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Dear Georgia

International student support at the University of Bristol

Thank you for your email to the Vice-Chancellor on 30 September. Professor Brady asked that I respond on his behalf.

Firstly, I fully appreciate this is a difficult time and many students, both international and domestic, have a range of concerns relating to COVID-19.

Throughout the pandemic, the University's top priorities have been the quality of our educational offer and the health and wellbeing of our students and staff.

We recognise the typical student experience will be different this year, certainly this term. However, our core curriculum remains in place and we are determined to continue providing engaging and evidence-led teaching and pastoral support of the highest quality – whether that is delivered face-to-face or online.

International student fees

International student fees vary depending on the programme. However, it is important to recognise that these fees are internationally competitive and cover all aspects of the provision to students, not just the cost of face-to-face teaching.

They are also based on the delivery of the overall learning outcomes for students in any given programme. We are confident that the flexible education and support environment developed by our expert staff will preserve those learning outcomes, no matter the method of learning and teaching used

International Hardship Fund

We ask that any student experiencing financial difficulties as a result of coronavirus talk to us in the first instance. We keep the demand for all student hardship and emergency support (including as it related to COVID-19) under constant review and will propose additional measures if deemed necessary.

Our Student Funding Office gives advice on scholarships, emergency short-term loans, the cost of living and on budgeting of finances. If a student is in financial difficulty, we will try to agree a payment plan with them that they can afford.

I note the University is investing £1.75 million in international scholarships for 2021 entry to help the brightest and best overseas students study at our University.

Communication between the university and international students

We recognise that accessible and targeted information and advice are fundamental to supporting international students during the pandemic. However, ahead of the new academic year, it was very difficult for the University (indeed, for all universities) to provide exact information about the specific composition of our blended learning offering. This was because it was unclear exactly what public health requirements the UK government would impose on universities in terms of, for instance, social distancing.

As an example, our ability to plan for the safe and appropriate use of our teaching spaces was clearly impacted by the difference between 2 metres social distancing and 1m+. This had a direct knock-on effect on timetabling.

We have done our very best to provide as accurate and up-to-date information as possible, but we trust that our students understand how complex the operating environment is, and that our absolute priority has been to put the safety of our staff and students first.

Continued support

I am pleased you feel many of our interventions to support international students have been positive. We continue to offer [dedicated international student support](#).

If any student finds themselves struggling in any way, I encourage them to contact their personal tutor. They can also access wellbeing support, academic support, and a host of other resources [here](#).

International students are indeed an integral part of our University community and this is a worrying and difficult time. The coronavirus pandemic has affected nearly every aspects of university life and study. However, we are determined to continue providing all our students with the highest quality of teaching and support.

I hope this response has helped to address the concerns you highlight. Let's stay in touch in the coming weeks and months as we all try to navigate this incredibly difficult situation.

With best wishes,



Dr Erik Lithander
Pro Vice-Chancellor & Vice-President
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