Living in College: a guide for students

Introduction

Everyone is looking forward to welcoming you to College next term. We know things are going to look and feel rather different from what you might expect to begin with but we hope that together we can create a safe and friendly space in which we can all live, study and work.

COVID-19 is a contagious disease, so individual behaviour affects the entire community. To help you adjust to new ways of life in College, we have outlined what ‘Living in College’ requires at this time.

The guidelines below are an initial iteration and are subject to change in accordance with government advice. We recognise that Murray Edwards is your home but being in residence requires us all, more than ever, to respect boundaries, be mindful of the needs of others, and work together to minimise risks. We will update these guidelines when required and will keep you informed of any changes via email and other appropriate communications channels.

Accommodation and households

What will accommodation look like next year?

In order to manage any potential future outbreaks of COVID-19 in Cambridge, all Colleges have made the decision to accommodate students in households.

What constitutes a household?

In a College context, a household is defined as those people with whom you share a bathroom, kitchen or toilet facilities.

How many people will be in each household?

At Murray Edwards, there will be no more than eight people per household. Each household will have access to a shared kitchen space and bathroom facilities, which will primarily be for their use only.

Do I have to social distance/wear a face covering within my household?

Your household is your social bubble. While you will not be required to wear a face covering in your household, we will be encouraging all students to maintain social distancing, wash their hands regularly, clean surfaces after use and take other sensible precautions to limit the spread of COVID-19.

In addition, it’s important to remember that on occasion, you will have to pass through other households in order to move around College. Wearing a face covering in all corridors is a courtesy and good practice.
Do I have to clean my own room and shared facilities?

- Students are expected to clean their own rooms
- En-suite bathrooms will be checked and cleaned once a fortnight
- Kitchens will be cleaned five days a week
- Communal bathrooms and toilets will be cleaned seven days a week
- Hand contact areas in College will be cleaned three times a day, seven days a week
- All communal and shared spaces in the Colleges houses will be cleaned five days a week

Public spaces in College

Do I have to social distance/wear a face covering around College?

When moving around the public spaces in College (including the Porters’ Lodge, the Dome, and corridors and walkways), you will be required to wear a face covering unless you are exempt from doing so.

You do not have to wear a face covering in the College gardens but please remember to maintain social distancing at all times.

Will there be hand sanitiser available in College?

You are encouraged to use hand sanitiser, and there are contactless sanitiser dispensers at the entrances to main buildings. However, hand sanitiser is not a replacement for thorough and regular handwashing.

Will I be able to move around College freely?

You may move around College freely but please follow the routes and movement advice signposted around College.

Will any of the communal areas in College be accessible?

We are currently trying to find alternative communal areas for household groups who do not have suitable communal space within their accommodation.

For now, students are not permitted to congregate in the Dome, the College bar, the JCR, the MCR, the Coach House or the Froud Room. However, we are looking at how these spaces could be booked by households for socially distanced gatherings. We are also working with the Gardens Team to see if cordoned off areas could be set up outdoors so that households can socialise. We will provide you with more information as soon as it is available.
University card

**Do I have to keep my University on me at all times?**

Yes. All students should carry their University card with them at all times. Your card does not need to be on display (i.e. you do not need to wear in on a lanyard) but you should be prepared to show it on request when entering College(s), Faculties, Departments, Libraries or other University buildings.

Catering

**Will the Dome be open?**

The Dome will be offering a takeaway service only to begin with. The proposed timings are as follows (from 21 September):

**Monday to Friday**

- 08:00-09:30 – Breakfast
- 10:00-11:30 – Coffee shop
- 12:30-14:00 – Lunch
- 14:30-17:00 – Coffee shop
- 17:30-19:00 – Dinner

**Saturday and Sunday**

- 11:00-12:30 – Brunch
- 13:00-17:30 – Coffee shop
- 18:00-19:00 – Dinner

Supervisions/teaching

**Will supervisions take place in-person or online this year?**

The intention is for supervisions and small group teaching to take place in-person as far as is practicable. However, it may be necessary to move these sessions online if doing so will help maintain the safety and wellbeing of our community. Your Director of Studies or supervisor will be in touch about arrangements.

**Where will in-person supervisions take place this year?**

Only 1:1 meetings will take place in Fellows’ offices unless the particular office has been risk assessed to allow for more visitors. Other in-person supervisions will take place in College meeting rooms and you may be asked by your DoS to attend supervisions in approved spaces at other Colleges.
Do I have to wear a face covering to in-person supervisions?

We recommend you wear your face covering until all members of the supervision have arrived and are sat in their socially distanced seating in the room. If any member of the supervision group or the supervisor would prefer that everyone wears their face covering throughout, please adhere to this request.

What is the guidance around arriving for and leaving in-person supervisions?

Please arrive at your supervision no more than five minutes before the start time. This is to help prevent crowding or queues in public areas. At the end of your supervision, you should leave promptly – please avoid gathering outside the supervision room.

Will rooms be cleaned in between in-person supervisions?

Yes. Rooms will be ventilated and sanitised before and after each supervision. When the weather outside gets cold, please remember to wear appropriate clothing so that you are a comfortable temperature during your supervision.

Am I allowed to share equipment and resources with others in my in-person supervision?

No. Please remember to bring all the items required for your supervision; equipment and resources should not be shared.

What happens if I start to feel unwell during my in-person supervision?

If you have a temperature or are experiencing any COVID-19 symptoms before your supervision, please do not attend. Make sure to let your supervisor know as soon as possible. If you start to feel unwell in the supervision, you should leave immediately, return to your room and follow the College’s guidance on reporting your symptoms.

