Covid-19: Frequently asked questions for academic year 2020-21

Study options and start dates

- **What changes are you making to your courses to manage the impact of Covid-19 on postgraduate students?**
  For the academic year 2020/2021 all postgraduate courses will combine face to face and online teaching and learning support. This combination means that you can confidently choose to study with Royal Holloway, and if you are not able to arrive on campus for the start of term, or social distancing measures are in place, you won’t miss out.

- **Will my course be online?**
  No. All courses will have a combination of face to face and online activity during the academic year 2020/21. This combination means that even if you are not able to arrive on campus for the start of the academic year, or if social distancing measures are in place on campus, you won’t miss out. You will be able to confidently begin your studies and, when you arrive on campus or any new restrictions are removed, you will be able to join in the class in person with academics and class mates that you will have met while studying online.

- **What happens if I am not able to come to campus for the start of the academic year?**
  Don’t worry if your arrival on campus is delayed. Our combination of face to face and online teaching and learning support means that, when you do arrive on campus, you can be confident that as long as you have kept up with the work of the class online, you will be able to join the class in person and carry on with your course without interruption.

- **Will I miss out face to face activity if I am not able to come to campus?**
  No. We have adapted our courses for 2020/21 to take account of the possible impact of Covid-19. Each course will be set up to accommodate a mix of students studying in face-to-face and remote modes at any one time. Some elements of your course will require face-to-face participation in particular activities, such as some practical work, end-of-year examinations and field trips, and these will be identified, scheduled for as late in the year as possible, and have a specified alternative in the event of further virus-related disruption. Our approach means that you can be confident that, as long as you have kept up with the work of the class online, you will be able to join the class in person and carry on with your course without interruption.

- **Which courses offer a choice between a September and a January start date?**
  This year we are offering a choice of a September start date or a January start date for some courses only.
Courses that offer a September or a January start will have a mixture of online and face to face activity. This means that even if you chose a September start, and your arrival on campus is delayed, you won’t miss out.

The choice of a September or January start is available on the following PGT courses only:

- MSc Accounting and Financial Management
- MSc Business Information Systems
- MSc Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- MA Marketing
- MSc Digital Innovation and Analytics
- MSc Digital Marketing
- MSc Human Resource Management
- MSc International Management
- MSc International Management (Marketing)
- MSc Logistics and Supply Chain Management
- MSc Artificial Intelligence*
- MSc Data Science and Analytics*
- MSc Engineering Management
- MSc Information Security*
- MSc Machine Learning *
- MSc Project Management

* includes “with a Year in Industry” version.
* Includes “with a Year in Business” version.

- **I would like to start my PGT course in January but my course is not listed**
  We are planning for the majority of our students to start their course in September but we recognise that travel restrictions or social distancing may mean some students won't be able to arrive on campus for the start of the academic year. That’s why all postgraduate courses for the academic year 2020/21 will combine face to face and online teaching and learning support. This combination means that even if you are not able to arrive on campus for the start of term, or social distancing measures are in place, you won’t miss out and will still be able to begin your studies.

- **Why is my course not available with a January start?**
  The decision to offer a January start reflect is a direct response to the circumstances created by Covid-19. In the time available, it has not been possible to plan a January start for all of our courses. However, don’t worry if you are unable to arrive on campus for a September start. For the academic year 2020/21 all of our postgraduate courses will combine face to face and online teaching and learning support. This combination means that even if you are not able to arrive on campus for the start of term, or social distancing measures are in place, you won’t miss out and will still be able to begin your studies.

- **Will your courses at the central London campus have an online option too?**
  All courses will have a combination of face to face and online teaching and learning support during the academic year 2020/21. This combination means that even if you are not able to arrive on campus for the start of the academic year, or if social distancing measures are in place on campus, you won’t miss out and will be able to start your studies.
Some courses delivered on our campus in central London have large elements of practical work. We are working to ensure that this work is scheduled for as late in the year as possible, and will have a specified alternative in the event of further virus-related disruption.

- **I don't know if I will be able to come to campus in September, what do I do?**
  We understand that the pandemic means there is a lot of uncertainty, that's why all postgraduate courses for the academic year 2020/21 will combine face to face and online teaching and learning support. This combination means that even if you are not able to arrive on campus for the start of term, or if you are on campus and social distancing measures are in place, you won't miss out and will still be able to start your studies.

  If your course is offering a September or a January start date, we have written to you asking you to tell us which of these start dates might work best for you. This does not commit you to starting on that date. At this stage we simply want to understand how many students might want to start in September or January, where both start dates are available.

