

26/5/20

Dear Students,

I hope you and your families are safe and well. I know it has been an immensely challenging time for everyone, but we have been pleased to see the vast majority of you managing to submit your assessments for consideration at the summer Exam Board.

Many of you will be wondering what your university studies will look like next year. While much is still uncertain, I would like to set out what the School is planning, and the support we will be putting in place to ensure you continue to receive a world-class education.

Our aspiration is to deliver as much in-person teaching as possible from September, consistent with public health guidelines, with the safety of staff and students our foremost consideration. Given that it is unclear whether or how many students will be able to return to campus-based teaching, we are therefore preparing to teach our programmes online from September. While staff availability will, as always, mean some modules are not available, the overwhelming majority will be available as normal.

Staff will be working extraordinarily hard throughout the summer to prepare a high-quality learning experience, which will obviously be very different to the emergency provision at the start of the pandemic. However, your weekly learning journey will look much the same as the one you are familiar with.

- Lectures will be provided online, with recordings available to all students via QMplus. Some lecturers may release recordings ahead of time, and may use the lecture hour for online Q&A. Others will deliver the lectures “live”, also with opportunity for Q&A, with recordings released afterwards.
- Seminars/ workshops will take place in real-time on Blackboard Collaborate, with structured tasks and discussions to help to manage the session and get the most out of the hour. This will involve the usual mixture of small-group discussion, writing exercises, debate, and so on, but adapted to suit the online context.
- As a back-up for students unable to participate in a real-time seminar in a given week due to temporary technical difficulties, modules will operate limited-time discussion forums, with structured tasks.
- All tutors will run weekly office hours on Microsoft Teams. Dissertation supervision will also be provided through Teams. The Dissertation module is being adapted to ensure that students select topics appropriately supported by online resources.

If circumstances permit, we will deliver seminars, supervisions and office hours face-to-face on campus. Students on campus will also be able to access the library and all other facilities and support services that are safe to provide. However, for Semester A at least, all modules will continue to be delivered online so that all students, wherever you are, can participate.

Your reading lists will all be revised so that only electronically-available resources will appear, and Queen Mary is devoting additional resources to purchase extra e-copies as needed. Extra guidance will be supplied on how best to prepare for seminars.

We expect Queen Mary to issue clear guidance about the hardware and software you will need to engage successfully in online learning. All students will be provided with pre-sessional training on how best to engage with online learning, and an opportunity to test-run your hardware to iron out any problems before classes start.

Once module registrations are finalised, your tutors will write to you to assign some preparatory summer reading, to help support your transition to the next year of your studies. Current second-years will also shortly be guided towards initiating their dissertation work, with the preparation of a research proposal over the long vacation.

We look forward to welcoming you back to classes in the Autumn, in the meantime I wish you the very best with your studies, and hope that you and your families remain in good health. If you have any questions regarding this please contact politics@qmul.ac.uk

Kind regards,

Prof Kimberly Hutchings
Head of School of Politics and International Relations