Covid-19 Guidance for Undergraduate Students on International Placements

Academic Arrangements/Adjustments
Academic Schools here in Manchester will provide more specific guidance related to your programme of study and any adjustments/mitigation measures that can be put in place due to the need to temporarily suspend, or permanently cancel, your placement. The following is general guidance.

If your placement provider (University/host organization) is closed or they have suspended your work placement because they cannot support non-essential staff:

- We encourage those of you studying or undertaking research placements at universities to continue with your studies/work/assignments to the extent that is possible whilst the Universities remain closed so that you continue to benefit as fully as possible from any period of closure. Please ensure you fully engage with online provision/remote study where this is being made available as the expectation will be that you complete your studies where provision has been made to enable you to do so remotely.
- If you are undertaking a work placement that has been suspended - we are aware that many students are being affected by closures to schools, businesses etc - then we encourage you to undertake work associated with your placement where possible. For example, if you had been tasked with a specific project and you can work on this remotely then there may be some benefits that you can still accrue despite the placement being suspended and such pro-activity will likely reflect well in terms of references etc. Any continued work undertaken remotely should be agreed in discussion with your work placement provider.
- Please keep a copy of all written communications from your placement provider that evidence the closure, the extent of the closure etc. so that you can evidence this should your School here in Manchester require it (and/or it be required for the purposes of an insurance claim).
- If you are a student on an Erasmus+ placement you may wish to take advantage of the language development provision available through the Online Linguistic Support (OLS) Platform. This provides online language learning resources. This is similar to DuoLingo and is free to access. Resources are available for all language levels. If you do not already have an OLS course licence or you didn’t do an OLS Assessment prior to commencing your placement please contact erasmus@manchester.ac.uk to request access.

If your placement has not yet been affected by closures or similar but you wish to discontinue your placement temporarily and return home:

- The University of Manchester recognises that even where placements remain viable some students may wish to return home because of the uncertain and escalating situation. Students who wish to discontinue placements because of the uncertainty, even though their placement remains viable, may do so. However, the provisions made by the placement provider, particularly host universities, may well be different if they have not closed. Consequently, the impact on learning outcomes may be
greater than for other students and the impact on academic progression may therefore differ. The University will do all it reasonably can to mitigate the impact.

- If you wish to discontinue your placement you should agree this in conjunction with your placement provider and your School so that you are aware of any broader implications. For study placements at Universities you should make sure that you understand whether there will be any option to complete work remotely - this should not be an expectation if the institution is not closing – or whether you will receive fail marks/incompletes/withdrawn status for all courses that are incomplete.

**Immigration/Visas**

You are encouraged to clarify with your host university/organization or relevant government body any implications for your visa status and validity as a consequence of a decision to leave the country for an indeterminate period due to the Coronavirus.

International students also on UK Tier 4 Visas should contact visa@manchester.ac.uk to discuss how any placement re-arrangements may impact on their Tier 4 Visa Status.

**Finance**

**Student Finance (only applicable to UK Students)**

Under the current exceptional circumstances, student funding arrangements will be as follows where placements are disrupted:

- Students able to continue their placement remotely in the host country – your maintenance loan will remain assessed at the same overseas rate as previously.

- Students able to continue their placement remotely in the UK – your maintenance loan will be reassessed by the Student Loans Company (SLC) and calculated at the UK rate for the duration you are in the UK, and at the overseas rate for the period already spent abroad.

- Students completing alternative provision put in place by The University of Manchester (either in the form of a new UK-based placement or provision in lieu of a placement) – your maintenance loan will be reassessed by the SLC and calculated at the UK rate for the duration you are in the UK, and at the overseas rate for the period already spent abroad.

- Students unable to secure any alternative provision – your maintenance loan will be reassessed based on the duration of the period spent abroad and any over-payment will be recovered.

You do not have to do anything in terms of contacting the Student Loans Company. The Funding Team in the Student Services Centre will report the change of circumstance to the Student Loan Company once it has been confirmed by your academic School. The SLC will
then make the necessary adjustments and notify you directly of the changes to your funding entitlement, both in terms of tuition fee and maintenance loans.

If you would suffer hardship as a result of the recovery of any overpayment you can apply to the Financial Hardship Team at Student Finance England to defer any recovery. Students wishing to pursue a claim to defer any recovery need to call Student Finance England to request a financial hardship form. Please note this step need only be taken once you have been notified of your revised funding entitlement for 2019/20.

If you have any additional questions regarding your funding then please contact the Funding Team: funding@manchester.ac.uk, +44 161 275 5000.

