

Coronavirus and SPIR

FAQs for Students

Last updated: 26 March 2020

Headlines

- **Teaching, supervision and drop-in hours:** All face-to-face teaching, dissertation supervisions and office hours in SPIR will take place online and/or by phone from Monday 23 March. For many modules this will happen earlier, so please check your QMUL email for announcements from module convenors.
- **Assessment:** You are still expected to complete assessments; please see below for information on deadlines.
- **Access to campus and services:** Queen Mary's buildings remain open, but the majority of activities and services will be moving online. Please check the latest [FAQs](#) for details.

This guidance has been compiled in order to provide students in the School of Politics and International Relations (SPIR) with the best possible information available at the time of writing. Please remember that the institutional, national, and international contexts in light of the coronavirus pandemic are uncertain and changing, and it is likely that this will continue for some time. As a consequence, we will need to update this information from time to time. Any new decisions that are taken will always be with the best interests of students and staff firmly in view.

If you have a question for SPIR that is not addressed by this page, please email us on politics@qmul.ac.uk.

WELLBEING

Where can I find further support around my health and wellbeing?

Queen Mary remains committed to supporting students at this difficult time. Please refer to the [University's Advice and Counselling website](#) or use [the Big White Wall for online support](#). There is also information on what to do if you're worried about coronavirus on [Queen Mary's dedicated web-pages](#) and [on the UK's NHS website](#).

Will I need to come into campus again this semester?

No student will be required to come onto the Mile End campus for face-to-face teaching in SPIR for the remainder of this semester.

Has SPIR closed entirely due to the coronavirus pandemic?

No. Academic staff will be available remotely at their normal teaching hours and specified office hours. Support staff will also be working remotely; they and therefore be unable to see students in person, and the reception will be closed. Communications will follow shortly advising you of the best communication channels for your enquiries, including online one-to-one meetings. For now we recommend you email your enquiry. Student Support contacts are as follows:

1st years: Jason Salucideen:

j.v.salucideen@qmul.ac.uk

2nd and Final years: Bronwyn Murphy:

bronwyn.murphy@qmul.ac.uk

Postgraduate students: Alex Foster

a.foster@qmul.ac.uk

General enquiries:

politics@qmul.ac.uk

ONLINE TEACHING & STUDENT SUPPORT

What does it mean that my timetabled face-to-face teaching will ‘migrate online’?

Academic staff have been asked to make the best possible arrangements for their modules in terms of providing online content, and to be available remotely for students in their classes during the normal timetabled teaching slots. Materials, discussion forums and webinars will be run through QMPlus. The arrangements will necessarily vary, and you will need to watch out for specific announcements from your teachers about your lectures and seminars.

I’ve left the UK and am now in a different time zone. How do I participate in online teaching?

Lecture recordings will be available for you to watch at any time. Where classes (some lecture and all seminars) are online in real-time, you should participate at the scheduled UK time. If this isn’t possible (e.g. it’s the middle of the night), please either follow the instructions for alternative activity issued by your module convenor/tutor or, in the absence of such instructions, do the normal preparation for the seminar and spend 50mins writing in response to the seminar questions in the module handbook/ QMPlus. Questions relating to the material can be raised via QMPlus discussion forums, virtual office hours or emails to seminar tutors. Please use email as a last resort as many tutors are inundated with the sudden move to online teaching.

How do I prepare for online teaching and learning?

Carefully read and follow the detailed guidance below. Beyond that, prepare for seminars as usual by following existing (or updated) information on QMplus and/or in module handbooks.

- Look out for specific instructions from teaching staff on your module.
- Prepare yourself physically:
 - Look at your timetable and plan to be in a quiet place with a reliable internet connection for your real-time sessions.
 - To help simulate the classroom environment, your tutors will typically prefer you to switch on your webcam, so ensure your dress and environment is appropriate. If you prefer not to use it, that is OK.
- Prepare yourself technically:
 - Choose which device you will use. Ideally it will be a modern computer with a reliable broadband internet connection and microphone, and ideally a webcam. However, tablets and even smartphones can also work.
 - Update your device and test the microphone and webcam.
 - Download and install appropriate software:

- A good browser like [Chrome](#).
 - [Zoom](#), which tutors may use for office hours and as a backup for online classes, available for computer or mobile devices.
- Consider using headphones to minimise noise from the environment and also prevent sound feedback.
- Read the QMUL [guidance](#) on using the main seminar interface, called Blackboard Collaborate, so you know what to expect ahead of time.
- Turn up early. You can join online sessions 15mins before the scheduled time. You should arrive early to sort out any technical issues before the session starts. Bear in mind that your microphone may be muted to begin with.

How do I access online classes ('webinars')?

Links to lecture recordings will be available through QReview on the module's QMplus page, which you can access at any time. Real-time classes (aka 'webinars', which could be lecture or seminar sessions) will take place through an application on QMplus called Blackboard Collaborate. Links will be added to each module's QMplus page in a dedicated folder, which will look like the below. Locate the correct class by your tutor's name and time, and click on their name (highlighted below).

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ONLINE SEMINARS (WEBINARS)

Instructions: click on the link below then "join session". If the Blackboard Collaborate technology fails, visit <https://zoom.us/j/8756760111>

📅

Lee

Yesterday 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Tuesday, 24 March 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

📅

Fred

Today 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Wednesday, 25 March 3:00PM-4:00PM

Then click "join session". You can join up to 15mins ahead of the scheduled time. We recommend you join early to solve any technical problems ahead of the start time.

