

As you will no doubt be aware, the Government has now laid out a path for us as a nation to ease the current lockdown and start on the path to normality. In response, the Department for Education have provided further guidance on 'Students returning to and starting higher education (HE) in the Spring term 2021'<sup>1</sup>. I am therefore writing to provide a further update on the ways in which we, at B&FC, are continuing to support you, as a HE student, in response to the challenges of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

For the majority of HE students, learning and teaching will continue to be online, tutor-led. For HE students who are studying practical or practice-based subjects, including creative arts, and require access to specialist equipment and facilities, limited learning and teaching session on B&FC sites are allowed to begin from 8 March. Your programme leader or tutor will keep you updated and consult with you around plans to bring you safely back onto our risk assessed, COVID-secure sites, to undertake any essential practical or practice-based study. The overall approach will therefore continue to be blended; a combination of remote delivery and limited, strictly controlled return to campus for some of your programme.

If you are asked to come onto a B&FC site you will be provided with clear guidance on our safety measures. Examples of these safety measures include the mandatory wearing of face coverings unless you have medical exemption certificate, maintaining strict social distancing and hand hygiene and the opportunity to take a COVID test, all of which help to ensure you are COVID-secure whilst on site at B&FC.

The Government has stated that it will review the arrangements for all HE students by the end of the Easter holiday period and will advise on the options and next steps, taking into account key data around infection rates and hospital admissions. Unfortunately, they have not given us an exact date of when they will share this information with us so we cannot be more explicit at this stage.

For regularly updated information during the pandemic please, particularly around our approach to ensuring your safety if you are returning to a campus for learning and teaching, please continue to visit the [Student FAQs](#) on the B&FC website and keep an eye on our social media for updates. For students undertaking studies as part of a higher or degree apprenticeship please also visit the [Apprentice FAQs](#) on the B&FC website.

Below, is a brief reminder of the services we have available to support your studies during this global health pandemic:

### **Mitigating Circumstances**

We recognise that this extraordinary situation may be creating additional pressures. The [B&FC Personal Mitigating Circumstances \(PMC\)](#) process enables us to consider each student's unique context to ensure

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<sup>1</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/963446/HE\\_guidance\\_spring\\_term\\_220221\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/963446/HE_guidance_spring_term_220221_FINAL.pdf)

no one is disadvantaged. During this period, we will consider a range of evidence/verification to support those impacted by circumstances relating to COVID-19. Please contact your lecturers, personal tutors and/or programme leaders to discuss and obtain further information, guidance and support.

### **Wellbeing**

The Wellbeing team is providing a remote support service for students, both online and via telephone. There is a range of resources available on Student Life [Wellbeing page](#) and click on the **Big Green Button** to request an initial meeting with the wellbeing team. Student Life is accessible through the [website](#) or through Canvas.

Being safe and feeling safe is crucial. If you have any concerns or feel you may be at risk of harm, head to the Student Life [Safeguarding page](#) and click on the **Big Yellow Button**. As always, in an emergency situation ring 999 straight away.

The **Higher Education Learning Mentors (HELMs)** are continuing to provide a remote service to support all HE students with academic support, for example reviewing assignment briefs, assignment planning and support with referencing. Follow this link to [book an appointment](#).

If you are working on your dissertation and would like to access useful resources, discuss tips with other students and ask the HELMs questions about your work, then you can join the online Dissertation Space for your curriculum area. Just fill in [this form](#) to be added to the channel.

### **Financial Support**

B&FC's non-repayable HE Hardship Fund is available for those who find themselves facing financial hardship. This will obviously depend on individual circumstances and you must already be in receipt of student finance to be eligible. Please email: [careers@blackpool.ac.uk](mailto:careers@blackpool.ac.uk) for more information.

### **Technology to support your learning**

The 'Digital Lounge' at Bispham, is available for those students without access to Wi-Fi or a suitable device for study, and for those students for whom isolation may be affecting wellbeing. In addition, a 'Digital Lounge' will also be available at University Centre from 8 March. If you would like to access the Digital Lounge, you are required to contact your tutor/lecturer at least 24 hours before you would like attend and they will be able to book you in. If you have any other issues accessing technology or equipment to support your studies please contact your lecturer or progress tutor to discuss.

All B&FC students can access the following software via their student account to assist with their education:

- Read + Write – literacy software with tools designed to support reading, writing, study and research, which includes reader software and speech to text

- Mind view – software used for mind mapping, concept mapping and other visuals

If you are unable to access either of these two pieces of software via your account and would like to use them, please email [canvas@blackpool.ac.uk](mailto:canvas@blackpool.ac.uk) and we will investigate this for you.

### **Learning Resource Centres (LRCs)**

For assistance with finding **online eBooks and journals** for your studies, please email [LRCs@blackpool.ac.uk](mailto:LRCs@blackpool.ac.uk) and include your student ID number in your correspondence.

If you require a **specific (hard copy) text** from a LRC/campus it can be ordered and made available at Bispham or University Centre Campus during your arranged visit. Please email [LRCs@blackpool.ac.uk](mailto:LRCs@blackpool.ac.uk) with your request - and don't forget to include your student ID number.

**Care leavers, carers and estranged students** with no family contact are able to access a package of prioritised support to assist with remote study and finance. Please email [hannah.emery@blackpool.ac.uk](mailto:hannah.emery@blackpool.ac.uk) if any of the above circumstances apply to you.

### **Higher Education Disability and Disabled Students' Allowance support.**

The B&FC Non-Medical Helper (NMH) team is providing support services for students online, via telephone, email or through MS Teams. Please liaise with your designated NMH B&FC support staff to continue your current provision. For any queries relating to disability support (including Disabled Students' Allowances) please contact [DSAinfo@blackpool.ac.uk](mailto:DSAinfo@blackpool.ac.uk)

As always, we are grateful for any comments, compliments or concerns you wish to raise with us directly or by email, via your lecturers, personal tutor, programme leader, the Students' Union or your course rep. Your feedback helps us continue to successfully support your learning journey.

Please continue to take care of your own wellbeing, and that of your family and friends. As always, I appreciate the contribution you are making to our B&FC community and your hard work during these difficult circumstances.

Best wishes,

Cheryl Dunn  
Vice Principal HE and Student Enhancement