

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 23 September 2020 23:21  
**To:** [REDACTED]; David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Cc:** Macdonald R (Roddy) <[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED];  
[REDACTED] David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** FW: Covid Actions by Universities

[REDACTED], David

Cc: as above

Thanks for your time and advice tonight, here's what Gerry has sent to Richard Lochhead.

Keep me in touch with how consideration is going in SG and whether we can help further.

Best,

Alastair

**Alastair Sim**  
**Director, Universities Scotland**

[REDACTED]

[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)

**From:** Professor Gerry McCormac (Stirling) <[principal@stir.ac.uk](mailto:principal@stir.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 23 September 2020 23:06  
**To:** [MinisterFEHES@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterFEHES@gov.scot)  
**Cc:** Sally Mapstone ([principal@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:principal@st-andrews.ac.uk)) <[principal@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:principal@st-andrews.ac.uk)>;  
Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** Covid Actions by Universities

Dear Richard,

Thank you for discussing the management of coronavirus cases in the student population today. You asked what more the sector could do to manage the impact of the pandemic on the student population. I discussed that with my fellow Principals this evening.

University leaders share the Scottish Government's complete commitment to keeping the student population and the wider community safe. We have already implemented strict measures to ensure the safety of the university environment, both for teaching and for student residences. We have seen the majority of students live up to our expectations of responsible behaviour, but a minority have not. We share your concern at seeing students in residences test positive for the virus and will act decisively to deal with this.

The additional actions we will take to drive down the transmission of the virus in student accommodation are listed below. These build on the wide ranging measures already agreed with Scottish Government. Taken together, we are confident that these will help significantly to control the virus in student accommodation and impact on the number of positive cases; after the inevitable time-lag caused by some existing cases not yet being symptomatic

Additional actions agreed:

- All universities will make absolutely clear to students that there must be no parties, and no socialising outside their households – communicating and

reinforcing these messages on a regular basis using our full range of media channels. Breaches will not be tolerated.

- This weekend, the first of the new tighter Scottish Government guidance, we will require students to avoid all socialising outside of their households and outside of their accommodation. We will ask them not to go to bars or other hospitality venues. We will be clear that this is a necessary step at this crucial moment of managing the virus in the student population, to protect students and the wider community.
- We will increase the staff presence in student accommodation, to be vigilant against any breaches of guidance and also to offer welfare and practical support to students who are experiencing isolation.
- We will engage further with private providers of student accommodation, especially those with significant numbers of bedspaces, to follow our lead and strictly enforce guidance.
- We will intensify our institutions' liaison with Police Scotland, to ensure vigilance about student behaviour off-campus and in private accommodation.
- We will take a strict 'Yellow Card/ Red Card' approach to breaches of student discipline that put students and others at risk. While we first want to advise students about breaches of discipline, we will not hesitate to escalate this to disciplinary action including potential discontinuation of study.
- We will commit to further agile staff responses to immediately respond to cases, to help manage the pressures on the public health authorities.
- We will require all students to download the Protect Scotland app.

There are a handful of actions that we want to take together with Scottish Government:

- Clear joint communication from university leaders and Scottish Government about the critical importance of adhering to the 'no parties, no socialisation outside your household' rules, to protect students' safety and the safety of the people around them.
- Getting a clear message from Scottish Government to students to stay at university and benefit from the blend of digital and in-person learning. The public health risks of their dispersal back to homes around Scotland, the wider UK and beyond are far greater than keeping them in an environment where the risks are being actively managed. We are also concerned about student learning and welfare if students become dissociated from the in-person teaching that we are currently able to offer safely on-campus.
- Getting the testing regime up to full agility. Aspects of that include:
  - o Ensuring that HEIs have access to volumes of testing kits, integrated with Test and Protect, so that symptomatic students can be tested immediately. This will enable quick detection and management of clusters. We recognise that this relies on capacity from UK Government;
  - o Quick implementation of the programme for walk-through testing centres in major centres of student population. Where these have been established they have been a great help to having fast and accessible testing and quick action to contain the spread of the virus;

- Further consideration of the case for limited testing of asymptomatic students, e.g. students in residences close to other cases, again to enable the quickest possible action to manage any clusters.

As we discussed at our meeting, we won't see the full effect of existing or new safety measures immediately. Some students brought the virus with them to university, others caught it from the unauthorised socialisation that a minority of students engaged in when they arrived at university. That minority has now clearly been shocked by the risks that this highly infectious disease poses to themselves and to their wider community. They have also felt the strict self-isolation restrictions that have had to be imposed on them and their contacts. After the first week of the semester we have seen partying behaviour being stamped out, partly as students realise they have put themselves and others at risk and partly as enforcement activities are ramped up. However, the incubation period means that over the next fortnight numbers of students testing positive are likely to increase even though strict measures are in place.

I am very grateful for the Scottish Government's consistent support enabling students to benefit from a safe blended learning experience in this new academic year. I remain thoroughly convinced this is the right thing to do for students' learning and welfare. We will work closely with you to manage the current issue of students. I would be very happy to discuss further any of the actions we intend to take and can assure you that universities in Scotland are committed to working with you to limit the spread of this virus and to help society manage and recover from it.

Very best wishes,

Professor Gerry McCormac

Convener, Universities Scotland

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 14:10

**To:** Robb DT (David) <[David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot)>; Macdonald R (Roddy) <[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>

**Cc:** David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED] Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Subject:** FW: URGENT QUERY FOR MEDIA

David, Roddy

I think Jason Leitch has just answered his own question, below, but the general policy on whether to stay put at uni still needs articulated ( and I know you're on the case).

Alastair

**From:** Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 14:00

**To:** David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED] Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: URGENT QUERY FOR MEDIA

Jason Leitch has just tweeted: "Was asked last night whether students in halls and flats can go back to parents' homes. To clarify, they are a separate household. There are exceptions, eg caring responsibilities, but the law is clear: they can't meet indoors with another household – even mum and dad. Sorry."

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**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** Thursday, September 24, 2020 1:20:20 PM

**To:** Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: URGENT QUERY FOR MEDIA

We're now getting this question from multiple sources.

I think this needs confirmed by Scottish Government. Urgently. Who in SG should answer this? Someone from US needs to push for urgent clarity following Leitch's comments.

SG & us both need to be giving the same answer to this question – and by mid-afternoon – or it does start to look like there is chaos in HE.

**And we've put Nigel up for multiple interviews (for US) this afternoon so we need to give him the answer urgently.**

Susannah

**From:** Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 13:14

**To:** [REDACTED] Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Subject:** FW:

Any guidance on this welcome. It follows Jason Leitch's comments yesterday: *Prof Leitch has said students will be allowed to return to their family homes "but they should think hard about that".*

*"If you are not self-isolating and have no symptoms, you can go home for the holidays etc," he said. "But we would ask you to think carefully about that. We don't want too much spread - particularly from high areas to low areas. So maybe not as often as you normally would, but it's not illegal."*

**From:** Jamie McIvor [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 12:59

**To:** Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Subject:**

Can I just confirm...

Is there specific advice we can quote in this situation.

Can a student in halls who is not self-isolating return to their home address for now and work remotely?

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 24 September 2020 17:16  
**To:** Macdonald R (Roddy) <[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>; Robb DT (David) <[David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Director of Advanced Learning and Science <[DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED] Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** FW: PRESS RELEASE: Preventing spread of coronavirus

Here's our news release.  
Thanks for all your work today,  
Alastair

**From:** Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 24 September 2020 17:10  
**To:** Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** PRESS RELEASE: Preventing spread of coronavirus

**MEDIA RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE USE**

**Attention of:** education correspondents, news desks

**Preventing spread of coronavirus**

Following the outbreak of positive cases of coronavirus in student accommodation in parts of Scotland, university Principals met with the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, Richard Lochhead to discuss what further measures and messages could be emphasised to stop the spread of the virus.

