

PRESS RELEASE



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Oxford gets ready to welcome back university students

Students are getting ready to come back to Oxford for the new academic year, and the city is getting ready for a return to a more normal rhythm of life.

Students are an essential part of life here, and Oxford has felt the impact of restrictions on student attendance as an additional impact on businesses, and a strangely empty city.

With the new academic year approaching, both universities will be continuing to have measures in place to manage the Covid risk. With many students now vaccinated as well as local residents, the risk this year is lower. However, the universities are still continuing to take steps to reduce COVID-19 risks.

Measures include:

- Support to encourage students to take up their vaccine appointments as early as possible, before they arrive at university if they can
- Pop-up vaccination centres provided at both universities for those who have not been able to get vaccinated before attending
- Encouraging students to get tested before they arrive at university, and to keep home testing twice weekly throughout the term
- PCR testing for symptomatic cases is available on site at Oxford Brookes and Oxford University
- Health guidance for staff and students at both universities, covering the use of face coverings, testing and self isolation
- Many larger lectures taking place online, with smaller sessions going ahead in-person, with appropriate safety measures in place.

Oxford Brookes University arrivals weekend is 11 and 12 September, while Oxford University students will arrive from early October.

Throughout the first semester, Student Community Wardens from Oxford Brookes University are prioritising visits to students in private rental properties, helping them settle into the local community and be good neighbours.

Both universities in Oxford have worked closely with the local council and the health services throughout the pandemic to manage the Covid risk, and this partnership working will continue this year.

Welcoming students back

Students are a key part of the Oxford economy and our communities, so their return to university also means a return to normal life for many businesses and organisations. With tourism down this summer, the return of students will be a welcome boost to many local businesses.

Students also volunteer within our communities, and many helped during the first stages of the crisis with food charities and community support. This term they will also be able to get involved again with wider activities such as supporting young people, contributing to arts and culture projects, and sports and physical activities.

International students arriving for this academic year will need to follow the same quarantine rules as any overseas arrivals. Those coming from red list countries will need to go through formal quarantine in hotel accommodation before they can join their university. The universities are offering those students detailed advice and support

The universities are also providing extra welfare support to help students, continuing to look after the mental health of young people through a time that has been particularly difficult

Progress on managing covid

Across the country we have made significant progress in managing covid. In Oxford, more than [85% of adults over 50](#) are now double vaccinated. 75% of all adults in the UK have the protection of two vaccines.

We know that prevention measures are still important. People are still encouraged to wear masks in indoor shops and venues and on public transport.

Everyone is also recommended to use home testing kits twice a week to check they are not infected.

Self-isolation is still required for those who test positive and close contacts who have not been double vaccinated.

Case rates in Oxford are currently around the national average.

Reporting concerns

This term there are no legal restrictions on indoor socialising, group sizes or outdoor gatherings.

Anti-social behaviour will be dealt with in the normal way, and residents needing to report an issue can find information on how to report an issue online:

Oxford Brookes - <https://www.brookes.ac.uk/about-brookes/community/community-engagement/resident-info/> or by email community@brookes.ac.uk

University of Oxford <https://www.ox.ac.uk/coronavirus/community>

Oxford City Council - <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/asb>

Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of Oxford City Council, said

“Oxford is looking forward to having students back and feeling that life is returning to normal. I want to thank both our universities for the huge contribution that they made as institutions and as individuals (staff and students) to our ability to tackle the pandemic on a local, national and international level.

“To new and returning students - welcome back to our city. I hope you will enjoy your time here, grow to love our beautiful city and get the most out of the fantastic educational opportunities that are open to you. Please do keep safe and respect other people.

“For local residents, it will take us a little time to adjust to the city filling up again, as it did when we started to emerge from lockdown. But in a city built around university education, the return of student life is an essential step towards normality –and very important for our local economy.

“The pandemic is not over but we are in a better place. We will continue to work with both universities to make sure we are ready to respond as needed if circumstances change. We now have good systems in place if we need to adapt.”

Professor Anne-Marie Kilday, Pro Vice-Chancellor Student and Staff Experience at Oxford Brookes University, said:

“We have been planning in detail for the return of students to Oxford in September, and are confident that we will continue to protect the health and safety of the local community, our staff and students. Even though life is opening up, we remain vigilant, continuing with some safety measures such as face coverings, and online teaching for larger groups.

“We also have high expectations of our students in terms of their behaviour, and will be writing to all residents in areas largely populated with Oxford Brookes students, reminding them of our procedures.”

Gillian Aitken, Registrar of the University of Oxford said:

“We are looking forward to the next academic year with most of our students back in Oxford. While the pandemic is not yet over, we are hopeful that this year will be less disrupted for everyone than the previous 18 months. Our new health campaign sets out the behaviours we expect of our students and staff; helping to reduce the risks of COVID-19 to the community as we look forward to studying and working on-site. ”

Ansaf Azar, Oxfordshire Director of Public Health, said:

“Cases in Oxfordshire are on the increase in line with the picture we are seeing across the rest of the country, and we expect numbers to increase further with the return of schools and universities.

“We are working closely with the universities to ensure that we have all the measures in place to limit transmission of the virus and provide support to those who might need to self-isolate.”

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