FAQs

What is the College’s advice about students returning home?
Government advice changed on Thursday 12 March as the UK has gone from the ‘contain’ to the ‘delay’ phase. The aim is to ensure that the disease does not spread fast so as to reduce pressure on the health service. The university is in ‘amber’ phase. It is widely expected that it will soon move to ‘red’. The College is aware that a significant number of our staff will fall ill. If schools are closed, staff will also have to stay at home to look after younger children. The College will therefore not have the resources to provide the facilities and support it can in normal times. For Undergraduate students we strongly recommend that, particularly for UK students, unless there are exceptional reasons why you can’t, you make plans to leave College accommodation as soon as you are able to, taking all of the things you need for your academic studies with you. There may be some of you, particularly international students, for whom it has not been possible to organise to get home because of travel restrictions etc. Please rest assured that for students in exceptional circumstances a room will be available, but please read further this document to understand the possible effects on the College’s ability to provide usual services over the coming weeks and months. If you are in exceptional circumstances that mean you need to remain in College, please can you email accommodation@robinson.cam.ac.uk to request permission to stay and so that we can know the numbers of students who will be on the College site. This is extremely important, so please make sure you do so. This also applies to those who have already been given permission for Easter vacation, since things have changed so much.

For Postgraduate students, please rest assured that the College will not turn you away or terminate your College residence contracts. We hope that the extra information in this document helps guide your own decisions about where to be in the near future. If you need academic advice, please be in touch with your supervisor/department/faculty.

If I stay in College and fall ill what help will the College be able to provide?
The College will not be able to provide nursing care. Students will have to self-isolate in their rooms. Assuming there is staff, we shall try to provide food once a day to those we know are self-isolating. Students who self-isolate are advised to liaise with friends to create a ‘buddy’ system which provides mutual support. We are concerned about the loneliness students may feel and we will also be setting up a group Whatsapp for all those who have to remain in College. Where possible Tutors will also provide online advice/telephone support, again assuming the staff are well enough. In the case of self-isolation, the College has an action plan and what you need to do to start the process is ring the Porters’ Lodge on 01223 339 100.

Can I leave my belongings in my room?
All students should aim to leave, with all their belongings, unless (1) exceptional reason signed off by tutorial, or (2) they have already left, having previously been given permission to leave their belongings in their room.
The usual Trunk Room Policy will apply. If you are unable to clear your room, or you need additional space in the trunk room, please tell Keisha Sharp why by emailing her.

**If I leave now, can I return to collect my belongings from my room later?**
In principle yes, but this depends on any travel restrictions imposed by the government.

**Will I be charged for leaving my belongings in my room?**
Yes, but we need to give further thought as to how to work out a charging system. The College will be as understanding as possible; this is a difficult situation for all concerned.

**I talked to my tutor about staying in College last week and now advice seems to be changing. What should I do now?**
Yes, the advice has changed because government policy has changed and is likely to become more restrictive.

**How will the tutorial office know who has permission to stay?**
The tutorial office is the single decision maker with authority for approving exceptional cases of students remaining in College. Please email accommodation@robinson.cam.ac.uk stating the reasons why you need to remain in College.

**What should I do if I am self-isolating?**
You must call the Porters’ lodge on 01223 339 100. The Bursar’s office will keep a log of all the cases. You will be given further information as to what to do. **You will be expected to follow the guidance you are given by the College. The College will be forced to take a firm line with any student who claims to be self-isolating but who is found not to be doing so. We do not expect to see this but if we do the College will require that student to move out of College residence immediately.**

**I am due to have exams in April, I would rather stay in Cambridge**
At the moment the only information we can give you is that provided in the Senior Tutor’s email: ‘Knowing that the exam season for some students has already begun, that more expect to take examinations and submit dissertations and other course work at the start of the Easter term in late April, and that many more will take exams throughout the Easter term, I want to reassure you that contingency plans exist for examinations. Faculties and departments will be working on the detail of these plans within common principles over the coming week. We are already working with student representatives on these plans, and your Faculty or Department will inform you of these details by 31 March 2020.’

Arrangements will need to be made for students who cannot return for whatever reason.
I’m a graduate student and I live in graduate accommodation, does this advice apply to me?
We encourage all students to consider these details carefully and to make their own decisions on the basis of the currently available evidence. The College will certainly honour its contracts for accommodation if graduate students wish to stay in College or if they have no other place to go to safely. Note that we are already witnessing flights being cancelled to a number of destinations.

In terms of what to do should your work circumstances within the University change in the coming weeks by virtue of any action that may need to be taken as a consequence of the covid-19 pandemic, you should be guided by advice from your supervisors, departments and faculties.

Will the decision to leave affect my residence requirements?
The university has emailed to say that ‘While the formalities will follow early next week, Professor Virgo [PVC for Education] has said that he would be very happy for students to be reassured about this now: ‘no student should be deterred from leaving because of concerns about residency requirements.’

What effect will leaving have on my visa?
The university’s own FAQs deal with this point. See also the government’s own guidance.

All of this is costing me a lot of money, how will the College help?
If students are suffering from severe/exceptional financial hardship as a result of travel and other arrangements made, it is possible for applications to be made to the College bursary fund or to the University Special Hardship fund. Please ask your Tutors for more details.

Will mental health services be available to me even when I am out of residence?
Your tutors will be available for consultation via email, and the UCS may be providing online help. We also aim to set up a Whatsapp group for those who do have to remain in College.

My parents are severely ill and I am afraid of bringing the virus with me. Can I stay?
We encourage you to discuss this matter with your tutor. Our policy is that other than in exceptional circumstances as detailed above, students should plan to return home.

For those still in residence what, facilities will be available?
Provided we have the staff, the Garden Restaurant will be open, currently at the usual times although this might change. The opening hours of the café/bar are likely in the future to be restricted, as will housekeeping services. You may be asked to carry out your own cleaning and bed-
making in your room. Further information will be provided to students in residence as and when necessary.