Commenting after the meeting, Convener of Universities Scotland, Professor Gerry McCormac said:

*“University leaders share the Scottish Government’s complete commitment to keeping the student population and the wider community safe. We have already implemented strict measures to ensure the safety of the university environment, both for teaching and for student residences. We have seen the majority of students live up to our expectations of responsible behaviour, but a minority have not. Everyone across the nation shares the concern at seeing students in residences test positive for the virus and we will act decisively to deal with this.*

*“The additional actions we will take to drive down the transmission of the virus in student accommodation build on the wide-ranging measures already agreed with Scottish Government. Taken together, we are confident that these will help*

*significantly to control the virus in student accommodation and impact on the number of positive cases; after the inevitable time-lag caused by some existing cases not yet being symptomatic.*

*“Our top priority is making sure that students that have tested positive and those quarantining are well-supported and ready to return to their studies. We appreciate this isn’t what students would have expected from their first few weeks at university, but it is critical that they play their part in suppressing the virus.”*

The Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, Richard Lochhead MSP said:

*“This is a welcome package of additional actions, building on the clear guidance that is already in place, to support all students and staff adhere to the rules and stay safe as they make a welcome return to study. We expect everyone to comply with public health advice and, as new laws come into force tomorrow, it’s even more important institutions make every effort to ensure the rules are understood and followed - and appropriate actions are taken if not. We know that these are difficult times for many students and we are grateful to them for the sacrifices they are making to protect themselves, their fellow students and the wider community.”*

Universities have agreed that:

- All universities will make absolutely clear to students that there must be no parties, and no socialising outside their households – communicating and reinforcing these messages on a regular basis using our full range of media channels. Breaches will not be tolerated.
- This weekend, the first of the new tighter Scottish Government guidance, we will require students to avoid all socialising outside of their households and outside of their accommodation. We will ask them not to go to bars or other hospitality venues. We will be clear that this is a necessary step at this crucial moment of managing the virus in the student population, to protect students and the wider community.
- We will increase the staff presence in student accommodation, to be vigilant against any breaches of guidance and also to offer welfare and practical support to students who are experiencing isolation.
- We will engage further with private providers of student accommodation, especially those with significant numbers of bedspaces, to follow our lead and strictly enforce guidance.
- We will intensify our institutions’ liaison with Police Scotland, to ensure vigilance about student behaviour off-campus and in private accommodation.
- We will take a strict ‘Yellow Card/Red Card’ approach to breaches of student discipline that put students and others at risk. While we first want to advise students about breaches of discipline, we will not hesitate to escalate this to disciplinary action including potential discontinuation of study.
- We will commit to further agile staff responses to immediately respond to cases, to help manage the pressures on the public health authorities.

- We will require all students to download the Protect Scotland app.

Taking forward these actions we will work very closely with the students' association of each institution.

Every student who needs a test is able to get one. To further develop the testing system we will continue to work closely with the Scottish and UK Governments on the roll-out of walk-through testing centres in major centres of student population. Where these have been established, they have been a great help to having fast and accessible testing and quick action to contain the spread of the virus. We will be also in discussion with the UK and Scottish Governments about increased availability of home testing in universities.

**ENDS**

**For further information please contact:**

Duncan McKay, Senior Public Affairs and Communications Officer, Universities Scotland, **M: 07445 747 222** [duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)

Duncan McKay  
Senior Public Affairs and Communications Officer  
Universities Scotland  
Mobile: 07445 747 222



**From:** Robb DT (David) <David.Robb@gov.scot> **On Behalf Of** SAAS Chief Executive  
**Sent:** 24 September 2020 22:29  
**To:** 'Alastair Sim' <alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk>  
**Subject:** RE: US Coronavirus update 24 September/ discussion with First Minister tomorrow morning

Thanks Alastair – good luck tomorrow with FM ☐

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 24 September 2020 18:34

**To:** David Lott <david@universities-scotland.ac.uk>; Robb DT (David) <David.Robb@gov.scot>; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** ' Alan Smith' <A.Smith@rcs.ac.uk>; ' Alastair Merrill' <vpgov@st-andrews.ac.uk>; ' Clinton Grant ' <c.t.grant@rgu.ac.uk>; ' Colin Peebles' <Colin.Peebles@sruc.ac.uk>; ' David Cloy ' <D.Cloy@napier.ac.uk>; ' David Duncan ' <David.Duncan@glasgow.ac.uk>; ' Debbie Dyker ' <d.j.dyker@abdn.ac.uk>; ' Eileen Schofield ' <university.secretary@stir.ac.uk>; I.hancock <l.hancock@rgu.ac.uk>; ' Fiona Larg' <Fiona.Larg@uhi.ac.uk>; ' Irene Hynd' <ihynd@qmu.ac.uk>; ' Jim McGeorge' <j.mcgeorge@dundee.ac.uk>; ' Kate Signorini ' <kate.signorini@open.ac.uk>; L.Fitch <L.Fitch@rcs.ac.uk>; ' Scott Parsons ' <S.Parsons@gsa.ac.uk>; ' Sheena Stewart ' <s.stewart@abertay.ac.uk>; ' Sue Collier ' <S.Collier@hw.ac.uk>; ' Susan Mitchell' <Susan.Mitchell@gcu.ac.uk>; ' Veena O'Halloran ' <veena.o-halloran@strath.ac.uk>; 'Gavin Lee ' <gavin.lee@uws.ac.uk>; 'Sarah Smith' <s.j.smith@ed.ac.uk>; 'Sarah Smith' <University.Secretary@ed.ac.uk>; 'Jones, Julian D C' <J.Jones@hw.ac.uk>; Smith, Dr David R <davidsmith@abdn.ac.uk>; Craig Williamson <C.Williamson@gsa.ac.uk>

**Subject:** RE: US Coronavirus update 24 September/ discussion with First Minister tomorrow morning

Covid leads – the message below came to Principals but is of more direct relevance to you.

David (R) – see list above for the COVID leads when you want to contact them directly.

Alastair

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### **URGENT: To University & HEI Principals:**

We are very grateful to you for your rapid responses on Wednesday and for your participation in the helpful call with Mr Lochhead.

Those of you with students self-isolating will share our growing concern about the welfare of these students: families too are anxious and seeking reassurances. Questions about support for basic necessities (food, medicines) are arising and there are also questions about ICT connectivity, social isolation and mental health. There will also be different approaches between students in university accommodation and those in private accommodation or purpose-built student accommodation.

Mr Lochhead will host an information-gathering **call for Covid leads tomorrow morning at 11.30am** (details to follow) and hopes you can all be represented. We are sorry for the short notice, but you will appreciate the pace at which things are now moving.

