

CYPE(5)-24-20 – Paper to note 4

Response from University of Wales Trinity Saint David

▪ **The COVID-19 measures you have taken in relation to your own accommodation, and how you have worked with Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSAs) and private landlords (NB please refer to arrangements for both term and vacation periods);**

UWTSD Accommodation

The University treats individual flats as households, and where permissible, students to form household bubbles with up to two other flats. This is currently not permitted given the 'Rule of six'. These household bubbles will be agreed by all members of the bubbles and list will be kept by accommodation services when the restrictions allow us to offer this. Visitors/overnight guests from outside the bubble are not allowed to enter the flat. There are outdoor spaces for students to safely socialise while maintaining social distancing. These are indicated to students on arrival.

Mandatory safety and Covid-awareness resources (e.g. video, unit on Moodle) were included as part of induction and welcome; a pulse survey held two weeks following induction checked the level of awareness amongst students to see whether additional campaigns were needed. Changes to advice and guidance for residential students are communicated via posters in kitchens, and communal areas and updates on changes to advice or guidance are communicated via email, Social Media, the Student Bulletin and the Hwb (our single point of contact for students).

All flats were provided with an initial cleaning pack, and it is the flat's responsibility to ensure the kitchen, communal and personal areas are kept clean. Site Operatives attend each flat once a week to conduct compliance checks and whilst there will check on the cleanliness of the kitchen and communal areas and report any issues to the Accommodation Team. At induction, students were able to opt into a weekly welfare check with Operation staff and many have taken up this offer.

Students have been given detailed guidance in relation to mid-term / reading week and vacation periods and the arrangements outlined above are in place both during and outside term. Clear expectations in relation to behaviour are outlined in our new Student Code of Conduct which includes a specific section covering Covid-19. The Student Code of Conduct was created with the Students' Union with a focus on supporting the university and local community.

Non-UWTSD Accommodation

We have worked with Purpose Built Student Accommodation providers (e.g. Student Roost in Swansea) in relation to a support agreement. We support these students in the same way that we would a student in private rented accommodation with the added layer of liaison with the provider. We continue to enhance this relationship in order that the provider has means to use the University's Code of Conduct Policy should there be a specific issue with a UWTSD student.

For our students in non-UWTSD accommodation, we provide bespoke advice, guidance and support depending on the individual's circumstances. The process begins with an initial call to provide guidance and to understand the support needs of the student. We offer advice on how to get food and shopping while isolating, how to access medical prescriptions, and information about our hardship fund. We may also organise regular online or phone catch up sessions to check in if appropriate to do so.

We are developing a volunteering scheme in place to enable staff and students to offer practical support in a safe and responsible manner to those who need it (e.g. picking up a 'click and collect' food order on behalf of someone who is self-isolating).

Our Student Code of Conduct covers explicitly behaviour in the community and the University proactively works together with other education providers (e.g. Swansea University) and the police in relation to any breaches in the community.

▪ How you intend to support – or have been supporting – all students (on and off-campus) who have needed to self-isolate, including how you would support large numbers self-isolating at the same time in a dignified manner (i.e. the provision of food and drink that meets dietary requirements, medicine, mental health support and other essentials);

- All students have also been sent information re key things to do (including emergency contact, GP registration, mobile phone number for emergency alerts, self-reporting form)
- Our 24/7 student self-reporting system updates key staff at least daily (8am) on the number of students self-isolating and/or symptomatic, with further updates if needed during the day. If a student tests positive, immediate contact is made with key staff so that students can be fully supported from the start.
- We have also communicated key messages to parents (video, family bulletin) so that parents are reassured about the care and support from the University.

Students on Campus at UWTSO

- Dedicated student communication has been sent out to residential students outlining what support the University will be able to provide in case students need to self-isolate, this covers provision of food, medication, laundry (provision of additional linen and towels), post and deliveries, rubbish, welfare and support needs etc.
- International students that were required to self-isolate in addition been fully supported by staff from our International unit.
- When residential students are asked to self-isolate or inform us that they are self-isolating, each household is contacted via Microsoft Teams to identify support needs at the beginning of the isolation period and a contact schedule is agreed to ensure that we check their practical needs as well as their wellbeing. This includes checking for any dietary needs.
- Students with repeat prescription needs are advised of local pharmacy delivery services.
- Spaces have been provided for students who become symptomatic while on campus and who cannot immediately return safely to their residence, so that they can isolate safely until arrangements for them to return to their residence have been made.
- All students have access to a 24/7 online support platform (TogetherAll) in addition to the support provided by Student Services.
- A dedicated student communication has been sent out to students in private halls of residences and with private landlords outlining what support the University will be able to provide them in case they need to self-isolate. The University is working on developing a volunteer framework to enhance support for the needs of those students

▪ The provision you have in place for identifying and addressing student hardship.

