues on this at the next meeting of the Outbreak Management Advisory Board on 13 July.