Best regards,

David

**David Robb**

Chief Executive, Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)

***Informing Choices, Funding Futures, Supporting Success***

**From:** Alastair Sim

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 18:00

**To:** David Lott <david@universities-scotland.ac.uk>; 'Craig Mahoney' <principal@uws.ac.uk>; 'Craig Mahoney' <craig.mahoney@uws.ac.uk>; 'p.macbeth@gsa.ac.uk' <p.macbeth@gsa.ac.uk>; 'Pamela Gillies (pamela.gillies@gcu.ac.uk)' <pamela.gillies@gcu.ac.uk>; 'Parsons, Scott' <S.Parsons@gsa.ac.uk>; 'Peter Mathieson (principal@ed.ac.uk)' <principal@ed.ac.uk>; Principal <Principal@qmu.ac.uk>; 'Principal University of St. Andrews (principal@st-andrews.ac.uk)' <principal@st-andrews.ac.uk>; 'principal@dundee.ac.uk' <principal@dundee.ac.uk>; 'principal@stir.ac.uk' <principal@stir.ac.uk>; 'Professor Andrea Nolan' <a.nolan@napier.ac.uk>; 'Professor Crichton Lang' <Crichton.Lang@uhi.ac.uk>; boyne <boyne@abdn.ac.uk>; 'Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam' <I.McAra-McWilliam@gsa.ac.uk>; 'Anton Muscatelli (principal@gla.ac.uk)' <principal@gla.ac.uk>; 'Professor Jeffrey Sharkey' <j.sharkey@rcs.ac.uk>; 'Professor Nigel Seaton (n.seaton@abertay.ac.uk)' <n.seaton@abertay.ac.uk>; 'Professor Sir Jim McDonald' <principal@strath.ac.uk>; 'Professor sir Jim McDonald' <j.mcdonald@eee.strath.ac.uk>; wayne.powell <wayne.powell@sruc.ac.uk>; 'Richard A. Williams (r.a.williams@hw.ac.uk)' <r.a.williams@hw.ac.uk>; susan.stewart <susan.stewart@open.ac.uk>; 'Valerie Dorward' <v.a.dorward@dundee.ac.uk>; 'Alistair Jarvis' <alistair.jarvis@universitiesuk.ac.uk>; 'Amanda Wilkinson' <a.wilkinson@uniswales.ac.uk>; 'Chris Hale' <chris.hale@universitiesuk.ac.uk>; 'steve.olivier@rgu.ac.uk' <steve.olivier@rgu.ac.uk>  
**Cc:** US Staff <USStaff@universities-scotland.ac.uk>; ' Alan Smith' <A.Smith@rcs.ac.uk>; ' Alastair Merrill' <vpgov@st-andrews.ac.uk>; ' Clinton Grant ' <c.t.grant@rgu.ac.uk>; ' Colin Peebles' <Colin.Peebles@sruc.ac.uk>; ' David Cloy ' <D.Cloy@napier.ac.uk>; ' David Duncan ' <David.Duncan@glasgow.ac.uk>; ' Debbie Dyker ' <d.j.dyker@abdn.ac.uk>; ' Eileen Schofield ' <university.secretary@stir.ac.uk>; I.hancock <l.hancock@rgu.ac.uk>; ' Fiona Larg' <Fiona.Larg@uhi.ac.uk>; ' Irene Hynd' <ihynd@qmu.ac.uk>; ' Jim McGeorge' <j.mcgeorge@dundee.ac.uk>; ' Kate Signorini ' <kate.signorini@open.ac.uk>; L.Fitch <L.Fitch@rcs.ac.uk>; ' Scott Parsons ' <S.Parsons@gsa.ac.uk>; ' Sheena Stewart ' <s.stewart@abertay.ac.uk>; ' Sue Collier ' <S.Collier@hw.ac.uk>; ' Susan Mitchell ' <Susan.Mitchell@gcu.ac.uk>; ' Veena O'Halloran ' <veena.o-halloran@strath.ac.uk>; 'Gavin Lee ' <gavin.lee@uws.ac.uk>; 'Sarah Smith' <s.j.smith@ed.ac.uk>; 'Sarah Smith' <University.Secretary@ed.ac.uk>; 'Jones, Julian D C' <J.Jones@hw.ac.uk>; Smith, Dr David R <davidsmith@abdn.ac.uk>; Craig Williamson <C.Williamson@gsa.ac.uk>

**Subject:** US Coronavirus update 24 September/ discussion with First Minister tomorrow morning

Dear Principal

To update you on developments today, and to invite Principals to a discussion with the First Minister 10.30-11.00 tomorrow. **Please tell me by return whether you can make that.**

**Safe start to the academic year and meeting with First Minister**

Scottish Government have accepted the proposals US made last night as an effective response to the challenges of managing the coronavirus in student residences.

Richard Lochhead has just sent the following response to Gerry:

Dear Gerry,

Thank you for Universities Scotland's swift response to our meeting yesterday and for submitting the proposed package of measures. We would be supportive of your members taking forward a programme of action on this basis, commencing with some immediate messaging for the coming weekend, which we will support from our end – I think those wheels are already in motion. We are also happy to agree to work jointly with you on the areas you suggest, and I would offer the following immediate comments:

- Proactive support for the thousands of students now in self-isolation is a priority, and a public health concern in itself. Behavioural science tells us that building support for compliance should actively involve students themselves and we would like to work closely with you and student associations on this. Perhaps the list of measures could include a commitment from universities that they will use whatever forums they currently operate to agree with student representatives how they will work together over the rest of the term to ensure high levels of compliance?
- On testing, we are continuing to roll out a number of local test sites across Scotland, focussing initially on areas with high student populations. We have already seen sites open in St Andrews and Glasgow and two further sites in Aberdeen and Edinburgh due to open by the end of this week. This will be followed by sites in Stirling, Dundee, Inverness (and a second site in Glasgow) into early October. This is part of a rolling programme that will establish a further 14 sites (3 of which will be in October) across the country over the course of the winter.
- These sites will provide an additional route for students (and others) to access community testing across Scotland, in addition to the other established testing routes for symptomatic students in Scotland - via Regional Test Centres, Mobile Testing Units and Home Test kits. The ability to deploy Mobile Testing Unit's also allows Incident Management

Teams to supplement that broader testing capacity in outbreak situations – which has already happened across Scotland this week, with MTU's at university accommodation sites in Glasgow and Dundee.

- We are continuing to look at other ways in which we can enhance our current approach and access to testing, as set out in our published Testing Strategy (<https://www.gov.scot/news/scotlands-covid-19-testing-strategy/>) and will carefully consider the suggestions offered in your letter, particularly around the proposition for the supply of test kits to Universities themselves.
- Finally, it is important to highlight that the use of testing, in and of itself, does not reduce transmission. Adherence to FACTS, including well supported self-isolation to enable maximum compliance with the full self-isolation period, is key to rapid action to reduce transmission and the support of Universities Scotland (and individual Universities) in ensuring adherence to that approach is greatly appreciated.

You will understand of course that we need to keep open in the background the possibility that, if there continues to be very high levels of cases in certain parts of the student accommodation estate, then we might need to discuss whether those establishments need to close for a period of time. The situation is fast moving and we should review this in a week.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with the Principals on this pressing emergency.

Gerry has probed with officials what's meant by 'whether those establishments need to close for a period of time'. It's specific to whether certain student residences might need to be closed for a deep clean.

Universities Scotland has issued the attached news release about the agreed additional measures institutions are now taking.

You already have suggestions from Alastair Merrill, David Duncan and Jim McGeorge for communications to students, for your use or adaptation. We will set up a meeting next week to discuss any issues arising from it.

The FM wants to speak to Principals tomorrow in advance of her daily coronavirus briefing. While we expect her to thank members for stepping up to the challenge, we can also expect her to be clear that the sector needs to deliver on what it has undertaken to do.

## **Media**

Many thanks to Nigel for 3 media interviews today – it's great to be able to field a member, who can give a direct and authentic sense of how students are being supported. I've additionally covered Channel 4 news today, and we expect Mr Lochhead to appear in support of the sector's action on the main Scottish TV news channels.

Alastair

Alastair

**Alastair Sim**  
**Director, Universities Scotland**

[REDACTED]  
[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 25 September 2020 16:55  
**To:** Macdonald R (Roddy) <[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science <[DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot)>  
**Cc:** SAAS Chief Executive <[saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Advice on University actions please

Hi Roddy, here's our FAQs, let me know if there's any points of concern and we'll reflect on them in revising it, and in any case I hope they're useful to you.

Best,

Alastair

**From:** Alastair Sim  
**Sent:** 25 September 2020 16:36  
**To:** [Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot);  
[DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot)  
**Cc:** [saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot); [REDACTED] [REDACTED] David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: Advice on University actions please

Ok Susannah's on it, based on work done by Uni of Glasgow colleagues, should have that shortly.

