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Dear Students,

I am writing again as the Department for Education released more guidance on the 17<sup>th</sup> December. This primarily related to secondary schools having a staggered return after Christmas, you will likely have seen this on the news and wondered if this had implications for you.

We have considered this guidance which is not directed to Higher Education providers and have made the decision to continue with the plans outlined in my previous emails. For reference I include my most recent email below.

We are however aware that with some schools staggering their return in January 2021, this might have an impact on the ability for some of you to attend in person. Therefore we continue to provide in classroom teaching with remote access if they are needed, either to enable social distancing or to support your individual circumstances.

Your personal tutor will confirm any programme related arrangements on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Once again, I wish you a restful festive break.

Best wishes,

Alastair

*Copy of email sent on the 16<sup>th</sup> December (from [University@southdevon.ac.uk](mailto:University@southdevon.ac.uk))*

Dear Students,

I hope you continue to be well during this time. Thank you for cooperation and support with moving to online delivery since the 7<sup>th</sup> December, your programme teams have confirmed excellent engagement and progress during these two weeks.

### **Christmas Closure**

All South Devon College and University Centre South Devon premises will be closed for the Christmas break from 17<sup>th</sup> December 1700hrs, opening again for timetabled sessions on the 5<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

Although buildings are closed during the Christmas break and all staff are on annual leave, you can visit the [UCSD website](#) for student information.

- If you want to develop your study skills and academic writing, you can use the [UCSD study guides](#) or undertake some of the [SkillsforStudy.com](#) short courses.
- If you are struggling with your wellbeing and mental health and want to talk to someone, please visit [Student Space](#) or text SHOUT to 85258.

For all other queries visit the [UCSD website Student Handbook](#) or [ask for help](#) and a member of the Student Support Hub team will contact you in the new year.

### **Returning in January 2021**

In my email on the [4<sup>th</sup> December](#), I outlined our plans for the return during the first week of January 2021. I have separately emailed students who are non-commuter (those who have both a term time and a home address and relocate during the academic term). If you fall into this non-commuter category and did not receive an email please get in touch as soon as possible, via [university@southdevon.ac.uk](mailto:university@southdevon.ac.uk).

In my letter linked above, I stated that we expected teaching to return after Christmas, and I am pleased to be able to confirm that this remains the case. Following DfE guidance commuter students should return as planned from **5<sup>th</sup> January 2021** (following your timetable).

### **Reflections on academic year to date**

We commenced this academic year with a clear intent to deliver as much of our curriculum in person as possible, utilising our physical premises which we redesigned to be Covid secure and with advancements in IT. The delivery was augmented with online delivery if required or to enable students to access learning remotely depending on your personal circumstances.

We made these decisions as we firmly felt that whilst online delivery had been successful during the national lockdown, students benefit from in person delivery and we would, and will continue to offer in person delivery whenever possible.

Much of the Higher Education sector moved to online only, or with limited in person delivery. I am proud of all our academic and professional support staff who have demonstrated versatility in their delivery and support, and their unwavering determination to enabling you, our students to engage with your studies despite the national pandemic.

I would also like to thank you, for your trust in us to provide your Higher Education opportunities this academic year, for your commitment to your future and dedication to your studies. We are all immensely proud of you.

So finally, I wish you a restful festive break, do try to focus on your own wellbeing and that of your family and friends...however you choose to engage with them.

Best wishes,

Alastair Wilson

Head of Higher Education and Academic Registrar