- **When do I need to make a decision about whether to start in September or January?**
  If your course offers a September and a January start you do not need to do anything yet.  we have written to you asking you to tell us which of these start dates might work best for you. This does not commit you to starting on that date. We will contact you in June to ask you to make a firm decision.

- **If I say I want to start in January but things change and I then decide that I would like to start in September, can I do that?**
  We will try to be as flexible as possible. If your plans change, you should contact a member of our Admissions Team (study@rhul.ac.uk) and discuss with them your circumstances.

- **I live overseas and will need a visa, but I don't know when I will be able to arrive on campus. What do I do?**
  Don't worry. Our combination of online and face to face activity means that you won't miss out and can confidently begin your course and then make your travel plans when you are able to.

  As soon as you know that you can travel you should contact us to request your CAS (Certificate of Acceptance to Study). Please bear in mind that it may take us up to a month to process your CAS request. You will also then need to allow time to apply for your visa. While you are waiting for your CAS and your visa you can continue to study so that when you arrive on campus, as long as you have kept up with the work of the class online, you will be able to join the class in person and carry on with your course without interruption.

- **I'm an international student still in the UK, can I study on campus from September 2020?**
  We expect that the majority of our students will start their course in September. If you are already in the UK or are able to travel to the UK we look forward to welcoming you to the campus in September.

  Some travel restrictions or social distancing may mean some students won't be able to arrive on campus for the start of the academic year. That's why all postgraduate courses for the academic year 2020/21 will combine face to face and online teaching and learning support. This combination means that even if you are not able to arrive on campus for the start of term, or
social distancing measures are in place, you won’t miss out and will still be able to begin your studies.

- **My course has a lot of practical work. What happens if I start my course in September but am not able to come to campus until late into the second term?**
  We know that activities in some subjects rely on face-to-face participation. Examples include practical work, end-of-year examinations and field trips. We will make sure that these are scheduled for as late in the year as possible. In the event that Covid-19 continues to disrupt travel, we will have a specified alternative available for those subjects.

- **If I decide to start my course in January 2021, when will it finish? And will there be any changes to term dates/attendance dates?**
  If you begin a postgraduate course in January 2021, you will complete your studies in early December 2021. Attendance during the first (January) term will follow the normal pattern and the Easter vacation dates will not change. However, your second term (starting after Easter) will be a full 11-week teaching term, finishing in early July. You will also need to be available for assessment and/or further teaching during a third term from August to mid-September. You will then complete your dissertation during the subsequent 12 weeks, submitting in early December 2021.

- **What happens if I start my course in September but travel restrictions mean I still can’t get to campus for January, or even later?**
  All postgraduate courses for the academic year 2020/21 will combine face to face and online teaching and learning support. This combination means that even if you are not able to arrive on campus for the start of term you won’t miss out and will be able to start and keep up with your studies.

  Some elements of your course will require face-to-face participation in particular activities, such as some practical work, end-of-year examinations and field trips, and these will be identified, scheduled for as late in the year as possible, and have a specified alternative in the event of further virus-related disruption. If your arrival on campus is very significantly delayed you will be able to discuss your particular situation with your course leader so that you can together decide the best option for you.

- **What happens if, when I arrive on campus, the UK goes back into lockdown?**
  All postgraduate courses for the academic year 2020/21 will combine face to face and online teaching and learning support. This combination means that even if the UK reintroduces lockdown measures, you will be able to continue with your studies.

**Applications, offers and acceptances**

- **I already have an offer. If I choose to start in January instead of September, will my offer change?**
No. If we have made you an offer to Royal Holloway, and your course offers a September and January start date, you will be able to choose either a September 2020 or January 2021 start date depending on which is the best option for you. We will contact you in June to ask you to confirm which start date you would like to choose.

I haven’t submitted my application yet. When I submit my application, do I need to commit to a September/January start date?

No. We advise you to apply for a course in the normal way. Your application will be considered and, for the purposes of processing your application, we will offer you a place initially for a September start date. We encourage you to accept this offer and pay your deposit in the normal way.

After you have received your offer, we will contact you separately to explain if alternative start dates are available for your course. We will let you know exactly when you have to decide if you would like to start in September 2020 or January 2021 if both options are available for your course. Note, September and January start dates are only available for some courses. The full list is [here](#).

If I decide to start in January, will any admissions deadlines change?

The application deadline will not change. We advise you to apply for a course in the normal way. Your application will be considered and, for the purposes of processing your application, we will offer you a place initially for a September start date. We encourage you to accept this offer and pay your deposit in the normal way.