Alastair

**From:** [Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot) <[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>  
**Sent:** 25 September 2020 16:33  
**To:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>;  
[DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot)  
**Cc:** [saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot); [REDACTED] [REDACTED] David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: Advice on University actions please

Alastair worth us seeing the FAQs first as just had hour on phone with Commissioner for Young People's office who had concerns such as position on the app (which FM clarified) and general concerns about punitive tone which could have effect on vulnerable students ie threat of police etc

Roddy

Dr Roddy Macdonald  
Head of Higher Education and Science Division  
Scottish Government Advanced Learning and Science Directorate  
5 Atlantic Quay  
Glasgow G2 8LU

[REDACTED]

PA/Divisonal Admin: [REDACTED]



**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 25 September 2020 16:05  
**To:** Director of Advanced Learning and Science  
<[DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot)>  
**Cc:** SAAS Chief Executive <[saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot)>; Macdonald R (Roddy)  
<[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] David Lott  
<[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: Advice on University actions please

Hi [REDACTED], non-compliance with the call voluntarily to avoid going to the pub this weekend wouldn't be a disciplinary matter.

FAQs on this and other issues are being finalised.

Best,

Alastair

**From:** [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of**  
[DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot)  
**Sent:** 25 September 2020 16:03  
**To:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Cc:** [saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot); [DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot);  
[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot); [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Advice on University actions please

Alistair

I wonder if you can assist. David Robb has asked that I get a view from US on the following

*To clarify the issue of unis using sanctions against students this weekend – will they not apply to this weekend because this is a voluntary ask or are they saying that if students go to a pub this weekend then there could be sanctions?*

You will be aware that there was considerable discussion around the ask of students this weekend and then also the use of disciplinary action at the FM briefing so we are just looking for some clarity on how the Universities will approach this over the weekend.

Thanks

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]



**From:** Robb DT (David) <[David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot)> **On Behalf Of** SAAS Chief Executive  
**Sent:** 24 September 2020 16:45  
**To:** 'Alastair Sim' <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** US package

Draft reply – being cleared now:

Dear Gerry,  
Thank you for Universities Scotland's swift response to our meeting yesterday and for submitting the proposed package of measures. We would be supportive of your members taking forward a programme of action on this basis, commencing with some immediate messaging for the coming weekend, which we will support from our end – I think those wheels are already in motion. We are also happy to agree to work jointly with you on the areas you suggest, and I would offer the following immediate comments:

- Proactive support for the thousands of students now in self-isolation is a priority, and a public health concern in itself. Behavioural science tells us that building support for compliance should actively involve students themselves and we would like to work closely with you and student associations on this. Perhaps the list of measures could include a commitment from universities that they will use whatever forums they currently operate to agree with student representatives how they will work together over the rest of the term to ensure high levels of compliance?
- On testing, we are continuing to roll out a number of local test sites across Scotland, focussing initially on areas with high student populations. We have already seen sites open in St Andrews and Glasgow and two further sites in Aberdeen and Edinburgh due to open by the end of this week. This will be followed by sites in Stirling, Dundee, Inverness (and a second site in Glasgow) into early October. This is part of a rolling programme that will establish a further 14 sites (3 of which will be in October) across the country over the course of the winter.
- These sites will provide an additional route for students (and others) to access community testing across Scotland, in addition to the other established testing routes for symptomatic students in Scotland - via Regional Test Centres, Mobile Testing Units and Home Test kits. The ability to deploy Mobile Testing Unit's also allows Incident Management Teams to supplement that broader testing capacity in outbreak situations – which has already happened across Scotland this week, with MTU's at university accommodation sites in Glasgow and Dundee.
- We are continuing to look at other ways in which we can enhance our current approach and access to testing, as set out in our published Testing Strategy (<https://www.gov.scot/news/scotlands-covid-19-testing-strategy/>) and will carefully consider the suggestions offered in your letter, particularly around the proposition for the supply of test kits to Universities themselves.
- Finally, it is important to highlight that the use of testing, in and of itself, does not reduce transmission. Adherence to FACTS, including well supported self-isolation to enable maximum compliance with the full self-isolation period, is key to rapid action to reduce transmission and the support of Universities Scotland (and individual Universities) in ensuring adherence to that approach is greatly appreciated.

You will understand of course that we need to keep open in the background the possibility that, if there continues to be very high levels of cases in certain parts of the student accommodation estate, then we might need to discuss whether those establishments need to close for a period of time. The situation is fast moving and we should review this in a week.

I look forward to continuing to work closely with the Principals on this pressing emergency.

**David Robb**

Chief Executive, Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)

***Informing Choices, Funding Futures, Supporting Success***

Due to the pandemic I am also currently working on Coronavirus Outbreak Management with colleagues in the Scottish Government Advanced Learning & Science Directorate

*I am working from home at the moment so please get in touch on [REDACTED] or by Skype. Please note that I'm sending this at a time that works for me: I'm not expecting a reply at a time that doesn't work for you.*



**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 23 September 2020 21:39

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: URGENT: COVID-19 CALL THIS AFTERNOON

Ok will do, thanks a lot.

Gerry will get the final version to Mr Lochhead

Alastair

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 23 September 2020 21:37

**To:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: URGENT: COVID-19 CALL THIS AFTERNOON

Alastair

Thanks. On immediate bum notes, the only immediate point I would offer is that SG can and will, I am sure, help in any way we can on testing kits but these come from the UK system and are not therefore in our direct gift. It may be useful to tweak the wording to somehow make clear that these come from that source.

Regards

[REDACTED]

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 23 September 2020 20:16  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: URGENT: COVID-19 CALL THIS AFTERNOON

[REDACTED]

Following up our conversation, here's our work in progress, subject to the usual agonies of getting words agreed by Principals but the ideas are what were discussed with them earlier.

As I said to David Robb, let me know if you see an obvious bum note.

Alastair

**From:** Alastair Sim  
**Sent:** 23 September 2020 20:05  
**To:** 'saasce@gov.scot' <[saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot)>  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT: COVID-19 CALL THIS AFTERNOON

Hi David, here's what I've drafted, it's still subject to drafting death by committee but the ideas were agreed by members this evening.

Hope it's helpful to see this now, and let me know if there's any nuance that would better hit the spot.

Alastair

**From:** [David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot) <[David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot)> **On Behalf Of** [saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot)  
**Sent:** 23 September 2020 19:30  
**To:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT: COVID-19 CALL THIS AFTERNOON

Hi – can you call me tonight?

D

[REDACTED]

**David Robb**

Chief Executive, Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)

***Informing Choices, Funding Futures, Supporting Success***

Due to the pandemic I am also currently working on Coronavirus Outbreak Management with colleagues in the Scottish Government Advanced Learning & Science Directorate

*I am working from home at the moment so please get in touch on [REDACTED] or by Skype. Please note that I'm sending this at a time that works for me: I'm not expecting a reply at a time that doesn't work for you.*



**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 23 September 2020 13:04  
**To:** Robb DT (David) <[David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot)>  
**Subject:** FW: URGENT: COVID-19 CALL THIS AFTERNOON  
**Importance:** High

David

Can you make sure I get the invite for this meeting please. I'll be the US staff participant (and I'm doing drivetime radio almost immediately afterwards).

