



University Centre South Devon

Long Road
Paignton
TQ4 7EJ

T: 08000 21 31 81
W: www.ucsd.ac.uk
E: university@southdevon.ac.uk

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Dear Students,

I am writing again following my last update on the 5th January. In that email I outlined our planned approach for Teaching and Learning, Accessing Support as well as access to facilities and wider information on Bursary and Hardship funding, all of which came into effect following the Government announced changes for Education on the 4th January. What I outlined in that email is still very much relevant and continues to now apply beyond February half term.

We are all proud of the resilience of all our students during this difficult time, and it continues to be regrettable that we are unable to resume in person delivery. None of us want to be in this situation and we really do understand.

The purpose of this email is to set out additional changes we are making to the [Safety Net](#) that we previously communicated on the [26th November](#). In addition to this, I will provide further information on support available to you, and details of access to facilities. Please therefore take time to read all aspects of this email.

Updates to the Safety Net

The COVID-19 Safety Net consists of a range of measures that are being taken to try to mitigate the impact of Covid 19 on your studies. These have been previously communicated to you and are available on our [website](#). However, we are aware that we need to do more to provide additional measures whilst also protecting the academic integrity of Degrees.

Below are details of some additional measures we are putting in place, which will be retrospectively applied to assessments from the start of this academic year. Please also visit our Safety Net pages to see the full details of all aspects that were previously communicated as well as the additional measures.

10 day Automatic Extension

- *All claims for Extenuating Circumstances for assessment deadlines on or after 4th January 2021 will be deemed valid, you do not need to wait to hear back to confirm that the claim is valid.*
- *To ensure you are signposted to appropriate support, you must submit an **Extenuating Circumstances claim form if you wish for this 10 day extension**, but you will not need to wait for a validation decision.*
- *We have removed the requirement to submit evidence with your Extenuating Circumstances claim form.*
- *If you have completed the Extenuating Circumstances claim form, confirming your intention for a 10 day extension and consequently you do not submit, you may be referred as the next attempt over the*

referral period unless you notify your personal tutor and module leader, within the 10 working day extension that you wish to change your claim to be for non-submission. If you wish to change your claim after the 10 working days, you are required to submit a further Extenuating Circumstances claim form explaining why you were unable to submit within the 10 working day extension period.

- *We also ask that you share with your Module Leader and Personal Tutor, that you have submitted for the 10 day extension.*

Changes to Tests and Exams

- **Most** *face-to-face, formal invigilated examinations have been replaced with online open-book assessments for the remainder of this academic year.*
- *Other alternative assessment arrangements may also have been put in place by your Programme Team.*

Completing module assessments

- *As usual, Award Assessment Boards will make decisions on what happens if you do not pass some of your modules. Depending on how much credit you fail, you will either be referred or be required to repeat.*

Referral

- *We have **increased the amount of module credits** which students can be referred in, so if you fail up to 80 credits worth of modules, you may be referred.*
- *This means you will complete assessments during your programme's referral period, which is usually over the summer (for some, such as Clinical Education programmes, the referral period may not fall within the summer period. Please discuss this with your personal tutor). If you pass these, you can progress to the next stage of your studies or be awarded your qualification.*
- *If you fail 40 credits during the referral period, you may still progress to the next stage of your studies with an extended referral in those 40 credits. If you are a final stage student, you may also have an extended referral to complete those assessments*

Repeat

- *If you fail more than 80 credits worth of modules, you may come back next year and repeat those modules.*

Same attempt re-assessment

- *If you submit or attend an assessment and fail, or have valid Extenuating Circumstances for non-submission/non-attendance, your referral or your repeat will be at the same attempt, without being penalised.*

Accessing support

We firmly believe that a unique characteristic of UCSD is the support provided by both academic staff and our University Centre team. We are pleased that many students have been accessing this support. We know that many students are really struggling and so we continue to urge you to please engage with us as early as possible.

You can access support via phone, email and MS Teams. Details of which are in the link below. You can also find information and advice on our dedicated [Student Support Hub webpage](#). I strongly encourage you to make use of these online resources and seek and support required.

Accessing Facilities and Buildings

As a change to my previous communication, a number of South Devon College buildings are now open for students to access for private study. This includes the University Centre and the Hi-Tech Centre.

Depending on how often you wish to use the facilities will determine if Lateral Flow Covid tests are required. Please liaise directly with your Personal Tutor or a member of the Support Hub who will be able to provide more details and support regarding access. You should not attend until you have discussed this first as above.

Final remarks

Our continued focus is to ensure that you can engage in learning and proceed with assessments to achieve the best possible outcomes. We will continue to do this through our committed, passionate and dedicated academic teams, as well as the wider study skills, wellbeing and disability and registry teams.

We have updated our [FAQ's](#) on the Covid page for your reference, and the Safety Net Page also now reflects the changes outlined above.

If you have any feedback, we encourage you to share this with your Course Rep, and for Course Reps to share this at the next Student Consultative Forum (Wednesday 3rd Feb). For more details please contact university@southdevon.ac.uk.

I wish to assure you that when a decision is made by Government that we can return to in-person delivery, we will be ready. We already have Lateral Flow testing in place, and this is scalable when students can return. The wider Professional Services team at the College have been and continue to actively plan for students return and we all look forward to that day.

If you do not already do so, please consider following our Twitter, Instagram and Facebook pages for further updates, all our handles are on the bottom right of our UCSD webpages – under 'stay connected'.

We continue to wish you all the best at this difficult and challenging time, and we are all thinking of you and your families.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us on 08000 213181 or email university@southdevon.ac.uk.

Best wishes,
Alastair Wilson
Head of Higher Education and Academic Registrar

