



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS RELATING TO THE CORONAVIRUS

CATS Colleges UK: Latest Guidance

16 March 2020

Travel, Boarding and Wellbeing

Why aren't schools closing now?

As schools operating in the UK, we have to follow UK government advice, which currently recommends schools remain open. Our efforts to facilitate students returning home early should they wish to, is in preparation for impending school closures.

We are receiving regular briefing notes and taking advice from the Department of Education, Independent Schools Association, and the Boarding Schools Association, all of which are advising schools remain open until advised otherwise.

What happens if my child gets sick?

We have discussed the possible symptoms with all students and staff. Members of the boarding team are on duty 24 hours a day and ready to offer advice and instruction if anyone develops symptoms. Our medical teams are also on-site throughout the school day, offering medical advice and assistance should students feel unwell.

Our advice currently is to ask any student or staff member who develops the symptoms of a continuous new cough and/or a high fever to self-isolate for seven days.

As is usual at this time of year we have a high level of common colds and seasonal flu, so we will judge each student's symptoms on a case-by-case basis and engage early with the National Health Service (NHS) where necessary.

Can my child remain in boarding accommodation until the Easter break?

Yes. The schools remain open as usual. However, we recommend that students make arrangements to go home as soon as possible.

Can my child remain in boarding accommodation over the Easter break if they can't return home safely?

We know that for some students, it will not be possible to return home. We will continue to provide boarding for those students who are in that position. We assure parents that we will continue to look after them and provide for their wellbeing. Please inform the College as soon as possible if your child is unable to return home by emailing the Student Services teams.

Will the school delay the start of summer term if the situation worsens?

We will continue to take advice from the health and education authorities and will act in the best interests of students, staff, families, and communities of our schools. As the situation develops, so will our response to it.

What will happen if my child cannot return after Easter due to travel restrictions?

While we cannot predict what the situation will be by the end of April, we will continue to communicate our advice to students, parents and agents and ensure that in the event of any prolonged school closures we will offer remote teaching.

We would recommend monitoring the travel advice in your home countries and keeping us updated with your plans so that we can support your return to the UK or deferral of your studies.

Can students stay in the UK away from college?

Yes, students are able to stay in the UK with a guardian. Normal exeat rules apply.

We will be continuing to offer boarding to any students who are unable to travel home.

Will you be charging the normal rate for those staying over Easter?

Yes. Please find details of fees on our website.

Academic

How will my child's studies be affected?

It is one of our main priorities to ensure that all students complete their studies and either progress to the following year of studies or move onto their next institution of education, regardless of the external situation.

Classes will continue in all schools as usual until the Easter break.

We would recommend students who leave early or are looking to leave before the end of term to take the time now, and over Easter, to begin their revision of previously covered material in preparation for their exams.

We will be setting work and assignments for Easter in the usual way and teachers will make contact with absent students via email.

Will there be online lessons?

There will be academic provision and direct contact with the teachers in the event of any school closures.

What will happen with exams?

We are following the advice of Public Health England and the Department for Education. At the moment we are proceeding on the assumption that there has been no change to non-examination assessment deadlines. So far, Ofqual, the regulator responsible for examination standards has issued the following statement:

"We recognise that students, parents, schools and colleges will be concerned about the possible impact of coronavirus on the 2020 summer final assessments and exam series. Our advice at this time is to continue to prepare for exams and other assessments as normal."

Their overriding priorities are fairness to students this summer and keeping disruption to a minimum. They have committed to providing as much notice as possible to schools and colleges should this advice change.

What about my attendance record?

We will be authorising absence from school for any students departing early for the Easter break. Students who remain in college will have normal attendance policies apply.

We anticipate classes starting on Monday 20th April. Students are currently expected to be present in college for the start of term. We recommend parents purchase flexible return fares for any flight home in the eventuality of a delay to the start of the summer term or school closures.

What will happen in regards to university applications?

Our Higher Education Officers (HEOs) will continue to support all students. It is in the best interest of the students that this advice continues to come from our impartial HEOs who will continue to be in regular contact with academic colleagues in the schools so that they will be giving the most appropriate advice. We are using our excellent links with all universities to ensure our students receive the most up to date advice on how British universities are likely to respond.

At this point students should continue to assume that they will have assessments in May / June / July (as previously announced) and should work towards these. With IB, A-level and GCSEs we will follow whatever the governing bodies of those examinations decide. We are looking at making UFP assessments more accessible worldwide.

What happens with students on A2 and UFP if they choose to defer?

A level, IB and GCSE examinations are controlled by bodies external to CATS and we will have to follow whatever they decide. At the moment students taking these courses should assume that the assessments this summer will go ahead.

At the moment CATS UFP exams are set to go ahead as scheduled. We are considering making some forms of assessment more accessible worldwide but no decisions have yet been made. Students should assume assessments will continue on the published dates.

Students may be able to delay taking examinations for a year, and we will support students to defer if this is what they choose to do. We are expecting UKVI to publish further guidance about students' visas. However in most cases, there will be no issue applying for a new visa if necessary. We expect UKVI to be flexible due to the exceptional circumstances, even for students who are close to the 2 year limit.

Admissions and Visas

What about my visa?

If you are on a T4 visa and have elected to leave the UK for a longer Easter break we have authorised any absence between Wednesday 11th March and Monday 20th April. After that time, we may be unable to authorise any further absence, and this may have an impact on our sponsorship of your visa.

As this is a rapidly changing situation, advice may change in the coming days and weeks. We are receiving regular updates from the Home Office and UKVI in regards to Tier 4 visa holders, which we will send on to parents, students, and agents as soon as we receive them.

Can I defer my studies until later?

Yes, you may defer your studies until September 2020 or beyond. We will transfer any tuition paid to any deferrals.

Will I get a refund for the weeks of lessons I miss?

We will not be offering any partial refunds to students who leave college before the end of term. As per our terms and conditions, given that this is a pandemic situation, there will not be a refund for students who leave early. We are still expecting to open as usual for the Summer Term. Therefore fees will be due as usual. If you choose to defer, the Summer Term fees will still need to be paid now but will be transferrable to cover the Autumn Term fees if your child returns to study with us in September.

If we have paid the Summer Term fees already and we would like to defer until September, can we defer the tuition and accommodation fees to the Autumn Term?

If you choose to defer, the Summer Term fees will be transferrable to cover the Autumn Term fees if your child returns to study with us in September.

If my child defers until September, they will need to apply for a new visa. How can we do this?

Help will be given on a case-by-case basis, including liaison with UKVI if needed.

Will you be charging the normal rate for those staying over Easter?

Yes.