Alastair

**From:** [David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot) <[David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot)> **On Behalf Of** [saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot)  
**Sent:** 23 September 2020 12:28  
**To:** [principal@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:principal@glasgow.ac.uk); [principal@uws.ac.uk](mailto:principal@uws.ac.uk); [principal@rcs.ac.uk](mailto:principal@rcs.ac.uk); [pamela.gillies@qcu.ac.uk](mailto:pamela.gillies@qcu.ac.uk); [principal@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:principal@dundee.ac.uk); [principal@ed.ac.uk](mailto:principal@ed.ac.uk); [pgrice@qmu.ac.uk](mailto:pgrice@qmu.ac.uk); [principal@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:principal@st-andrews.ac.uk); [principal@stir.ac.uk](mailto:principal@stir.ac.uk); [crichton.lang@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:crichton.lang@uhi.ac.uk); [boyne <boyne@abdn.ac.uk>](mailto:boyne@abdn.ac.uk); [j.harper@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:j.harper@rgu.ac.uk); [p.macbeth@gsa.ac.uk](mailto:p.macbeth@gsa.ac.uk); [n.seaton@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:n.seaton@abertay.ac.uk); [principal@strath.ac.uk](mailto:principal@strath.ac.uk); [wayne.powell <wayne.powell@sruc.ac.uk>](mailto:wayne.powell@sruc.ac.uk); [r.a.williams@hw.ac.uk](mailto:r.a.williams@hw.ac.uk); [principal@napier.ac.uk](mailto:principal@napier.ac.uk); [a.nolan@napier.ac.uk](mailto:a.nolan@napier.ac.uk); [susan.stewart <susan.stewart@open.ac.uk>](mailto:susan.stewart@susan.stewart@open.ac.uk); [martin.jones@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:martin.jones@uhi.ac.uk)  
**Cc:** [MinisterFEHES@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterFEHES@gov.scot); [DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot); [Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot); [Linda.Pooley@gov.scot](mailto:Linda.Pooley@gov.scot); [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [David Lott <david@universities-scotland.ac.uk>](mailto:David Lott <david@universities-scotland.ac.uk>); [kwatt@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:kwatt@sfc.ac.uk)  
**Subject:** URGENT: COVID-19 CALL THIS AFTERNOON  
**Importance:** High

**URGENT: To University & HEI Principals:**

Mr Lochhead and his Ministerial colleagues are very concerned about the rapid rise of cases amongst university students.

He will host a call this afternoon at 3.30pm (details to follow) and hopes you can all be present or represented.

We would also like to see **summary reports** from each HEI covering the effectiveness of the preparations made for the start of term and outlining what **additional steps** you may now be considering to deal with the spike. With apologies for the short notice, could these please reach me **by 4pm today**: urgent discussions about compliance options are underway.

Best regards,

David

**David Robb**

Chief Executive, Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)

***Informing Choices, Funding Futures, Supporting Success***

Due to the pandemic I am also currently working on Coronavirus Outbreak Management with colleagues in the Scottish Government Advanced Learning & Science Directorate

*I am working from home at the moment so please get in touch on [REDACTED] or by Skype. Please note that I'm sending this at a time that works for me: I'm not expecting a reply at a time that doesn't work for you.*



**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 20:10

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** FW: Restrictions on students

[REDACTED] – for info: Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland rather over-interpreting what we said.

Alastair

**From:** Alastair Sim

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 20:07

**To:** Nick Hobbs <[nick.hobbs@cypcs.org.uk](mailto:nick.hobbs@cypcs.org.uk)>; [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Restrictions on students

Dear Nick,

I will look forward to speaking with you on Monday, but for clarity all the universities are asking for is for students, for this weekend, voluntarily, to avoid pubs and hospitality venues, as part of measures to control the spread of the virus at this critical moment.

Nothing is being required of them beyond what is already required of citizens in general by the Scottish Government.

Best,

Alastair

**Alastair Sim**  
**Director, Universities Scotland**

[REDACTED]  
[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)

**From:** Nick Hobbs <[nick.hobbs@cypcs.org.uk](mailto:nick.hobbs@cypcs.org.uk)>  
**Sent:** 24 September 2020 19:58  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Restrictions on students

Dear [REDACTED]

Thanks for responding so quickly. I think it likely we will need more than half an hour though. We would like to discuss:

- The legal basis for the proposed restrictions
- The process through which they were decided on (including what level of consultation took place with students or their representatives, whether or not EQIAs or CRIAs were conducted)
- How the necessity and proportionality tests were addressed and considered in terms of human rights impact (for example what alternatives were considered by Universities Scotland and the Scottish Government)
- What mitigations are proposed to account for the human rights impacts, and particularly how vulnerable students will be supported
- How it is proposed the restrictions will be implemented and enforced

In advance of the meeting it would be helpful to see the full legal text of the restrictions and the date on which it is proposed they will be implemented.

Best wishes

**Nick Hobbs**  
Head of Advice and Investigations

Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland  
Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road  
Edinburgh  
EH7 4NS

Tel: 0131 346 5350 / 077 1240 4531

Young Persons' Freephone: 0800 019 1179

www.cypcs.org.uk



**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 19:41

**To:** Nick Hobbs <[nick.hobbs@cypcs.org.uk](mailto:nick.hobbs@cypcs.org.uk)>

**Cc:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Restrictions on students

Dear Mr Hobbs,

Alastair Sim, Director – Universities Scotland, has asked me to find a time to speak with you, week commencing Monday 28 September.

I can offer Monday 28 September at 16:00 – 16:30 p.m. via either Microsoft Teams or by phone call. Please advise which will suit you best, if via phone please advise the best number upon which to contact you.

Please also provide a couple of bullet points of the kind of questions that you would anticipate discussing with Alastair.

Many thanks in anticipation,  
[REDACTED]

***Please think about the environment before you print out this email.***

[REDACTED]

**PA to the Director**

Universities Scotland

Twitter: [@uni\\_scot](https://twitter.com/uni_scot)

***Universities Scotland staff are working from home for the foreseeable future.***

**From:** Nick Hobbs <[nick.hobbs@cypcs.org.uk](mailto:nick.hobbs@cypcs.org.uk)>

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 19:14

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Restrictions on students

Dear Alistair

We would welcome an urgent conversation with you about this story. We are concerned about the human rights implications for children.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-54285720>

**Nick Hobbs**

Head of Advice and Investigations

Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland  
Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road  
Edinburgh  
EH7 4NS

Tel: 0131 346 5350 / 077 1240 4531  
Young Persons' Freephone: 0800 019 1179

[www.cypcs.org.uk](http://www.cypcs.org.uk)



**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 25 September 2020 08:21

**To:** First Minister <[firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)>

**Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <[DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science <[MinisterFEHES@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterFEHES@gov.scot)>

**Subject:** RE: Phone call with University Principals and the First Minister

[REDACTED]

Also:

Gerry McCormac, Principal, University of Stirling.

If asked, he'll be happy as Convener of Universities Scotland to say a few introductory words about how university leaders are committed to addressing the issues around coronavirus in the student population.

Thanks

Alastair

**From:** Alastair Sim

**Sent:** 25 September 2020 07:58

**To:** [firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)

**Cc:** [DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot); [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [MinisterFEHES@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterFEHES@gov.scot)  
**Subject:** RE: Phone call with University Principals and the First Minister

Thanks [REDACTED]

I'm also now expecting:

Julian Jones (Deputy Principal, Heriot Watt University)

Pamela Gillies (Principal, Glasgow Caledonian University)

Steve Olivier (Principal, Robert Gordon University).

And at Universities Scotland level as well as myself Susannah Lane (Head of Public Affairs) will listen in and possibly David Lott (Deputy Director).

Many thanks,

Alastair

**From:** [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** [firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)  
**Sent:** 25 September 2020 07:54  
**To:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Cc:** [DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot); [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [MinisterFEHES@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterFEHES@gov.scot); [firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)  
**Subject:** RE: Phone call with University Principals and the First Minister

Morning Alistair,

Relevant dial-in details for passing to Principals below;

[REDACTED]

Grateful also if you could ask that participants are on the line circa 5 mins prior to 10.30 – I will also dial in early and do a quick roll call prior to the First Minister joining the call.

