



**Email to students regarding Hilary Term
06/01/21**

Dear students

Happy New Year. We all hoped that by now the situation would have improved and I was so looking forward to welcoming you back to College in the near future but, as a consequence of the pandemic, sadly that will not be possible. I wish it could be otherwise but the virus is spiralling out of control and it is right that the Government has imposed the lockdown. I realise that you must be extremely frustrated by the constant changes of plan and also anxious about your studies. I reflect that we are now in a similar position to Trinity Term and we can build on that experience. I recognise, however, that a lockdown in the middle of winter is more difficult than in the spring.

You will have received an email from the University this afternoon stressing that, following Government guidance, you should stay at home until at least mid-February. Students on a very few courses will be able to return early, and your department will have informed you if this is the case – please let me know if this applies to you. Otherwise the default position for the vast majority of you is that students should stay at home and access learning remotely. As you will know there are a few very limited exemptions available which will be very strictly assessed:

- You are an international student and have remained in the UK or have already arrived back, or have booked travel which cannot be rescheduled.
- You have stayed in University or College accommodation over the Christmas vacation.
- You require additional support, including if you are having significant mental health difficulties.
- Even when viewed pragmatically, you do not have access to appropriate study spaces or facilities at home.

If you feel that you meet any of these conditions, please email Andrew Parker (Treasurer@some.ox.ac.uk) with a copy to Steve Rayner (senior.tutor@somc.ox.ac.uk) and me. Like every other College we will apply very strict criteria and follow government guidance when evaluating applications for exemptions. We take the need to comply with the lockdown very seriously so we do not expect to be saying yes to many of these requests. Those of you who have already emailed do not have to do so again.

Some of you will have applied for vac res last term. I regret that previous vac res approvals no longer apply. It is only those to whom we give specific approval post lockdown who can come back.

I know that many of you will have questions about rent. We have agreed that you will only have to pay rent when you return to College. Our finances will take another big hit but it would not be fair to charge rent when you are following Government guidance to stay at home.

You will have questions about many more issues including catering, the library, and, for those who are returning to or are already in College, testing and households. We do not yet have those answers and are awaiting further guidance. I will email you over the weekend when we will have more detailed information.



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In the meantime, we learned from our remote teaching during lockdown last Trinity Term so we can be confident about supporting your teaching this coming term. I can assure you that we will do everything possible to help and support you at this worrying time and to enable you to make academic progress. It is a difficult time to be young but being a Somerville student with great tutors, part of a strong academic community, and sustained by friends and families as well as welfare support when necessary, gives you resilience and a strong foundation on which to build your future.

Keep safe.

Warm regards

Jan