Emmanuel College: COVID-19 FAQs for undergraduate students

General

Why has the College asked as many students as possible to go home? Government advice changed on Thursday the 12th of March as the UK has moved from the ‘contain’ to the ‘delay’ phase. The overall aim is to ensure that the disease does not spread as fast as it would otherwise do, in order to reduce pressure on the health service. The University is currently in the less severe ‘amber’ phase of our contingency planning, but it is widely expected that we will soon move to ‘red’. This would mark a movement to a situation where the business of the University is severely affected. A significant number of College staff are likely to fall ill, and even if they are not affected by COVID-19, they will want to take sensible precautions. If schools are closed, staff will also have to stay at home to look after younger children. They may also take the view that they do not want to expose vulnerable family members to unnecessary risk. The College may therefore not have the resources to provide the same facilities and support we can in normal times. We believe most students will generally be better off going home for the time being where possible because they can support their own families and be better looked after if they fall ill. Already foreign governments are closing their borders to all but their own nationals, and students are strongly advised to make their plans accordingly.

Accommodation

When do I have to leave my College-provided accommodation? Undergraduate students have been asked to return home, where possible, by Saturday 21st March. Public transport is still functioning, and we hope that for most students this will not pose undue difficulties. We understand that this may be more difficult for international students, however, and perhaps more expensive. If you do not intend to leave please let your Tutor know, and also inform the Bursar of your plans (so that your room booking can be adjusted accordingly). If you face difficulties returning home, please discuss this with your Tutor as soon as possible.

Can I leave my belongings in my room? Resident students due to leave shortly should fully clear their room and place their belongings in storage. You should try and take as many of your belongings home with you, where this is possible. Anything you are unable to take with you, you should place in storage - please email the Bursar to ensure you have access to storage. If, for whatever reason, you are unable to place your belongings in storage then please contact the Bursar.
If I leave now, can I return to collect my belongings from my room later?
Yes, but this of course depends on any travel restrictions imposed by the Government. It is best to take as much as you can; certainly take what you need. If you intend to return shortly, to collect the rest of your belongings, please let the Bursar know.

My family members are vulnerable and I am afraid of bringing the virus with me. Can I stay?
We encourage you to discuss this matter with your Tutor and your family. Steps may be possible to segregate you or them once you get home. In the longer run, you may be better placed to help them from home. Please remember that there are vulnerable students remaining in College, and we must think about their welfare too. The NHS provides the following advice on living with a vulnerable person:


Academic Matters

Will the decision to leave affect my residence requirements?
Please refer to the Senior Pro-Vice Chancellors message on teaching arrangements, dated 16th March 2020, available here.

I am due to have exams in April, I would rather stay in Cambridge
Please refer to the Senior Pro-Vice Chancellors message on teaching arrangements, dated 16th March 2020, available here.

International students

What effect will leaving have on my visa?
The University’s FAQs deal with this point. See also the Government’s own’s guidance.

Several countries have closed their borders to non-nationals. I come from one of those countries. Should I still return home?
If you can, and have a clear travel plan to get you home safely then you should do so. However, students in difficult situations such as this will not be required to leave the College.
I am from a country that has imposed quarantine on my return. Should the likelihood of the need to self-quarantine on my arrival in my home country for two weeks affect my plans to return home, book flights?
Take official advice for your country and discuss this with your family. In these circumstances no person will be forced to leave the College.

College provision

For those still in residence what facilities will be available?
The College’s provision will remain as normal based on staff availability, although this we expect this to change over the coming weeks. We do anticipate that staff absence will impact to a very significant degree on catering, housekeeping, and on the Porters, Nurse, and College Counsellor. Some cover will be available for Tutors’ absence, but Tutors may not be able to attend in person.

Other facilities will be affected. We anticipate closing the gym on public health grounds, and we advise that use of the Computer Room is limited, with requirement for people to wash their hands before and after use of communal keyboards and equipment. There may be no Library access because of the social distancing recommendations.

If I stay in College and fall ill what help will the College be able to provide?
The College will not be able to provide routine nursing care. Students who live alone without shared facilities will have to self-isolate in their rooms. However, it is important to note that revised Public Health England guidance now requires all ‘household’ contacts to also self isolate for a period of 14 days starting from the first onset of symptoms in the group. Further PHE guidance is here. We previously invited students to volunteer as self-isolation supporters. Now, we encourage all remaining students to nominate 2 willing people who are also intending to stay, and who have confirmed willingness to help each other should this be needed. We are obviously concerned about the loneliness some students may feel. Where possible we will also provide online advice/support, again assuming the staff are well enough.

What should I do if I am self-isolating?
You should self isolate for 7 days if you develop a new continuous cough and or a fever (greater than 37.8°C). Public Health England Advice is available here. You must email or call the Porters Lodge – do not go along in person. Note that revised Public Health England guidance now requires all ‘household’ contacts to also self isolate for a period of 14 days starting from the first onset of symptoms in the group. The College may ask you to self-isolate in a room different to your own, depending on availability.
Will mental health services be available to me even when I am out of residence?

Your Tutor will be available for consultation via email, and the College Counsellor may be able to offer skype/zoom or telephone consultations. The University Counselling Service is putting in place arrangements for counselling by telephone for appointments already made, and will be developing these plans. For College counselling, please contact Ann Hughes in the first instance.

I am in a situation of financial hardship, can the College help?

If students are suffering from financial hardship as a result of travel and other arrangements made, please approach your Tutor and also complete a College Hardship Application (available on the College website).