- A small committee meets regularly to assess all applications to the hardship fund which is available to all students. Advice for managing money is available to students through Student Services.

▪ Your approach to working with students on COVID-19 measures and actions, including self-isolation;

- The University works closely with the SU in creating communications and in deciding measures. The SU has been fully integrated within the University's decision and intervention framework.

- As outlined above the University is working with the SU in setting up a volunteer framework to support students in self-isolation, especially those in private accommodation.
- The University is working in partnership with the SU in relation to a student project in relation to blended learning. This project was started during induction and entails focused work with student representatives. to create resources for students on how to make the most of the blended learning experience. The university and SU met with QAA and explained this project, which they have asked for us to share a case study for it to be highlighted as best practice to other institutions.
- The Students' Union is also supporting the university in advertising its wellbeing services through several short videos. This shared approach exemplifies our commitment to student wellbeing, especially during COVID-19
- Planning for the new academic year included a Welcome & Induction Project Group. This group focused on delivering a welcome to students to explain what changes were being made for their safety. The SU was a major part of this project providing ongoing feedback of what student expectations were and how to respond to these expectations with appropriate safety measures.

▪ **How you are working and integrating with the public health and civil contingencies machinery within your local authorities and local resilience fora (to include confirmation of whether you have on-campus testing facilities for students);**

- The Registrar and Provosts have been engaging with the two Health Boards, Hywel Dda and ABMU, which serve the University's principal campuses located in Lampeter, Carmarthen, and Swansea. This engagement has focused on local TTP arrangements as well as information on accessing other key related services, such as mental health support.
- In addition, there has been positive and very helpful engagement with Public Health Wales in Aberystwyth, Carmarthen, and Swansea.
- The University has also established links with the three local Authorities in order to support the TTP service.
- The Lampeter and Carmarthen campuses have been reviewed by Environmental Health and the University's plans and practical arrangements on site have been commended.
- The University is an active participant in the regional planning and communications for a, such as the Dyfed Powys Regional Recovery Group.
- The University does not have any plans for local testing facilities and is following PHW advice and guidance, which discourages blanket asymptomatic testing. The University has confirmed that it will make facilities available if PHW and the NHS need to establish further testing sites, and especially in Lampeter.

▪ **How you have engaged – and are engaging – with the local population, in particular where you have campuses in rural local authorities;**

The Vice-Chancellor and campus Provosts have been engaging with local authority leaders. Colleagues including the campus Provosts are represented on local groups including local resilience forums and communications cells. We have held meetings with our local authority officers to ensure a coordinated approach and to ensure that they are fully aware of the measures that we have taken to safeguard local communities. We have also communicated with county and town councillors, local MS and MP to outline our arrangements for the return of students to campus and published messages aimed at the local communities (e.g. on our website, videos, local press). We have an online breaches of conduct form that allows members of the local community to report any behaviour in the community that they are concerned about.

- Any recommendations you believe the Committee could helpfully make to the Welsh Government to improve support for universities, staff and students.

Positive message about students in the community and the value students bring. The image created by the media currently focuses very much on breaches of conduct by students. Most students are adhering fully to the measures, are studying within a challenging context, and contribute positively to society in a number of ways.

There are exemptions made in England for British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) Return to Play in relation to the 'Rule of 6', however these exemptions are yet to be available in Wales. To ensure that our students are fully able to partake in activities that enhance their wellbeing a similar exemption for student activity would be welcomed.

We would suggest that further consideration should be given to asymptomatic 'reassurance' testing, and especially for students returning home or back to campus after returning home. We believe that this could be managed within the context of PHW reservations, i.e. that it could discourage compliance with the Covid core management guidelines, by emphasising that this is no substitute for adherence to the guidelines and rules. This could reassure local communities. And if we are doing this to respond to international requirements for national returning home, then why are we not doing it for UK citizens? It would also be consistent with current considerations regarding an extension of quarantine regulations.