Thanks,  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** First Minister  
**Sent:** 24 September 2020 19:10  
**To:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; First Minister <[firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)>  
**Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <[DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Phone call with University Principals and the First Minister

Alastair,

Grateful to you for confirming this and the names so quickly.

We will issue the number and relevant passcodes first thing tomorrow. I would be really grateful if you were able to pass these on to the Principals please.

At this stage I don't think there is anything other than the general issues we are currently facing to be on the agenda but if that changes we will let you know as soon as possible tomorrow morning,

Many thanks again.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 18:58

**To:** First Minister <[firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)>

**Cc:** Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills <[DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Phone call with University Principals and the First Minister

Dear [REDACTED],

So far the following Principals have said they can participate at 10.30-11.00:

Sally Mapstone, St Andrews  
Paul Grice, Queen Margaret University  
Susan Stewart, Open University in Scotland  
Pater Mathieson, University of Edinburgh  
Jeff Sharkey, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland  
Craig Mahoney, University of the West of Scotland  
Andrea Nolan, Edinburgh Napier University  
Penny Macbeth, Glasgow School of Art  
Anton Muscatelli, University of Glasgow  
George Boyne, University of Aberdeen  
Crichton Lang, University of the Highland and Islands

Plus one Deputy Principal:

Veena O'Halloran, University of Strathclyde

I'd also like to take part.

We may get a few more, I'll let you know if we do.

If you give me the dial-in details do you want me to circulate them to the Universities Scotland participants?

Are there any particular agenda points you'd like me to alert members to, over and above the general issue of the challenges of managing the safe start of the academic year?

Many thanks for enabling this meeting,

Alastair

**From:** Alastair Sim

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 17:40

**To:** [firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)

**Cc:** [DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot); [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Phone call with University Principals and the First Minister

Thanks [REDACTED], I'm sure we'd get a good number of them to clear their diaries to speak with the FM at 10.30, I'll let you know as soon as I can this evening who's able to make that.

Please thank the FM for her support for the university sector through some challenging days.

Best,

Alastair

**Alastair Sim**

**Director, Universities Scotland**

[REDACTED]

[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)

**From:** [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** [firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot)

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 17:32

**To:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Cc:** [DFMCSE@gov.scot](mailto:DFMCSE@gov.scot); [firstminister@gov.scot](mailto:firstminister@gov.scot); [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Phone call with University Principals and the First Minister

Dear Alastair,

As discussed with [REDACTED], grateful if you could please confirm if it is at all possible for a call to take place tomorrow between the First Minister and the University Principals. Provisionally, the First Minister is able to make 10.30am although we could arrange a more convenient time in the afternoon if that is not feasible.

We appreciate that not all Principals will not be able to attend. Grateful if you could please confirm this is suitable and provide names of who will be on the call. We will then provide the dial in details.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards  
[REDACTED]

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 25 September 2020 13:57  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Thanks

[REDACTED],

Can you pass on Universities Scotland's thanks to the FM, please, she had to stand and take a lot of pressure just now on keeping universities open. It's much appreciated.

We're taking up a lot of media requests, so will get the same messages over.

Best,

Alastair

**Alastair Sim**  
**Director, Universities Scotland**

[REDACTED]  
[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)

**From:** Macdonald R (Roddy) <[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>  
**Sent:** 23 September 2020 17:19  
**To:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - US public response to rising positive cases of CV-19 in HE

Susannah thanks. Have shared in SG Roddy

Dr Roddy Macdonald  
Head of Higher Education and Science Division  
Scottish Government Advanced Learning and Science Directorate

5 Atlantic Quay  
Glasgow G2 8LU

[REDACTED]

PA/Divisonal Admin: [REDACTED]



**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 23 September 2020 16:45

**To:** Macdonald R (Roddy) <[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED]

**Cc:** Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]

**Subject:** FW: URGENT - US public response to rising positive cases of CV-19 in HE

Roddy, [REDACTED],

To share our statement which will issue for immediate use today. This has been cleared by the Convener and Vice Convener and will go in Convener's name so it can be quoted. See below.

We took the decision that we needed a statement following the read out from the Minister's meeting today and following statements from NUS and UCU today.

Our tone aims to convey compassion and caution but also aiming to calm things down and defend the prioritisation of some in-person access to education (HE) during the pandemic over other things.

This will issue in the next 10 mins or so after a quick proof read. You'll see it on our website and social media and we hope it will get picked up. Alastair doing various live & pre-record broadcast interviews this afternoon/evening.

Please do share this with the Minister & other colleagues in SG as relevant.

Best,

Susannah

## **Keeping our higher education community safe. Statement from Universities Scotland.**

Professor Gerry McCormac, Convener of Universities Scotland:

“There has been a number of positive cases of coronavirus linked to universities. We understand that this is concerning for the students, their loved ones and our wider communities so it is important to be clear, that the cases have been identified early, all students concerned are being supported to isolate by their institutions and, that universities’ outbreak management plans are in place and working effectively with local health protection teams.

“Universities are taking a very robust and cautious approach in the way they have started the academic year. There is meticulous application of the higher education guidelines by every university around the country and universities’ plans for the academic year have been developed and scrutinised by Scottish Government and public health experts. Close collaboration with Government and agencies continues. Testing is key and experience over recent days has shown that the walk-through test centres, created to enable more accessible and quicker testing close to university communities, has supported rapid identification of positive cases and helped containment.

“There has been no evidence that the positive cases in universities are linked to in-person teaching, which is a very tightly controlled environment. So far, the tracing process suggests that, just with the wider population, transmission is occurring in student residences, where students have been mixing households in breach of the rules. In the case of the first institutions to be affected, their experience is that the number of cases is now plateauing and that speaks to successful containment.

“We need every member of the university community to adhere to the rules and act in ways that keep themselves and each other safe. The exceptions make the news, but universities are reporting high levels of compliance with the requirements on physical distancing, hygiene measures and socialisation within the rules on households. We want to thank those students and reaffirm the continued need for this.

“We believe that it is very important, after experiencing months of disruption, that university students get the chance to continue their education. Some element of in-person contact with teaching and support staff is important to both student wellbeing and a satisfying educational experience. This will vary institution to institution and course to course, as appropriate, and this is the reason that the guidance for universities around “blended learning” cannot be as prescriptive as the guidance created for schools.

“We strongly agree with the Scottish Government’s view that access to education, at all levels, should be one of the priorities, second to public health, as we all seek to manage this pandemic and continue our lives as constructively as possible. Universities will continue to work very closely with the Scottish Government and

public health experts, as we have done for the last six months and will adapt, as needed, to changing guidelines and restrictions in the interests of keeping all of our communities safe.”

**ENDS**

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 17:20

**To:** [REDACTED]; Duncan McKay <duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk>; will.mcleish@collegesscotland.ac.uk; joanne.buchan@collegesscotland.ac.uk; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Walk in test centres - SG social post

Thanks [REDACTED].

I've added my other colleague, [REDACTED], to this info. We'll definitely share this on twitter tomorrow.

We have been citing the first 2 walk-through test centres in our media lines over today as helpful in facilitating swift testing & results and supporting rapid containment of the virus (which is what I hear from the institutions concerned). So we'll keep that up.

**From:** [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 24 September 2020 17:12

**To:** [REDACTED] Duncan McKay <[duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:duncan@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [will.mcleish@collegesscotland.ac.uk](mailto:will.mcleish@collegesscotland.ac.uk); [joanne.buchan@collegesscotland.ac.uk](mailto:joanne.buchan@collegesscotland.ac.uk); [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Walk in test centres - SG social post

Good afternoon,

I hope you are all well. Just to advise that the Scottish Government social team will be posting from @scotgov tomorrow at 10am to highlight the four walk through test centres in operation – these are St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen (opened today) and Edinburgh (opening tomorrow), please repost as appropriate.