Visitors

Can friends from other households (including from other Colleges) visit me in my room?

Having visitors to your room, kitchen or corridor from other households increases the risk of COVID-19 being transmitted among you and your friends. Until Tuesday 20 October, you will not be permitted to host visitors from other households in your room OR within the shared spaces (i.e. kitchen and corridor) of your household accommodation. We will review this rule following 20 October and will update you of any changes via email. Until we have more information about infection rates in Cambridge following the arrival of students, we must take a cautious approach to allowing visitors into student accommodation. We will review the situation on an ongoing basis, taking a progressive approach as soon as we can.

When we do allow visitors into students’ rooms again, we will provide further guidance around visitor behaviour.

Please note: when visitors are allowed in students’ rooms, we will not be permitting them to remain overnight (i.e. after midnight). We know this might come as a blow to some of you but we hope you
will understand that the College has made this decision for everyone’s safety. As with the general policy on visitors, we will review the situation on an ongoing basis.

**Can I socialise with friends from other households (including from other Colleges) anywhere in College?**

Provided you adhere to current social distancing guidelines, you are welcome to socialise with friends from other households in the College gardens - up to a maximum of six people (as per current government legislation). Even when socialising with other members of your household in the College gardens, we expect you to maintain social distancing at all times.

If you have a guest visiting from another College, you must meet them at the Porters’ Lodge. They must sign in when they arrive and sign out when they leave.

Please note: In the event that you do choose to gather in the College gardens with friends, you may be asked about the nature of that gathering by a Porter/Fellow/member of staff. This will be done in order to keep you and other members of the College/University community as safe as possible.

**Can I have guests from outside Cambridge visit me in College?**

For now, the College is not allowing visitors from outside Cambridge to visit students in their rooms or stay overnight. This rule is subject to change (in accordance with government guidelines) and the College will review the situation on an ongoing basis, taking a progressive approach where it can.

**Can I visit friends or family outside Cambridge?**

You should only stay with friends or family away from Cambridge if absolutely necessary. If you do plan a Term-time absence and you’re an undergraduate, please discuss this with your Tutor in advance.

**Testing**

**Can I get tested for COVID-19 if I don’t have any symptoms?**

Yes. The University is offering all undergraduate and postgraduate students living in College accommodation a weekly COVID-19 test, even if they show no symptoms. The test will be self-administered using a swab to take a sample from your nose and throat. Samples will be pooled by household enabling the University to reduce the number of samples analysed and make the programme manageable using limited testing capacity.

If any sample from a household confirms a positive test result, each member of that household will then be required to take a COVID-19 test.

For further details, please visit the #StaySafeCambridgeUni webpages.

**Do I have to get tested every week?**

If you are a student living in College accommodation, we strongly recommend you get tested for COVID-19 every week, even if you don’t have symptoms. This is because it is possible for people to
spread the virus and infect others even if they are unaware they have it themselves. By being tested regularly, you will help keep our community as safe as possible. For further details, please visit the #StaySafeCambridgeUni webpages.

Feeling unwell

What should I do if I have COVID-19 symptoms?

Symptoms of COVID-19 include:

- Fever
- Cough
- A loss or a change of your usual sense of smell/taste

If you develop one or more of these symptoms, you and all other members of your household must self-isolate in accordance with NHS guidance.

You must email or call the Porters’ Lodge if you believe you have symptoms of COVID-19 – do not go along in person.

You should then arrange a test immediately by:

- Calling Addenbrooke’s Hospital on 01223 216 767 (08:30-16:30 Monday to Thursday), stating that you wish to be tested as part of the University of Cambridge’s testing programme. If you develop symptoms out of hours, please request a test using the NHS website.
- Inform your Tutor and the Porters’ Lodge.
- Self-isolate until you receive further instructions from Addenbrooke’s Hospital.

The University will also offer a test even if you have only flu-like symptoms such as a sore throat or muscle aches. If your symptoms only include a sore throat or muscle aches, other members of your household do not need to self-isolate unless you subsequently test positive. You can find more information on testing on the #StaySafeCambridgeUni webpages.

What happens if I test positive for COVID-19?

If you test positive, you will be called by Addenbrooke’s Hospital and you must self-isolate in your accommodation for 10 days from the date upon which you first experienced symptoms. Everyone in your household group will be required to self-isolate for 14 days from that same date.

If you test positive, the College and your nominated self-isolation supporters will offer you support during your self-isolation period. Please refer to the College’s ‘Key Information for students in self-isolation’ document for further information.

Please also ensure that you are familiar with government advice on when to self-isolate or household isolate.
Behaviour outside College

Do I have to adhere to these guidelines outside of College?

These guidelines are specific to Murray Edwards College. However, many of the principles and requirements will be similar elsewhere within the University. All students are expected to adhere to the guidelines or rules outlined by individual Colleges, and Faculties and Departments while they are in their grounds or buildings.

Summary

After the significant restrictions of the last few months, returning students now have a wonderful opportunity to be among friends again while freshers have the chance to develop new friendships at College.

The guidelines in place are there to protect all of us and **we expect you to adhere to them**; breaching or violating these guidelines has the potential to cause great harm to others and put the student experience at risk. If the College has multiple households in self-isolation at any one time or if there is a local or national resurgence of COVID-19, we will have to put stricter measures in place in order to protect each other and the wider community.

It is up to each of us to create the community in which we want to live. With that in mind, we have been working hard (with the JCR and MCR) to provide you with imaginative, compassionate, realistic, and risk-minimised options for staying socially connected and intellectually stimulated throughout the coming academic year. This is a learning curve for all of us and we will continue to adapt as circumstances change throughout the coming months.