

8 January 2021

Dear Scholars,

I am writing to provide you with important updates from the Commission in relation to the UK Government recently announced lockdown.

We are available

Naturally we understand that the latest lockdown and current phase of the pandemic is a cause for concern, but please take some comfort from the fact that the associated challenge is being taken seriously by the authorities. Please be assured that our staff continue to do everything necessary to ensure the continued functioning of the programme and to make sure you are supported. The Commission, like the rest of the UK, is following Government advice as and when it is provided and we will continue to review our guidance as things change. We are well prepared for the period ahead and are available to support you during this time.

Commission Covid policies

The Commission has now received the guidance that has been issued for universities in the UK https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950583/Students_returning_to_and_starting_higher_education_in_Spring_Term_2021_FINAL_v3.pdf

The Commission is therefore basing its advice on that provided by the Government and I am sure you will recognise this is also in line with what your UK universities are telling you.

Scholars currently in the US

I understand that a number of you returned to the US for the holidays and were scheduled to return over the next couple of weeks. The Government guidance states:

“Students are able to study online until in-person learning resumes. Our advice for international students travelling from overseas for the Spring term is to consider whether they in fact need to travel to the UK at this time, particularly if their course does not require them to be on campus from 4 January. Those students

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should consider delaying if travel arrangements can be rearranged without undue costs” P16

As per Government guidance, we are therefore recommending that you remain where you are until the Government and your UK universities indicate that you should return. If there are exceptional circumstances that mean you need to travel back to the UK as originally planned, including the fact that changing flights would incur a significant cost, then you should contact Mary to discuss this.

In order to make sure that you are all supported the Commission has decided to freeze the number of days allowed outside of the UK until the UK Government indicates that international students should return. This means that, if you travelled to the US for the holidays, the information you provided on the Marshall Travel Form will be used to calculate the number of days used outside the UK. No further days will be counted. Once the advice is to return the count will be restarted until the end of the academic year. If you did not complete the form before you travelled, you must notify Helen as soon as possible and complete the form using your original travel dates.

Scholars Currently in the UK

Government advice states:

“There may also be some students who have remained in their university/term-time accommodation over the winter break, or have already returned, including many international students, but are not expected to return to in-person learning until mid-February. These students should remain at their current university accommodation. They should be asked to only utilise campus resources when they have to, in order to reduce footfall on campus, but they should be offered testing alongside the first expected returners.” Page 8

As per Government guidance, we are recommending that you remain in the UK (whether or not you are living in university accommodation). If there are exceptional circumstances that mean that you need to travel to the US over the coming weeks, then you should contact Mary to discuss this.

Your university will provide updates in relation to its response to the lockdown. You should follow your university guidance and engage with your department about working arrangements. If you encounter any issues please do let Mary know.

Funding

All Scholars have already received their stipend for the months of January to March. If the lockdown extends beyond March and the Government guidance continues to advise against travel those of you who are in the US will continue to receive your stipend providing you are still studying for your degree. Those of you in the UK will continue to receive your stipend as usual.

At present, there is no change in the Commission’s policy that it does not fund flights to and from the US during tenure. We will keep this under review should the circumstances change.

Wellbeing

We are aware that the lockdown creates a series of challenges and difficulties that have an impact on everybody’s wellbeing. May I take this opportunity to remind you of the resources we have provided to help support you. You have access to the Health Assured Programme and the Togetherall Platform. Details on how to use these have been sent separately.

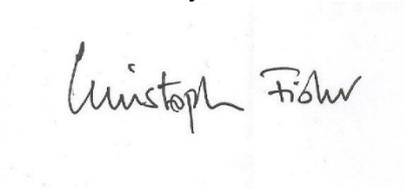
We will also be running a weekly Scholar drop in, and the Marshall Hangouts will start again shortly. We are also speaking with the Class Secretaries about other events we can fund or run to help support you during this period. In addition, you each have a designated contact Commissioner.

You should make sure that you remain in touch with the Secretariat and, if asked, respond to any requests for information in a timely manner. We have created some FAQ's for you and will update these on a regular basis. They are attached here and will also be on the Marshall website and on the Scholar google drive.

As I am writing, let me also refer to recent events in Washington. These have obviously been most distressing and naturally unsettling. Hopefully the worst of the episode is now over and an orderly transition of power later this month is assured. Inevitably, the full ramifications of the disturbances may continue to unfold for some time.

Finally I thank you for all of your resilience and for all of your enthusiasm to continue to work towards your degrees and to make the best of less than perfect circumstances.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher Fisher". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C' and 'F'.

Christopher Fisher
Chair

FAQs and Coronavirus

The following FAQs provide key information to Marshall Scholars about their award and the Commission's policies in relation to the unfolding Coronavirus pandemic. These will be updated as and when required in response to further advice from the government. All Scholars should follow current UK Government, University and NHS advice in relation to the pandemic.

Last update: 8 January 2021

Where can I find Government advice on universities and lockdown?

The current advice being given to UK Universities can be found here:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950583/Students_returning_to_and_starting_higher_education_in_Spring_Term_2021_FINAL_v3.pdf

The Office For Students (OfS) has also published some FAQs:

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/for-students/student-guide-to-coronavirus/returning-to-university-in-2021/>

UKCISA, the Council for International Student Affairs, has also provided a useful set of FAQs aimed at International students specifically:

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students>

What effect will the most recent lockdown have on my degree?