Sources of Financial Support

Income-Assessed Travel Grants - if you are eligible for the income-assessed Travel Grants from Student Finance then the cost of your flight to return home to the UK can be claimed by submitting the normal claim form and receipt evidence. You can find further information here: http://www.goabroad.manchester.ac.uk/finance-and-funding/student-finance/

Living Cost Support Fund – this is available to students who find themselves in financial hardship and need access to funds as a consequence of the current unanticipated circumstances: http://www.studentsupport.manchester.ac.uk/finances/funding-opportunities/all/living-cost-support-fund

Erasmus+ Grant Funding

As you will be aware, Erasmus grant funding is linked to placement duration. Students on placements that are eligible for Erasmus funding are entitled to retain Erasmus funds for the days they have spent studying/working at their host organisation. We have had confirmation from the UK Erasmus National Agency that temporary closure days of host organisations due to the Coronavirus remain eligible for funding and so will continue to be included when we calculate the level of your grant entitlement. We will keep all students updated as further information and advice from the Erasmus+ National Agency and the European Commission is provided.

We are seeking clarity as to the position on funding should the closure of placements become permanent.

If you have any questions regarding your Erasmus Grant please email: erasmus@manchester.ac.uk

Insurance (what is and isn’t covered)

1) If you choose to return to your home country because there is currently no need for you to be overseas due to closures affecting your placement then the additional costs
incurred as a result of coming home early will be considered by the insurance company. They will typically cover the cost of changing existing flights back to your home country or booking new flights where existing flights cannot be changed. The costs of booking a flight home are not covered if you do not already have a flight home booked as this would be considered a cost that you would ultimately have had to incur to return home at the end of your placement and not an additional cost incurred as a result of returning home early. You must keep evidence that you could not change or obtain a refund for any existing flights.

2) If you travel home and then need to return to your placement at a later date to continue your studies/work the claim for the costs of flights will be considered by the insurance company on a case by case basis.

3) Costs for unused accommodation will typically be considered where there is clear evidence that you have requested a refund but this was not permitted under the terms of your accommodation contract or similar.

4) If you leave belongings behind in anticipation of returning at a later date you should note that the return of your belongings by courier or similar will not be covered by insurance should you not return. [It is important to recognise that the logistics of regaining personal possessions is not always straight-forward and may be complicated in the event of long-term closures due to the pandemic. We would strongly advise under the current circumstances that you do not leave possessions behind].

5) There is no additional cover in this circumstance for students with pre-existing medical conditions, but you should raise specific circumstances with the Insurance Office and these can be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

6) The travel insurance coverage will be very limited during any period where you are in your country of domicile. Please also note, should you for any reason relocate to a third country other than for necessary travel to return home, then the Travel insurance, as always, will not cover you.

If you have any questions regarding insurance please email: insurance@manchester.ac.uk
You can also review insurance information here:
http://www.goabroad.manchester.ac.uk/emergencies-and-insurance/insurance/

Health

Local Healthcare Provision
The nature of the local healthcare provision should be a consideration in your decision-making regarding whether or not you return to the UK/your home country.

Students with pre-existing/underlying conditions that would place you at higher risk
If you have a pre-existing condition that places you at higher risk were you to contract the Coronavirus please make sure that your School placement co-ordinator is aware and that you keep them informed of any decisions you make. You will be best placed to make a judgment as to the best course of action in discussion with your medical professionals. We can work with you if that is needed.
If you return to the UK from certain countries please be aware that you will be required to self-quarantine for 14 days (https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas/covid-19-specified-countries-and-areas-with-implications-for-returning-travellers-or-visitors-arriving-in-the-uk). If your home country is not the UK you should check relevant guidance as to measures that are in place.

Key Contacts for Academic Questions/Support:

AMBS – andrew.walker@manchester.ac.uk
Biological Sciences – placementoffice.biosciences@manchester.ac.uk
Computer Science - mabel.yau@manchester.ac.uk
Geography – TBC, support questions for students participating in exchanges should be directed to relevant advisers in the International Programmes Office (IPO), see below
Psychology - TBC, support questions for students participating in exchanges should be directed to relevant advisers in the International Programmes Office (IPO), see below
SALC (Languages) – residenceabroad@manchester.ac.uk
SALC (non-languages) – TBC, support questions for students participating in exchanges should be directed to relevant advisers in the International Programmes Office (IPO), see below
Social Sciences - TBC, support questions for students participating in exchanges should be directed to relevant advisers in the International Programmes Office (IPO), see below

International Exchange Programme regional advisers:
USA & Canada – Denise Whitehead denise.whitehead@manchester.ac.uk
Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Europe (except Scandinavia & The Netherlands) – Deborah Williams deborah.williams-2@manchester.ac.uk
Scandinavia & The Netherlands - Victoria Rowlands victoria.rowlands@manchester.ac.uk