

	<u>Agenda Item: #</u>
Report to:	Local COVID Outbreak Engagement Board
Date:	
TITLE:	BIRMINGHAM UNIVERSITIES COVID RESPONSE OVERVIEW
Organisation	Birmingham City Council
Presenting Officer	Dr Justin Varney Director of Public Health

Report Type:	For information
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1. Purpose:
To inform the Board on how the universities in Birmingham are planning their response to Covid for students and staff and local communities.

2. Recommendation
2.1 The Board is asked to note the report.

3. Report Body
<p>3.1 The Annex report provides a summary of the approaches across the five largest universities in the city. The report highlights the following key areas of action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student behaviour management - Communication and Engagement - Teaching and timetabling - International students - Student Wellbeing - Outbreak response - Supporting the wider community <p>3.2 The universities have been working closely with the Director of Public Health to develop their approaches and there is a regular meeting between the operational leads and a lead consultant in Public Health. Work is also ongoing with the small specialist universities in the city such as the University of Law (Birmingham) and BIMM Institute Birmingham.</p> <p>3.3 The work in Birmingham has been shared as good practice with the other areas nationally through PHE.</p>

4. Risk Analysis
Each university have their own risk assessment and mitigations in place.

Appendices
Annex A : Covid-19 Universities Overview report

The following people have been involved in the preparation of this board paper:

- Dr Justin Varney
Director of Public Health
- Hamira Sultan
Assistant Director (Public Health)
- Thomas Harwood
Head of Office (Public Health)
- Representatives from the five universities in the city

COVID-19 Preparation in Birmingham Universities

September 2020



Universities of Birmingham

There are five Universities in Birmingham:

- Aston University
- Birmingham City University
- Newman University
- University College Birmingham
- University of Birmingham

This slide set summarises some of the actions being taken across the five universities to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for staff and students and protect the local communities in Birmingham.



Student Population

University	Student Population	% Resident in University run accommodation	% Students not resident in Birmingham
University of Birmingham	35,189	14%	20%
Birmingham City University	12,555	40%	34%
Aston University	13,000	0%	66%
University College Birmingham	6,800	26%	26%
Newman University	4,255	0%	49%
Total	70,222	16%	32%

There is a significant population of students, and staff, studying and working in the five universities in Birmingham.

32% of the student population are commuting into the city during term time, primarily from the surrounding metropolitan local authorities.

There are circa 16,000 first year students starting each year across the five universities.

There is significant variation in the number of international students, on average 20% of students are international. India and China have particularly strong links to the universities in the city.



Student Behaviour Management

Codes of Conduct

- Student code of conduct explicitly includes Covid safe behaviour for all students
- Guidelines and code of conduct for students resident on campus (i.e. halls of residence)
- Guidelines to follow if students should feel unwell
- Student self assessments

Behaviour on Campus

- One way systems for students in place
- Expectation to wear face coverings / masks in public areas where social distancing not possible
- Classrooms socially distanced
- Risk assessments on classrooms and halls





Communication and Engagement

Targeted Communication approaches

- Multiple communication channels, including microsites for specific groups
- Working with Student Guilds/Unions to support peer to peer messaging
- Specific tailoring of messaging for new students, international students, returning students and staff.
- Returning staff guidelines on staying safe and self assessments
- Specific messaging on face covering expectations

Communication on Campus

- Covid student and staff helplines
- Improved signage around campus
- Hard copy guidelines as well as multi-media

Community Engagement and Communication

- Town hall engagement meetings with local residents
- Targeted engagement with private landlords for student accommodation

HEALTHCARE AND STUDENT WELLBEING

COVID Secure

1. We have carried out a COVID-19 risk assessment to ensure our buildings are ready for your arrival.
2. We have cleaning, handwashing and hygiene procedures in line with guidance
3. Where people cannot be two metres apart, we have done everything practical to manage transmission risk. Information is regularly updated on: <https://www2.aston.ac.uk/current-students/health-wellbeing/coronavirus>

Campus Sa

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Teaching and timetabling approaches

Teaching approaches

- Bimodal – on campus and on line – delivery of teaching
- Larger groups migrated online, avoiding any large teaching groups in 2020
- Seminars and small face to face group sessions with social distancing and other mitigations
- Specific risk management of teaching that requires face to face delivery e.g. laboratory based teaching
- Investment in staff development in online design and delivery for engagement with students

