

**Email to staff at the beginning of Michaelmas Term
02/10/20**

Dear colleagues

The first thing I want to say to you today is thank you. Over the summer, you've done the most amazing work, often under very difficult circumstances, and our college is now able to open because of that hard work. It really is as black and white as that – without you, Somerville wouldn't be Somerville and this academic year could not happen.

I know there have been frustrations along the way and it can feel scary to continue working under conditions of uncertainty and unease. All I can say is that we have all been thrown into this uncertainty together – and I truly believe that the only way out of it is by continuing to work together. Kindness is fundamental to the values of this college, and together we can embody it more than ever.

To help us stay together and keep those channels of communication open, I wanted to share with you a few of the key resources we've put in place to support everyone in college this year.

First of all, do please visit the [COVID-19 Hub](#) on our website. This is your first stop for all the latest guidance we produce, including Support Staff FAQs that will be continuously updated throughout the year. It also contains [an archive of all the messages](#) that myself and colleagues are sharing with staff, parents and students. Total transparency is essential if we are to maintain the bonds of trust during this period, and this is a first step towards that.

Second, I wanted to let you know that my email to you today will be followed on a weekly basis by an expanded version of [Grapevine](#) that will include a section detailing the current status of college relating to COVID-19, including the number of people self-isolating and the number of people who have tested positive. Again, this is in the interests of transparency and clarity.

Third, we have created a special [COVID-19 Helpdesk](#) for staff and students alike. You can contact this helpdesk at any time by emailing covid@some.ox.ac.uk. However, please note that your first port of call for questions is still [Salome in HR](#) and/or your line manager. The helpdesk is primarily there as a resource in the event that you and your manager need further clarification having exhausted other avenues.

Fourth, I would like to invite you to a [Staff Only Q&A](#) this **Monday 5th October from 12-1pm** to discuss our Michaelmas 2020 Preparations. The session will occur on Teams, but will be made public so anyone can join (no need for an SSO).

Finally, we all know this year is going to be tough. So please do remember that you're not alone in this – just reach out and we will support you. Also, do try and look out for each other; a kind word in passing, a joke or laugh about the craziness of it all,



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showing some tolerance or patience when a colleague is clearly frazzled – it all makes a difference.

I look forward to speaking with you in person soon.

My warmest regards,

Jan