

15th October 2021

Dear students and families

I'm writing again as we near the end of our first half-term of the academic year to thank you for all you've done to help keep our Colleges safe during this latest phase of the pandemic and to wish you a very happy half-term break if you're having one.

With your help, we have kept infection rates at our Colleges low and have seen few if any cases where the infection has been spread among our students and staff since we started back at College in September. Thank you very much for being careful and supporting us. We do have vulnerable students and staff among us and need you to continue working with us to keep our Colleges safe.

It is vital that we all work hard at slowing the spread of the Coronavirus. Please continue to:

- Stay away from College if you have any symptoms
- Take up the offer of a vaccination if it is available to you
- Wear a face-covering whenever you are in any circulation space around the Colleges
- Keep your hands clean, washing or sanitising them regularly
- Socially distance where you can
- Comply with requests from College staff
- Take regular lateral flow tests; you can get these from College

We do not want to disrupt anyone's learning and your efforts to reduce the risk of infection will also allow us to keep lessons going.

We have attached updated guidance on testing, isolation and other measures currently in place.

Most courses are now starting a two-week half-term break and we will be back together on 1st November, although a few courses will be continuing and there are revision classes for English and Maths GCSE retakes, and some vocational areas, over the next two weeks.

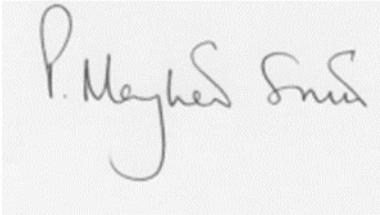
We are also keen to make sure you are thriving in spite of all the challenges brought about by the pandemic. There are wellbeing support materials available on Moodle, but also you can use additional resources available through London's NHS:

<https://www.good-thinking.uk/>

I hope very much that your learning is progressing and that you are keeping yourself and those around you safe and well. Please take care, follow the guidance very carefully and let us know if we can do any more to support you.

We all look forward very much to seeing you in November and wish you a very happy half-term break.

With best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light grey background. The signature reads "P. Mayhew-Smith" in a cursive style.

Peter Mayhew-Smith

Group Principal and CEO

Contact tracing arrangements

NHS Test and Trace will contact anyone who has tested positive or contact their family to identify any close contacts, including those within College. NHS Test and Trace will then advise those involved on what they need to do next, such as taking a Covid-19 PCR test (this is a more sensitive test which is sent to a lab for results) or self-isolating. Close contacts can also take daily rapid Lateral Flow Covid tests while waiting for the result of their PCR test.

If you think you or you are a close contact of someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 but you have not yet been contacted directly by NHS Test and Trace, please follow the guidance here or consult the NHS guidance on-line. If you do not have on-line access, please contact 119.

What to do if you have been in contact with someone who has had a confirmed positive test for Coronavirus infection

About 1 in 3 people with Covid-19 do not have symptoms but can still infect others. You should do a rapid test twice a week (every 3 to 4 days) to check if you have the virus. Test kits are available from your College.

Confirmed close contacts of someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 will not need to isolate if they:

- are fully vaccinated (by having had both doses and it has been at least two weeks since their second vaccination)
- are below the age of 18 years 6 months
- have taken part in, or are currently part of, an approved Covid-19 vaccine trial
- are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

You should not arrange to have a Covid-19 PCR test if you have previously received a positive test result in the last 90 days, unless you develop any new symptoms of Covid-19. This is advised because it is possible for PCR tests to remain positive for some time after Covid-19 infection.

What to do if you develop symptoms of COVID-19

If you develop symptoms of Covid-19, you should get a PCR test and remain at home at least until the result is known.

If the test is negative, you can end self-isolation.

If the test is positive, you should isolate until at least 10 days after your symptoms appeared.

Anyone with symptoms can book a free PCR test at <https://www.gov.uk/get-coronavirus-test> or by phoning 119 free of charge.

What to do if you test positive but have no symptoms

If you have a positive test result but do not have symptoms, you should stay at home and self-isolate for 10 days from the date the positive test was taken.

If you go on to develop symptoms, you will need to extend this period so that you isolate for 10 full days from the day following your symptom onset.

Guidance for people who live in the same household as someone with COVID-19 (tested positive or symptomatic awaiting a test result)

You will *not* be required to self-isolate if you are a contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and any of the following apply:

- you are fully vaccinated
- you are below the age of 18 years 6 months
- you have taken part in or are currently part of an approved COVID-19 vaccine trial
- you are not able to get vaccinated for medical reasons

Fully vaccinated means that you have been vaccinated with an MHRA approved COVID-19 vaccine in the UK, and at least 14 days have passed since you received the recommended doses of that vaccine.

Instructions for household contacts who are not required to self-isolate

Even if you are vaccinated, you can still be infected with COVID-19 and pass it on to others. If you are identified as a contact of someone with COVID-19 but you are not required to self-isolate, you can help protect others by following the guidance on how to stay safe and help prevent the spread. As well as getting a PCR test, you may also consider:

- limiting close contact with other people outside your household, especially in enclosed spaces
- wearing a face covering for those aged 11 and over in crowded places such as college or public transport
- limiting contact with anyone who is clinically extremely vulnerable
- taking part in regular Lateral Flow testing

Reminder of how to stop coronavirus (COVID-19) spreading

There are things you can do to help reduce the risk of you and anyone you live with getting ill with coronavirus (COVID-19):

- get vaccinated – everyone aged 18 and over can book COVID-19 vaccination appointments now and 12-17 year olds are being offered 1 dose of the vaccination at the moment
- wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitiser regularly throughout the day
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- put used tissues in the bin immediately and wash your hands afterwards
- open doors and windows to let in fresh air if meeting people inside
- wear a face covering when it's hard to stay away from other people – particularly indoors or in crowded places
- participate in twice weekly LFD testing following national guidelines (recommended for 11 years and over). We encourage you to log your results here: <https://www.gov.uk/log-test-site-covid19-results>

Symptoms of COVID-19

As a reminder, the most common symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) are:

- A high temperature – this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)

- A new, continuous cough – this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)
- A loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – this means you've noticed you cannot smell or taste anything, or things smell or taste different to normal

Please be reassured that for most people, coronavirus (COVID-19) will be a mild illness.

If you develop symptoms, you can seek advice from NHS 111 at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/check-if-you-have-coronavirus-symptoms/> or by phoning 111