Timetable management

- Staggered teaching schedule
- Baseline bimodal approach, with prioritisation of on campus activity that can be adjusted with local UK restrictions
- Designated campus days/weeks for staff/students

Risk management of teaching environment

- Face coverings / Face masks in common areas
- Student bubbles where possible
- Staff to wear visors when teaching
- Managed student flows and clear behavioural expectations
- Rooms cleaned between use

The screenshot shows the Newman University Birmingham website. At the top left is the university's crest, a red shield with a white lion and a cross. To the right of the crest, the text 'Newman University' is written in a large, white, serif font, with 'BIRMINGHAM' in a smaller, white, sans-serif font below it. Below the university name is a search bar with the word 'SEARCH' and a magnifying glass icon. The main content area has a light teal background with the text 'Help & Advice - COVID-19 - SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS' in a white, sans-serif font. Below this text is a white search bar with the text 'SEARCH THE KNOWLEDGE BASE' and a right-pointing arrow. At the bottom of the page, there is a section titled 'Student FAQs' in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below the title is a link that says 'BACK TO "COVID-19 - UNIVERSITY UPDATE FOR STUDENTS"' with a left-pointing arrow. At the very bottom, there is a small line of text that says 'Last Updated: September 16th 2020'.



International student approaches

Pre-arrival approaches

- Flexible start dates, in some cases can return anywhere in first two months of autumn term
- Remote class options for autumn term
- Communication about covid-safety behaviour and support

Student support

- Specific engagement about NHS services & free Covid testing for symptoms
- Support for quarantine period
- Student buddies and peer support
- International student union groups supporting targeted engagement



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Student wellbeing approaches

Student health and wellbeing

- Specific discussion and highlighting of impact of Covid on wellbeing and impact of different teaching approach and restrictions on student experience
- Work with Guild/Union on wellbeing support and risk reduction
- Student health services doing proactive engagement on wellbeing

Staff health and wellbeing

- Individual risk assessments
- Working with Birmingham City Council to support uptake of Bhealthy mortality risk reduction campaign
- Mental wellbeing support helplines and occupational health support

Covid Testing & Tracing response

- Reporting single point of contact for symptomatic students and staff
- Reactive response plans in place for symptomatic individuals on campus to isolate and support return to accommodation and access of testing
- Co-location of walk-through testing facilities near student accommodation hubs
- Reactive testing support to staff and students developing symptoms on campus (similar to schools approach)
- In-house tracing data collection teams, collating data from schedules, attendance records, hospitality registers and computer log-in data to support NHS test and trace
- Working with Birmingham City Council to support students and staff to become Covid Community Champions

UCB actions during the COVID-19 pandemic



Test and Trace



Outbreak response approaches

All five universities have processes in place to respond to cases of Covid-19 in staff or students, these have been developed with BCC Public Health department.

Symptomatic individual on campus

- Rapid response support for isolation of individual and safe transfer to accommodation and support access to test, if appropriate.
- Follow up support for individual in isolation and contacts if in student accommodation
- If confirmed positive then reactive internal tracing support to support public health and NHS test and trace identification of contacts

Positive cases identified associated with University

- Work with Public Health England and BCC public health team to assess risk of on campus transmission and interventions required.
- Potential to move to further online teaching.

Impact of rising cases in local community

- Responsive to local advice and restrictions
- Consider impact on non-campus resident students in wider region



Supporting the wider community approaches

Research & Innovation

- UoB – testing technology advances, university laboratory supporting national testing effort, specific research and development programme for covid recovery/rehabilitation, clinical evidence synthesis to support University Hospitals Birmingham Trust acute response.
- BCU – digital interventions to tackle loneliness in care homes, culturally specific nutrition and advice support for Ramadan during lockdown, IT tool to speed up Covid diagnosis in radiology.



Community support

- Student volunteering to support befriending, community food distribution and local voluntary sector response.
- Production and donation of personal safety equipment and hand sanitiser to NHS and Council.
- Rapid deployment of health and social care students to support the acute response during the first wave.



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Making a positive difference every day to people's lives

