Dear firstname,

I do hope that this email finds you well and that you are making good progress with your assignments and assessments.

I would also like to thank you for your ongoing commitment to your studies and for the way in which you have continued to embrace University life over the last few months.

I know that, like my colleagues and me, many of you will be missing being on campus and physically engaging with your friends, academics and other staff who provide you with personal support. We very much look forward to welcoming all of our students and staff back to our campuses, and whilst the current public health advice means that this is still not currently possible, the gradual lifting of the lockdown and evolving Government guidance means that we can now, with some degree of confidence, begin to plan a return to campus in the autumn term.

As such, I am pleased to confirm that we are now planning for the controlled reopening of all our campuses to enable teaching to begin as scheduled from Monday 5 October 2020. This is with the exception of some courses in the School of Health Sciences where there is an earlier start date.

Clearly in doing this we have to put the health and safety of both you, our students, and also our staff at the heart of the decisions we make and to ensure that we manage our return in such a way as to reduce risks and safeguard health and wellbeing.

Although our return to campus will be in a little over four months, we know the situation can change quickly, and we will need to be flexible in our approach. However, our current plans are based on:

- Delivering our academic programmes through a carefully planned blend of socially distanced campus-based teaching and enhanced digital learning.
- All students having opportunities for face-to-face on-campus interaction with their academic tutors and peers – albeit in smaller groups which reflect social distancing and related guidelines.
- The delivery of larger group teaching, such as lectures, through enhanced digital learning.
- Teaching and learning in laboratories, workshops, studio spaces and specialist facilities taking place in compliance with the appropriate additional safety guidance.
- Organising the teaching schedule to limit the numbers of students and staff needing to be on campus at any one time.
• Controlling the way that facilities and services (including libraries, student services and catering outlets) are physically accessed.

• Introducing appropriate social distancing and cleaning protocols, controlling movements around campus, and other measures such as supporting the wearing of face coverings in certain appropriate circumstances.

This approach is designed to allow us to be responsive to any changes in public health guidance and to ensure we are able to deliver an engaging educational and student experience during a period when our ambitions for an increased amount of face-to-face delivery will hopefully become possible.

I also want to say thank you for your views and opinions on the things that have worked well for you during this period of remote learning, and also some of things that have been more challenging. Along with our regular feedback from the Students’ Union, this has helped inform the development of our approach to the 2020-21 academic year.

Our planning over this period has led us to explore ways in which we can enhance and further support your educational experience. This includes investment in technology that will make for more interactive and engaging delivery of the digital learning elements of your education, and will also help improve the accessibility of learning materials for those of our students who, for example, experience visual impairment.

You have also helped inform our thinking about ways in which we can improve the use of StudentCentral to ensure ease of access to these materials and we will be working on this over the summer.

I hope that you will be reassured by what I have shared with you and will understand that we will be working hard to ensure that all these arrangements are in place, including undertaking ongoing risk assessments to inform our approach. We will continue to review the position in the light of wider Government guidance and hope to provide a full on-campus experience at an early point in 2021.

I hope this is helpful and we will continue to keep you updated. In the meantime, please do look at our Covid-19 FAQs and Student Update.

Best regards,

Professor Ruth Whittaker
Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Students