

CYPE(5)-24-20 - Paper to note 8



SENEDD RESPONSE FROM ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY – 7 OCTOBER 2020

- **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);**

We have ensured full and detailed safety measures across our own accommodation and frequent communications with our students about safe behaviours. Many of our accommodation blocks are relatively small which makes it easier to self-isolate groups of students without affecting large cohorts of learners. Students have the option of remaining in our accommodation across normal holiday periods if they prefer. Further details are noted below:

- *Arrangements for students moving in with us was extended over a much longer period than usual, to allow for social distancing and self-isolating*
 - *Specific arrangements have been made for international students arriving from countries and regions identified by Welsh Government as having high rates of infection to self-isolate for 14 days – Accommodation is provided free of charge and includes a welcome pack of food and toiletries, bed linen, towels and one hot meal per day. This provision is for students living in AU managed accommodation and private landlords.*
 - *Students were provided with clear communications to ensure that social distancing guidelines were adhered to during the process of moving their belongings into buildings.*
 - *The University issued a clear instruction to UK students that they should not travel to Aberystwyth if they are self-isolating or have symptoms.*
 - *Students were advised to maintain social distancing, within their new households, for the initial period of moving in together.*
 - *All kitchens and bathrooms in AU accommodation have a cleaning ‘starter’ pack, to remind students of the importance of keeping these areas sanitised.*
 - *The University has introduced a click & collect service for COVID tests and food supplies, for those students who have been advised to self-isolate.*
 - *A 12hr helpdesk has been set up to assist students with queries on COVID related issues.*
 - *The University is collaborating with the local authority housing department, to ensure private landlords, are kept informed and reminded of their duty of care, to their tenants during this pandemic.*
- **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);**

We already have small clusters of students both in University and private accommodation who need to self-isolate. We have ensured they have access to both shopping and hot food delivered to them safely. All these students receive welfare checks to ensure they have any medicines they need and support their mental health needs. In very exceptional circumstances, and in agreement with PH Wales, we would allow them to return home temporarily.

- **the provision you have in place for identifying and addressing student hardship;**

Students who find themselves in short or long term hardship can make an application to the University's Hardship Fund. We also support students by providing food vouchers in appropriate circumstances.

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

All our students are regularly reminded of the steps to take if they display COVID symptoms. We have a 7 day a week helpline and a fast workflow that enables students to be tested quickly (including recently the installation of a mobile testing unit close to campus), We know the process works well as we have had many reported cases that have been tested negative. Where we are advised of symptoms we [proactively work with the students and their household to achieve self isolation whilst they are awaiting test results

- **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);**

We are part of a joint Incident Management Team (IMT) with the health board, County Council, police, and PH Wales. We meet daily and the IMT reports to Welsh Government. We are using the IMT test and trace data and local intelligence to make informed decisions and take appropriate actions. The IMT have commended our extensive steps to make our campus safe for teaching/research and have detailed information on our teaching plans for blended learning. This ensures we only have a portion of the student cohort on campus at any one time. So far our joint actions have kept cases in limited clusters. Additional testing facilities for the town have been provided by PH Wales at a location close to our campus