

Universities and Colleges Sub Group - Update for the Outbreak Management Advisory Board

Summary

This short paper provides a brief mid-Easter break overview for the Outbreak Management Advisory Board on how Universities and Colleges have been working with the City Council as we emerge from lockdown, including support for city-wide testing initiatives.

Detail

1. Step Two unlocking

Both Universities and colleges have been working closely with City Council colleagues to prepare for the next stage of easing of restrictions. The general step two measures do not have a significant impact on campus facilities other than allowing covid secure hospitality to resume in outside venues. We will keep in close touch with colleagues across both public health and other council departments as students return to hospitality venues across the city to ensure that covid secure measures are continuing to be adhered to.

While not linked to step two unlocking, we also expect post-Easter to see greater numbers of students returning to face to face teaching in-line with government guidance which allows for teaching to resume on some practical subjects. The Government has promised further details on the return of all other HE students "by the end of the Easter holidays" - which for some Universities is as early as the end of this week. Latest indications are that authorisation for in-person teaching for the final tranche of students (in classroom subjects in the humanities and social sciences) will be delayed until mid-May (which is after most teaching has finished for the year).

2. Testing and Isolation

As more social spaces unlock for students at both HE and FE institutions, regular testing will become increasingly important. Both Universities will continue to host mass asymptomatic testing sites jointly with the Council, and these sites are also now offering provision for the collection of home testing kits (as announced on Monday evening by the Prime Minister). We have also been told by the Departments of Health and Education that home testing kits will also be rolled out for students in HE, although precise details of how this testing regime will work are still to be confirmed. As well as encouraging access to testing, we will also be regularly reviewing our communications and engagement approaches to make sure that students and staff continue to follow the basic - but important - covid precautionary measures including use of face coverings, self isolation following symptoms or a positive test, and social distancing.