After you have received your offer, we will contact you separately to explain if your course offers a September 2020 and a January 2021 start date. We will let you know exactly when you have to decide if you would like to start in September 2020 or January 2021 if both options are available for your course. Note, September and January start dates are only available for some course. The full list is [here](#).

If you are an international student and need a visa to come to the UK you will also need to request a CAS (Certificate of Acceptance to Study). You can request a CAS up to three months before the start of your course. It may take us up to a month to process your CAS and you will also need to allow time for your visa application to be processed.

Visa applications and CAS requests

If I decide to start in September, what does this mean for the visa application process?

To apply for a visa, you will need to ask us to issue a CAS (Certificate of Acceptance for Study) CASes are valid for a period of three months from the date of issue.

If you know that you will be able to travel to the UK in September, you will be able to request a CAS from 20 June onwards. This will give you enough time to get your CAS, apply for your visa and make your travel arrangements.
If you are not yet sure when you will be able to travel to the UK in September, we suggest that you delay your CAS request until your travel plan is clearer. We will continue to issue CASes on an ongoing basis.

We may need up to a month to process a CAS request and you will also need to allow time for your visa application to be processed.

Remember, if you cannot arrive on campus in September, you can still begin to study for your degree. Our combination of face to face and online teaching and learning support means that, you will still begin to start your course online. When you do arrive on campus, you can be confident that as long as you have kept up with the work of the class online, you will be able to join the class in person and carry on with your course without interruption.

- **If I decide to start my course in January 2021, what does this mean for the visa application process?**

To apply for a visa, you will need to ask us to issue a CAS (Certificate of Acceptance for Study). CASes are valid for a period of three months from the date of issue. This means that we will begin to issue CASes from October 2020 for a January 2021 start. If you know your travel plans you can contact us anytime from October 2020 to start the CAS process for a January 2020 start. We advise that you to wait until you are confident you will be able to travel to the UK before requesting your CAS. Please bear in mind that we may need up to a month to process CAS requests and you will also need to allow time for your visa application to be processed.

Please note, if you are an EU student, changes to immigration rules following Brexit mean that if you arrive on campus any time from 1 January 2021, you will need to apply for a Tier 4 visa.

- **What will happen if I am not able to come to campus and so start my course online, and am then refused a visa to travel to the UK in January?**

If you are refused a visa to travel to the UK, you will not be able to continue your studies on campus. Our courses are not designed to be delivered fully online. We, however, will try to be as flexible as possible. If your circumstances change, you should contact a member of our Admissions Team (study@rhul.ac.uk) and discuss with them your circumstances.

**English language**

- **I will need to follow a pre-sessional English programme in order to satisfy the English language conditions attached to my offer. If I choose to start my degree course in January, will there be an opportunity to attend a pre-sessional English programme during the autumn term?**

Our normal pre-sessional English language programmes (12 week, starting June 2020; 8 week, starting July 2020 and 4 week, starting August 2020) will all be available online. You are welcome to complete one of these programmes, to prepare for either a September or a January start to your degree course. We are also hoping to offer additional pre-sessional programmes
(online and face-to-face) in the autumn of 2020. We will provide further information about these options as soon as it is available.

Course content and study methods

- **If travel restrictions or further periods of social distancing mean I need to study some of my course online, what will that look like?**

Each course will be set up to accommodate a mix of students studying in face-to-face and remote modes at any one time. Some activities will require face-to-face participation in particular activities, such as some practical work, end-of-year examinations and field trips, and these will be identified, scheduled for as late in the year as possible, and have a specified alternative in the event of further virus-related disruption. Our approach means that you can be confident that as long as you have kept up with the work of the class online, you will be able to join the class in person and carry on with your course without interruption.

- **What platform does online teaching take place on and how will I access this in my country?**

We use Moodle and Microsoft Teams, both of which can be accessed through our website.

- **If I am not able to travel to the UK immediately and need to begin my course online in China, will I need a VPN to have access to teaching and resources?**

We don't anticipate any need for a VPN to access resources. We use Moodle and Microsoft Teams, both of which can be accessed through our website.

- **How many hours will I have to study each day/week if I study online?**

Each course will be set up to accommodate a mix of students studying in face-to-face and remote modes at any one time. Some elements of your course will require face-to-face participation in particular activities, such as some practical work, end-of-year examinations and field trips, and these will be identified, scheduled for as late in the year as possible, and have a specified alternative in the event of further virus related disruption. Our approach means that you can be confident that as long as you have kept up with the work of the class online, you will be able to join the class in person and carry on with your course without interruption. The exact number of online study hours may vary according to your personal circumstances and the course you are taking.

