

Dear colleagues

Firstly, can I thank you for everything you have been doing over the last few days in supporting our students and each other.

We are in an unprecedented and fast changing global crisis and yesterday the Prime Minister announced that schools will close this Friday. I write further to my message on Tuesday.

Throughout this crisis the University's main priority has been to ensure the health and wellbeing of our staff, students and visitors. Given yesterday's advice from Government, the University will now move where practical to a virtual operation and continue our activities. The transition to working from home and providing academic and professional services support online and over the telephone is already getting established.

The new key decisions since Tuesday are:

1. The University's physical campuses in Canterbury, Medway and Tunbridge Wells will close with effect from 17.00 hrs on Friday 20 March 2020 until further notice with the exception of Augustine House, Canterbury, and Rochester House, Canterbury. Rochester House is our registered office and will be open to nominated essential staff.
2. Students in University accommodation have already been advised to go home where this is possible. However, we will have remaining some overseas students and a few other students who do not have a UK home to return to. We will therefore continue to support these students. It is with this in mind that Augustine House will remain open on reduced hours (9am to 5pm seven days a week).
3. Assessments: There have been a number of queries from staff and students about assessments. For Foundation Year (FY) students and Level 4 students on programmes without PSRB requirements, we are cancelling any assessments from Monday 23 March for the remainder of this Academic Year. An assessment will be made of the student's ability to progress to the next level of study based on their assessment outcomes and engagement with their programme to date. We are still working through our approach to assessment of Levels 5 and 6 as well as postgraduates. Further information will follow in due course.
4. Research: We are aware that there are a number of labs with ongoing experiments. Wherever possible these should be shut down and labs closed down. If there is an exceptional reason to access a lab in a particular building then please contact the Security Lodge at Anselm, Canterbury, on 01227 922355, urgently. Any research which involves face-to-face human participation should cease with immediate effect. Further guidance on online approaches to engaging human participants will be published in due course.

This is a difficult time for all our staff and students and we will continue to keep in touch with colleagues and students through e-communications throughout this period.

The aim is to provide services online. Some areas are already set up to do so; others are moving towards this. Further information will be provided. We recognise that there will be particular challenges for those with school aged children at home and would like to reassure staff that they will continued to be paid normally.

Student support will be available through the following email:
studentwellbeing@canterbury.ac.uk

I wish to reiterate that the University Guidance on Covid-19 is regularly updated and answers many of the questions you might have: www.canterbury.ac.uk/about-us/coronavirus/coronavirus-advice-and-guidance.aspx

It is imperative that colleagues read these fully so that they are able to respond to queries from students.

We are moving towards a virtual 'new normal' approach to the operations of the University for at least the next few weeks or months. Again, I would like to thank all colleagues for their support and co-operation at this challenging time.

With best wishes,

Professor Rama Thirunamachandran
Vice-Chancellor and Principal