

Coronavirus – Scottish Government issues guidance to students

The Scottish Government has issued guidance on the position regarding students living away from home in halls and flats.

Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science has written to principals of colleges and universities as well as companies and bodies which provide student accommodation this evening.

The guidance has been drawn up in consultation with the National Union of Students and Universities Scotland.

The latter organisation, which is a membership body 'working for the Principals and Directors of Scotland's 19 higher education institutions', issued its own guidance to students on 24 September 2020. This is here and included a ban on parties and socialising outside households. It also included a statement that there will be a yellow/red card approach to any breaches by students. Peter Mathieson the Vice-Chancellor of University of Edinburgh, Professor Andrea Nolan Vice-Chancellor of Edinburgh Napier University are both part of the Executive Group.

The [main message](#) is to urge students to remain on campus if they are able to. Otherwise it explains what students can and cannot do and what they need to consider if they are intending to return home permanently. Students who are self-isolating are also given guidance on what they need to do, including

avoiding public transport.

Mr Lochhead said: "Our priority is to try and keep people safe from a virus that, even for young people, can do a lot of damage to physical health.

"We would encourage students to remain living in their current accommodation where they are able to, so they can continue to benefit from both a blend of digital and in-person learning, where that is possible and the opportunity to engage with others, within the restrictions, to build new networks and to make new friends.

"However, we know that many students may be struggling with the prospect of not being able to return home to visit family and other support networks, especially if it is the first time in their life they have been away from home.

"Knowing what to consider in deciding whether to return home will help support wellbeing and enable students to make informed choices, but it is important to stress that adjusting to life away from home is always challenging.

"And, as the First Minister has made clear, we are strongly advising that students do not visit pubs and restaurants for the remainder of this weekend.

"I'd like to thank students for playing their role at this very difficult time when they are trying to benefit from further and higher education against a backdrop of a global pandemic."

Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Willie Rennie said: "Issuing new guidance on a late Sunday evening is no way to communicate clearly and effectively. It is yet another panicky response from a government that should have been ready for this. I warned the First Minister for weeks that this was coming as it was the biggest movement of people since the lockdown.

“I have asked for an urgent statement to Parliament from the Education Secretary who should set out a programme to roll out routine asymptomatic testing, the right to go home if they test negative, mental health support and rent rebates.”

[What students can and cannot do and advice on visits home](#)

There is general guidance for everyone at [this link](#).