Let me know if you require any further information.

Many thanks,  
[REDACTED]

**From:** Peter MATHIESON <principal@ed.ac.uk>

**Sent:** 23 September 2020 12:50

**To:** SAAS Chief Executive <saasce@gov.scot>; principal@glasgow.ac.uk; principal@uws.ac.uk; principal@rcs.ac.uk; pamelagillies@gcu.ac.uk; principal@dundee.ac.uk; pgrice@qmu.ac.uk; principal@st-andrews.ac.uk;

principal@stir.ac.uk; crichton.lang@uhi.ac.uk; boyne@abdn.ac.uk;  
j.harper@rgu.ac.uk; p.macbeth@gsa.ac.uk; n.seaton@abertay.ac.uk;  
principal@strath.ac.uk; Wayne.Powell <Wayne.Powell@sruc.ac.uk>;  
r.a.williams@hw.ac.uk; principal@napier.ac.uk; a.nolan@napier.ac.uk;  
susan.stewart@open.ac.uk; martin.jones@uhi.ac.uk

**Cc:** Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science  
<MinisterFEHES@gov.scot>; Director of Advanced Learning and Science  
<DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot>; Macdonald R (Roddy)  
<Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; Pooley L (Linda) Dr <Linda.Pooley@gov.scot>;  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]david@universities-  
scotland.ac.uk; kwatt <kwatt@sfc.ac.uk>; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: URGENT: COVID-19 CALL THIS AFTERNOON

David

I can join, please send joining instructions to [REDACTED]

Peter

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---

**From:** [David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot) <[David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot)> on behalf of  
[saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot) <[saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 23, 2020 12:28:25 PM  
**To:** [principal@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:principal@glasgow.ac.uk) <[principal@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:principal@glasgow.ac.uk)>; [principal@uws.ac.uk](mailto:principal@uws.ac.uk)  
<[principal@uws.ac.uk](mailto:principal@uws.ac.uk)>; [principal@rcs.ac.uk](mailto:principal@rcs.ac.uk) <[principal@rcs.ac.uk](mailto:principal@rcs.ac.uk)>;  
[pamela.gillies@qcu.ac.uk](mailto:pamela.gillies@qcu.ac.uk) <[pamela.gillies@qcu.ac.uk](mailto:pamela.gillies@qcu.ac.uk)>; [principal@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:principal@dundee.ac.uk)  
<[principal@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:principal@dundee.ac.uk)>; Peter MATHIESON <[principal@ed.ac.uk](mailto:principal@ed.ac.uk)>;  
[pgrice@gmu.ac.uk](mailto:pgrice@gmu.ac.uk) <[pgrice@gmu.ac.uk](mailto:pgrice@gmu.ac.uk)>; [principal@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:principal@st-andrews.ac.uk)  
<[principal@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:principal@st-andrews.ac.uk)>; [principal@stir.ac.uk](mailto:principal@stir.ac.uk) <[principal@stir.ac.uk](mailto:principal@stir.ac.uk)>;  
[crichton.lang@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:crichton.lang@uhi.ac.uk) <[crichton.lang@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:crichton.lang@uhi.ac.uk)>; [boyne@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:boyne@abdn.ac.uk)  
<[boyne@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:boyne@abdn.ac.uk)>; [j.harper@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:j.harper@rgu.ac.uk) <[j.harper@rgu.ac.uk](mailto:j.harper@rgu.ac.uk)>;  
[p.macbeth@gsa.ac.uk](mailto:p.macbeth@gsa.ac.uk) <[p.macbeth@gsa.ac.uk](mailto:p.macbeth@gsa.ac.uk)>; [n.seaton@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:n.seaton@abertay.ac.uk)  
<[n.seaton@abertay.ac.uk](mailto:n.seaton@abertay.ac.uk)>; [principal@strath.ac.uk](mailto:principal@strath.ac.uk) <[principal@strath.ac.uk](mailto:principal@strath.ac.uk)>;  
Wayne.Powell <[Wayne.Powell@sruc.ac.uk](mailto:Wayne.Powell@sruc.ac.uk)>; [r.a.williams@hw.ac.uk](mailto:r.a.williams@hw.ac.uk)  
<[r.a.williams@hw.ac.uk](mailto:r.a.williams@hw.ac.uk)>; [principal@napier.ac.uk](mailto:principal@napier.ac.uk) <[principal@napier.ac.uk](mailto:principal@napier.ac.uk)>;  
[a.nolan@napier.ac.uk](mailto:a.nolan@napier.ac.uk) <[a.nolan@napier.ac.uk](mailto:a.nolan@napier.ac.uk)>; [susan.stewart@open.ac.uk](mailto:susan.stewart@open.ac.uk)  
<[susan.stewart@open.ac.uk](mailto:susan.stewart@open.ac.uk)>; [martin.jones@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:martin.jones@uhi.ac.uk) <[martin.jones@uhi.ac.uk](mailto:martin.jones@uhi.ac.uk)>  
**Cc:** [MinisterFEHES@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterFEHES@gov.scot) <[MinisterFEHES@gov.scot](mailto:MinisterFEHES@gov.scot)>;  
[DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot)  
<[DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot](mailto:DirectorofAdvancedLearningandScience@gov.scot)>; [Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)  
<[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>; [Linda.Pooley@gov.scot](mailto:Linda.Pooley@gov.scot) <[Linda.Pooley@gov.scot](mailto:Linda.Pooley@gov.scot)>;  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]david@universities-  
scotland.ac.uk <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; kwatt <[kwatt@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:kwatt@sfc.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** URGENT: COVID-19 CALL THIS AFTERNOON

### **URGENT: To University & HEI Principals:**

Mr Lochhead and his Ministerial colleagues are very concerned about the rapid rise of cases amongst university students.

He will host a call this afternoon at 3.30pm (details to follow) and hopes you can all be present or represented.

We would also like to see **summary reports** from each HEI covering the effectiveness of the preparations made for the start of term and outlining what **additional steps** you may now be considering to deal with the spike. With apologies for the short notice, could these please reach me **by 4pm today**: urgent discussions about compliance options are underway.

Best regards,

David

**David Robb**

Chief Executive, Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)

***Informing Choices, Funding Futures, Supporting Success***

**From:** Alastair Sim <alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk>

**Sent:** 21 September 2020 13:13

**To:** [REDACTED]; David Lott <david@universities-scotland.ac.uk>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

Hi [REDACTED], you'll see I've sent an invitation to selected Principals and COVID leads and asked them to come back to you directly to say whether they can be there.

I'll be there too if you can send me the Zoom link when it's available.

Thanks

Alastair

**Alastair Sim**

**Director, Universities Scotland**

[REDACTED]

[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 21 September 2020 12:23

**To:** [REDACTED]; David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Cc:** [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Re: URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

Hi [REDACTED], who in the Scottish Govt is the discussion with?

Alastair

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---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 21, 2020 12:10:11 PM  
**To:** David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

David/Alastair,

Hope you are both well.

I am just getting in touch with an urgent request to meet with the Scottish Government to discuss the latest COVID-19 developments. I have managed to secure some time **from 11:30-12:15 tomorrow**. I'd be really grateful if you both would be able to accommodate this and attend the meeting along with one or two Principals/Chairs.

Apologies for the urgency on this, we will be hosting the meeting on Zoom and I will share all details with you as soon as available.

Happy to discuss if helpful.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 21 September 2020 12:24  
**To:** 'Alastair Sim' <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]; David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

Hi Alastair, it's with Roddy and David Robb, as well as [REDACTED]and myself.