- **If the course is a mixture of online and face to face, and I’m not on campus, how will the face to face activity be replaced for me?**

We intend to replace face-to-face seminars and tutorials with online classes with staff.

- **If I study some elements of my course online, will there be live sessions with lecturers or will it all be recorded?**
Course content is being designed to be appropriate to the topic, and will involve live sessions with staff. Our approach is to blend learning resources, such as recorded lectures, with live discussions (sometimes called ‘flipped’ learning).

- **If I can’t come to campus and start my course online, how will the time difference be accommodated?**

We will, as far as possible, arrange classes at times appropriate to the students attending them.

- **If I am not able to come to campus and start my course online, will I be able to connect with my fellow classmates?**

Our online learning platforms will encourage contact between students on and off campus.

- **What support will be available to me if I start my course online?**

Our personal tutors will support you, whether you are studying online or face-to-face. We will also provide additional support at the start of the year to help you learn to study online. Throughout the course, our academic and wellbeing services will all be available online as well as on campus.

- **Will there be set hours that I have to be available online to study the online option?**

This will vary from course to course. If your course has some classes that are live streamed, they will also be recorded so you are able to watch them at a time that suits you. There will be some classes where you will need to engage at a specific time but we will do our best to ensure that these times are calculated to fit your time zone.

- **The degree I have chosen normally provides accreditation by a professional body. Will this still be available if I study online/start in January?**

Subject to agreement by the relevant professional body, we do not expect any changes to accreditation.

- **Are the lecturers the same on the online course as those who teach on campus?**

All classes will be taught from the same pool of staff, whether you start your course in September or January and whether you study face-to-face or online. Royal Holloway has a reputation for research-led teaching, so the majority of our staff are leading researchers in their field, or specialist higher education practitioners.

- **Will I have different teachers if I start in January compared to the students who start in September?**

All classes will be taught from the same pool of staff, whether you start your course in September or January and whether you study-face-to-face or online. Royal Holloway has a reputation for research-led teaching, so the majority of our staff are leading researchers in their field, or specialist higher education practitioners.
• **My country does not recognise online degrees, will my degree certificate show that I studied part of my degree online?**

Royal Holloway does not offer an online degree and this is not an online degree. All courses will have a combination of face to face and online activity during the academic year 2020/21. This combination means that even if you are not able to arrive on campus for the start of term, or social distancing measures are in place, you won't miss out and will still be able to begin your studies. Our expectation is that when you are able to travel to campus you will join us in person at Royal Holloway and, provided you have kept up with your studies, join in the class in person with academics and class mates that you will have met while studying remotely. Our aim is to support you to be an active learners wherever you are based, and we place great emphasis on interaction with staff and other learners.

• **If I start in January and then do not achieve the required level in my examinations, will I still have the opportunity to re-sit these?**

There will be no change to our normal arrangements although the timing of all exams/assessments will be adjusted to reflect the revised start date.

• **Will I be able to do a year in industry?**

Yes. Where a year in industry is offered as an integral part of your course, this option will be available, whichever start date you choose.

**Tuition fees and funding**

• **Will the changes to the course structure make any difference to the tuition fee?**

No. We have adapted our course to combine both face to face and online activity in response to the global pandemic. We are not offering an online degree. We are using a number of different approaches to ensure that if your arrival on campus is delayed, you can start your course and will have the same access to world class academics and excellent teaching and learning support as the students on your course who are on campus.

• **If I decide to start my course in January 2021, will the fee stay the same as it was to start in September 2020?**

Yes. You will pay the normal 2020/21 tuition fee for your course. This will apply whichever start date you choose.

• **If I have a scholarship, will this still stand if I start in January?**

Yes. If you have been awarded a scholarship by the College, this will be valid for either a September or a January start.

If your scholarship has been awarded by an external funding body, we advise you to check that they are happy for you to use it for a January start.
Accommodation

- **If I begin my course in September, but don’t arrive on campus until later in the year, will I be able to secure university accommodation? If so, how/when do I apply for it?**

  Accommodation will be available for courses that start in September and January. Full details of the application process will be provided in due course. If you have a contract for a September start but have to delay your arrival on campus because of COVID-19 restrictions, we will amend the contract dates to suit your course dates. The usual eligibility criteria still apply.

- **If I begin my course in January, will I be able to secure university accommodation?**

  Yes, accommodation will be available for courses that start in September and January. Full details of the application process will be provided in due course. The usual eligibility criteria still apply.

- **If I begin my course in January and secure university accommodation, will I be able to stay in it until my course finishes?**

  Yes. We will provide options for staying in Halls of Residence for courses that start in September and January. Contracts will still run for a year and reflect the needs of your course.