Your university should have already been in touch with you about the steps they are taking to make sure you can continue working for your degree. The universities remain open and will be continuing to teach online whilst also offering support to all of their students. If their guidance is unclear or if you are not sure what you should do please notify the Commission by contacting Mary. It would also be helpful if you could share the guidance you are receiving from the universities.

What support is available from the Commission?

The Commission is operating as normal in supporting its Scholars.

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The Secretariat staff remains accessible to all Scholars to answer any questions you may have about your Scholarship.

What happens to my Scholarship if I have to remain in the US?

Government advice is currently that if international students can rearrange their travel without incurring significant costs they should remain where they are. If there are exceptional circumstances and you wish to return to the UK you should discuss this with Mary. The borders remain open and should you wish to return to the UK you will be able to as long as you comply with all of the UK Government Covid travel advice: <https://www.gov.uk/uk-border-control?priority-taxon=774cee22-d896-44c1-a611-e3109cce8eae>

You should be aware that the UK is planning to introduce a compulsory negative Covid test before travel. Once we have more information we will update the FAQ's and send you the information.

The Commission has frozen the number of days that Scholars are allowed to remain outside the UK. This will be reinstated when the Government advice is for students to return to their universities in the UK. You have already received your stipend for January to March 2021 and if this restriction continues beyond March stipend will be continue to be paid providing you are still working on your degree.

It is our understanding that some of the universities are also looking at freezing rent on their own accommodation if you are unable to return to the UK, so you should check your university's policy on this.

What happens for Scholars in the UK?

The current Government advice is that students should not travel if they are currently in the UK and should therefore remain in their current accommodation. If there are exceptional circumstances and you wish to travel to the US you should discuss this with Mary.

Your university will provide updates in relation to its response to the lockdown. You should follow your university guidance and engage with your department about working arrangements.

The Commission will set up a weekly Scholar Drop in session so that we can all support each other and we will also be running Marshall Hangouts and are looking into offering more social online events. You may also wish to reach out to your Marshall Connect 'buddy' who is no doubt in similar circumstances to you and will be able to offer friendship and support. You also have your designated contact Commissioner.

Will there be an effect on the tenure of my Scholarship?

It is our understanding that the universities are continuing to offer teaching online and remain open and for those of your undertaking taught degrees you should be able to work on your degree in this way. We are not planning to curtail anyone's Scholarship, those of you who are completing in the summer of 2021 your award will run until the end of your tenure and Mary will be sending details of these dates with your stipend payment on 1 April. For those of you who are continuing into your second or third year your Scholarships should run as previously expected.

We are aware that some of you who are undertaking research degrees, in particular lab based subjects may be unable to continue your research and may have to extend your thesis deadlines or take intermission of degree. Please contact Mary if this is the case for you.

What if I am self-isolating, have underlying health conditions/am pregnant or have Covid19?

You should follow government and your university's advice and contact the NHS if necessary. Full details are available from: <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>

- It is important to note that you should not go to a GP (doctor's) surgery, pharmacy or hospital if you have mild symptoms, in order to help protect others.
- If your symptoms get worse or are no better after seven days, contact [NHS 111 online](#). If you have no internet access, call the NHS advice line on 111.
- For a medical emergency, call 999.

The Commission has paid the NHS Health Surcharge for all Scholars so that every scholar has free-at-the-point-of-use access to the NHS.

Other information on health resources in the UK can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Lr1-PzC9Zz7zhWGGZ-YQ9IEueDvCCAUF?usp=sharing>

What should I do if I am struggling with my mental health?

As you are aware the UK Universities have been working hard to make sure their students are supported and to provide support for their students' wellbeing. You should therefore reach out to your university's support services in the first instance. A list of the services can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/u/1/folders/1Lr1-PzC9Zz7zhWGGZ-YQ9IEueDvCCAUF>

The Commission provides two ways you can access supplementary mental health support through the Health Assured Programme and the Togetherall Platform and you have received information about these separately.

Health Assured provides access to in person counselling as well as online CBT. To

access the counselling service you will need to ring the helpline.

To use the online CBT:

“You can make an enquiry via email or contact the Health Assured helpline in order to speak to a qualified counsellor and discuss how to access Online CBT.”

Both Health Assured and Togetherall offer courses on dealing with stress and anxiety as well as other areas.

You can also find a list of other apps and resources for mental health can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1j6-7SB-DTBXGDxhNd0A_r_4xpoBbbiAL/view?usp=sharing

If the weather doesn't let you leave your room during the lockdown period here are some suggestions of online exercise you could do:

The Body Coach: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCAxW1XT0iEJo0TYIRfn6rYQ>

Pilates: <https://www.cosmopolitan.com/health-fitness/g28765236/best-pilates-youtube-channels-videos/>

Yoga: <https://www.youtube.com/user/yogawithadriene>

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/may/31/the-best-online-workout-classes-to-keep-fit-at-home>

I have a Tier 4/Student Route visa, will this be affected by the current lockdown?

Your university may have already sent you guidance on this. At the moment as long as you are working on your degree even if you are in the US, your visa should remain valid. If you have to take a formal intermission from your degree then you would need to apply for a new visa before returning to the UK. If you have any questions please ask Mary.

I have a question not covered by the above FAQs, what should I do?

Please email Mary or Helen with full details and one of our team will provide a response as soon as possible.