[REDACTED]

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 21 September 2020 12:23  
**To:** [REDACTED]; David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

Hi [REDACTED], who in the Scottish Govt is the discussion with?  
Alastair

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---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 21, 2020 12:10:11 PM  
**To:** David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

David/Alastair,

Hope you are both well.

I am just getting in touch with an urgent request to meet with the Scottish Government to discuss the latest COVID-19 developments. I have managed to secure some time **from 11:30-12:15 tomorrow**. I'd be really grateful if you both would be able to accommodate this and attend the meeting along with one or two Principals/Chairs.

Apologies for the urgency on this, we will be hosting the meeting on Zoom and I will share all details with you as soon as available.

Happy to discuss if helpful.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

**From:** David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 21 September 2020 12:43  
**To:** [REDACTED]Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

Colleagues

Can I just check. Is this to pick up on the issues in my email of Friday?

I assume that you will also want to pick up on any developments in broader public health guidance.

I ask whether it's to pick up on the issues in my email as, if so, I can ask sector colleagues just now for stronger illustrations of the challenges and possible solutions.

Regards  
David

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---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 21, 2020 12:34:09 PM

**To:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]; David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

Thanks, Alastair.  
[REDACTED]

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 21 September 2020 12:28  
**To:** [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** Re: URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

Ok we'll round up a posse and let you know who we have.  
Alastair

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---

**From:** [REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 21, 2020 12:24:06 PM  
**To:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]; David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Subject:** RE: URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

Hi Alastair, it's with Roddy and David Robb, as well as [REDACTED]and myself.

[REDACTED]

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Sent:** 21 September 2020 12:23  
**To:** [REDACTED]David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Re: URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

Hi [REDACTED], who in the Scottish Govt is the discussion with?  
Alastair

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---

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, September 21, 2020 12:10:11 PM  
**To:** David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** URGENT - Meeting to discuss latest COVID-19 developments

David/Alastair,

Hope you are both well.

I am just getting in touch with an urgent request to meet with the Scottish Government to discuss the latest COVID-19 developments. I have managed to secure some time **from 11:30-12:15 tomorrow**. I'd be really grateful if you both would be able to accommodate this and attend the meeting along with one or two Principals/Chairs.

Apologies for the urgency on this, we will be hosting the meeting on Zoom and I will share all details with you as soon as available.

Happy to discuss if helpful.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED]

**From:** David Lott <david@universities-scotland.ac.uk>

**Sent:** 19 September 2020 19:04

**To:** SAAS Chief Executive <saasce@gov.scot>; Alastair Sim <alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk>

**Cc:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] J.McGeorge@dundee.ac.uk; Macdonald R (Roddy) <Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**Subject:** Re: urgent: discussion on practical issues re. testing and public health response to cases

Thanks David

Just let us know when suits.

Regards

David

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**From:** [David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot) <[David.Robb@gov.scot](mailto:David.Robb@gov.scot)> on behalf of [saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot) <[saasce@gov.scot](mailto:saasce@gov.scot)>

**Sent:** Saturday, September 19, 2020 10:38:15 AM

**To:** David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Cc:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]; [J.McGeorge@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:J.McGeorge@dundee.ac.uk) <[J.McGeorge@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:J.McGeorge@dundee.ac.uk)>; [Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot) <[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: urgent: discussion on practical issues re. testing and public health response to cases

Hi David,

Sorry not to have replied sooner – yesterday got a bit frantic. The worsening situation at Napier is a concern: we are aware of small numbers of cases in three other universities.

Your concerns reinforce points already made to us by individual institutions and they have been relayed to public health colleagues, who are well aware of the current challenges around testing.

However we'd be glad to discuss early next week – I will explore the possibilities with testing colleagues: Monday is a holiday for most folk here too.

Best regards,

David

**David Robb**

Chief Executive, Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS)

***Informing Choices, Funding Futures, Supporting Success***

**From:** Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 18 September 2020 15:19

**To:** David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; Macdonald R (Roddy) <[Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot)>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Jim McGeorge (Staff) <[J.McGeorge@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:J.McGeorge@dundee.ac.uk)>

**Subject:** RE: urgent: discussion on practical issues re. testing and public health response to cases

Thanks David,

For info, when I was interviewed just now for BBC's Sunday Politics Scotland I was asked what we'd like to see improved, and I mentioned the need to get the walk-through centres up and running and speed of getting results back from testing (which seems a bit inconsistent at the moment).

Alastair

**From:** David Lott <[david@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:david@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>

**Sent:** 18 September 2020 15:14

**To:** [Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot](mailto:Roddy.Macdonald@gov.scot); [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

**Cc:** [REDACTED] Alastair Sim <[alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk](mailto:alastair@universities-scotland.ac.uk)>; [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]; Jim McGeorge (Staff) <[J.McGeorge@dundee.ac.uk](mailto:J.McGeorge@dundee.ac.uk)>

**Subject:** urgent: discussion on practical issues re. testing and public health response to cases

Colleagues

I am writing to raise some urgent practical issues re. testing and public health response to cases on campus that have arisen in our meeting of University Secretaries / Chief Operating officers this morning. It would be good if we could get an early discussion to consider some actions.

I should say that the issues below are highlighted in the context of a broader view from sector colleagues that things are proceeding well. The balance of encouragement and enforcement re behaviours appears to be effective and where we have had cases to date the systems seem to be operating well. The issues below are practical ones that arise both from the circumstances of being a student and from the distinctiveness of the university community more broadly. They mean that broader public health systems might need slight adaptation to be as effective as possible.

## 1. Access to tests

It would be very helpful if we could revisit the inclusion of universities in the satellite system such that they can hold a number of tests and disperse them promptly for **symptomatic** testing only if needed and arrange for their dispatch. We don't feel this needs to be a 'mass system' and of course the eventual opening of 'walk in' centres will remove the need in many places. However, in the interim and for those places where there will not be a 'walk in' centre, we feel that institutions having immediate access to a limited number of tests would be hugely beneficial. This is because experience to date is suggesting:

- students do not have access to private transport, nor very often to relatives nearby with transport. We are finding that even where institutions seek to book taxis to take students to testing centres those taxis for understandable reasons are declining those bookings.
- The pace of access to a test (and result) is particularly important for the student population as they are in 'households' that are distinct from elsewhere in society. We are pleased that students are coming forward when they feel that they have symptoms but you can see a clear disincentive to do so when it means that your housemates – who very often you have only just met – will as a result be required to isolate, perhaps for many days. It was notable that colleagues at the accommodation workshop yesterday said that some who have come forward with symptoms are feeling that they are 'social pariahs' and a similar anxiety was noted in a student mental health group yesterday. Institutions are doing all that they can to support individuals but the importance of speed of testing to minimise the period of perhaps unnecessary isolation is particularly acute.

## 2. Public health response to cases / outbreaks

We have of course had a couple of incidences of cases on campus and David Robb was very positive in reporting on the process at Napier when asked during the accommodation workshop yesterday. Its early days but we feel that it would be good to have an early chat now about lessons learned to date. We feel that these centre on communications and speed of action. Public Health colleagues have been really prompt, remarkably so given how stretched they must be. However, the cases to date have served to illustrate how the close-knit campus community means that there is a premium on extremely swift comms and action because wider social media networks flourish and act beyond institutions' control. We feel it would be beneficial to get a mutual understanding of how institutions will often have to act in the very immediate term in advance of meetings with public health. Relatedly, members have

flagged that it would be good to chat through the data protection implications of local management of outbreaks.

Could we liaise on a time or times to chat about the above? We have a local holiday on Monday but happy to interrupt that if its possible to convene that swiftly. I would look to get a couple of sector expert contributors to inform discussions.

I am cc'ing this email to Jim McGeorge who is University Secretary at Dundee and convenes our University Secretary Group

Regards  
David