The screenshot shows a navigation breadcrumb at the top: a home icon followed by '> POL307 - Politics at the End of the End of History - 2019/20 > online seminars (webinars) > Fred'. Below this, there is a header for 'FRED' with a small icon. Underneath, the text 'Today 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM' is displayed. A green button labeled 'Join session' is highlighted with a yellow hand-drawn circle. At the bottom of the visible area, the text 'Wednesday, 25 March 3:00PM-4:00PM' is shown.

In the webinar folder there may also be links to backup Zoom seminars that looks like this: <https://zoom.us/j/xxxx>. You should only click on these links if the Blackboard Collaborate session does not work.

Will my lectures be available online?

Yes, as far as possible lecture content will be made available to you. Often this will mean viewing a lecture via QReview, although sometimes teaching staff may post new video or audio content, or upload scripts. Copies of lecture slides and handouts will be uploaded to QMplus as normal.

What will happen in seminars and workshops?

Your teachers will advise you about what will happen in particular online sessions, which will try to mirror the face-to-face experience insofar as possible. Copies of classroom slides and handouts will be uploaded to QMplus as normal.

I can't find any online teaching resources for my class: what should I do?

Please be patient with your teachers as they adjust to this new way of working. You shouldn't necessarily expect to find any additional online materials for the class until shortly before the date/time at which it is due to start, and in some cases classes may need to be rearranged to give your seminar leader time to prepare. Please be aware that staff taking industrial action will not be available until Friday 20th March and may therefore need more time to prepare. Check the announcements forum on the QMPlus page and your email. If you still can't find resources/ class links, please email your seminar tutor/ module convenor.

I don't have access to a suitable device or internet connection to participate in online learning: what should I do?

The technical requirements for online learning in SPIR will be the same as your normal access to QMplus. However, if you do have concerns about your capacity to participate due to technical limitations, please get in touch for advice at politics@qmul.ac.uk. Please also advise your teachers of your concerns.

I have children who are now at home or care for family members who are ill: what do I do if this means I cannot meet assessment deadlines?

If you are in this situation, please contact politics@qmul.ac.uk. SPIR is committed to supporting students with caring responsibilities and will work with you to deal with this very difficult situation.

Can I still use libraries, archives and special collections for my research?

Queen Mary's [Library at Mile End](#) has now closed for at least 6 weeks. During this time, Library Services will continue to support learning and research by providing access to digital resources and virtual enquiry services.

Can I still access individual members of teaching staff for drop-in hours and dissertation supervision?

Yes. All teaching staff are expected to retain their existing drop-in hours and to offer remote meetings via email, telephone, and/or video conferencing. Staff are expected to use the same mechanisms to offer dissertation supervision. Please feel free to contact your advisor, teacher and/or dissertation supervisor to find out what arrangements they have made and to book a remote appointment.

ASSESSMENT

Will I still need to complete written assessment for my modules this semester?

Yes. Please check your QMUL email regularly for updates on any changes to assessment. You should submit assignments on QMPlus as normal.

When will I know what alternative assignments have been set for exams?

We are in the process of working out the implications for the assessment schedule of the cancellation of all face to face examinations. We will be in touch as soon as we are able, but this is a complex matter, so it may take a little time.

What if I submit an assignment late, or miss an assignment submission altogether, due to the coronavirus pandemic?

We are aware that the current situation is putting extra strain on students in many different ways, because of unexpected relocation, self-isolation, caring responsibilities and anxiety about your own and others' health.

- We initially allowed students to submit assignments up to a week late without penalty. Following University guidance, you will now be able to submit a further week later without penalty. Therefore, **you will be able to submit your work up to 2 weeks after the original deadline without penalty**. This permission will be backdated to all work due on or since 9 March.
- The third-year UG dissertation deadline is the only exception to this. The deadline has already been moved to Sunday 10 May. In order to leave enough time for finalists to sit exams, so that they can graduate this summer, we can only permit a further week's extension without penalty. Therefore, **the absolute deadline for the dissertation is 17 May**. Dissertations submitted after this deadline will incur late penalties.
- To avoid late penalties when submitting any work after these extended deadlines, you will need to apply for extenuating circumstances (ECs). Applications related to the COVID-19 outbreak will be considered sympathetically. To discuss an EC claim or make an application please contact:

1st year students: Jason Salucideen

j.v.salucideen@qmul.ac.uk

2nd and final year students: Bronwyn Murphy

bronwyn.murphy@qmul.ac.uk

Students who are in self-isolation or actually have Covid-19 must email studenthealth@qmul.ac.uk to report their circumstances

How will my assignments be marked fairly given the impact of the coronavirus pandemic?

SPIR is committed to ensuring that no student is disadvantaged in their assessment outcomes as a consequence of the current pandemic and the transition to online teaching. Members of staff in the School will mark your work on the basis of the teaching you have received and the resources available to you, and adjust their expectations as necessary. In advance of the Subject Examination Boards that confirm your final marks for the year, the

School will take extra measures to review student achievement and progression in order to ensure that all students are being treated equally and sympathetically.

Please see the [centrally maintained FAQs](#) for further information from the University related to the Covid-19 outbreak.