



**Email to students**  
**24/07/20**

Dear Students

I hope that you have been able to relax and perhaps even socialise a little in the last few weeks, although I realise that our postgraduates are still working.

I am going to be away for the next two weeks so I wanted to update you on a few things.

Plans for Michaelmas Term are progressing well, in the University and in Colleges, though there is still much to do. You should look out for an email from the University towards the end of next week which will give you the most up-to-date information. Some of the most important plans relate to health and, as I have mentioned in the past, there will be University testing service which, fortunately for us, will be on the ROQ site. You will also know from past communications that face coverings will be required during face-to-face teaching and indoor shared spaces, though of course there will be exceptions, for example, on grounds of disability. At Somerville we always try to respect all members of our community but next term it will be even more important to understand our responsibilities towards each other.

Fabio is in discussion with Andrew about the organisation of households. Some people think that households mean that they will never be able to see friends. This is absolutely not the case. You will be able to socialise with friends and eat with friends, albeit in a socially distanced way. We are not sure what the arrangements will be for catering, however, I will let you know as soon as possible – but the temporary dining room and kitchens on the quad look very impressive. Fabio has plans for the terrace which sound great, with the JCR and College splitting the cost. This will be an excellent space for you to meet each other. Other colleges with tiny bars are not so lucky. Out MCR is also spacious so our post graduate students should also have a place to meet up. With regards to the Library, Fabio is in discussion with Anne Manuel who I know wants to provide the best possible service for you in MT, although social distancing and the need for rigorous cleaning mean that it will be very different to last MT and HT.

Everything to do with the student experience – accommodation, catering, re(orientation), clubs, societies, sport, welfare and wellbeing – is being looked at by the Student Experience Coordination Group on which there is good representation from the Students' Union so that your voice is being heard. The group and its sub-groups are developing guidance which we hope will allow a really good experience which is safe.

I realise that sport, drama, music and much else including general socialising is vital for your wellbeing. Ellie Cooper attended Governing Body last week, together with Fabio, and brilliantly presented the JCR's Welfare Report. It is a very good report and will be used to inform proposals which Steve Rayner will take to Standing Committee at the beginning of September and then to GB. Whilst it is acknowledged that we have very good welfare provision we could and should do better and, working closely together, the JCR and College can bring about change.

On the issue of change, we are already putting in place some of the anti-racist actions agreed by GB in June. The equality and diversity committee will have its first meeting in September; the visiting scholarship in partnership with Ethox for researchers from BAME backgrounds will be launched soon; we have agreed support for Alternative Curricula; books have already been bought to make our collection more diverse and inclusive; plans for mentoring for all of

our black freshers are in place; all staff are receiving unconscious bias training and there will be on-line training for all students before the start of term.

Likewise there will be an on-line programme on consent that all freshers will have to do before the start of term followed, if possible, by in person workshops. The timing is important because the evidence shows that most sexual assaults take place in freshers' week. We are also working on an on-line version of the development programme for freshers before they come up so that after 6 months away from school they will be ready to start the academic year.

Notwithstanding the fact that I will be away, you are always welcome to contact me. I will check my emails at least once a day.

I am very much looking forward to seeing you next term. In the meantime, keep safe.

Warm regards

Jan