



Department
of Health &
Social Care

*From the Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care*

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Devolved Administrations
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Dear colleagues,

Subject: Managed Quarantine of International Students from Red-list Countries

I would like to extend my thanks to the many of you involved in ongoing efforts to support the Managed Quarantine Service, which remains vital to protect the UK from the importation of variants of COVID-19 that risk undermining the success of our vaccination programme. There has been great interest in recent weeks in our approach to international students arriving from RED-list countries (RLCs), and I wanted to clarify the Government's policy to ensure a joined-up approach in communicating with students.

The Borders & Managed Quarantine Service (MQS) Programme within my department has been working intensively to accommodate an expected surge in managed quarantine demand in August and September. This has involved a number of changes to our Managed Quarantine Facility (MQF) specification and supplier relationships, which have been discussed in detail through the MQS Local Authority Steering Group. We are confident, as a result, that we will have the necessary headroom to accommodate students aged 18 or over arriving from RED-list countries. International students are projected to constitute a minority of MQS demand in those months, though they are likely to be a significant cohort. For this reason, my officials have been convening a cross-Government working group on students since mid-June, including the Devolved Administrations and Universities UK International (UUKi), to ensure alignment on MQS capacity and the likely sequencing of demand and communications to the sector.

I want to address understandable concerns that MQS would not be able to accommodate student arrivals from RED-list countries. I wanted to offer my assurance that we can create headroom for the necessary expansion, accommodating adult students in line with wider border health measures policy. My officials are contracting with a significant number of new MQFs for the purpose of accommodating students.

Consideration of alternative options

A range of scenarios and options have been considered by the Working Group for RLC students.

Capacity Measures. My department's previous guidance on the use of university accommodation for quarantine of RLC students has not changed. Isolation of RLC students in university accommodation is not a suitable option in England, as these students will arrive from different parts of the world with different epidemiological risks (and prevalent variants of concern).

Evidence from the sector as supplied by UUKi suggested that only a minority of institutions had potential to offer the accommodation and support services that would allow them to meet the requirements set out in the MQS Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) . Securing the necessary public health assurance for bespoke solutions - in a scenario where different individuals will be arriving from multiple high-risk countries into one cohort - would not be feasible in the time available, or deliver meaningful alleviation of MQS capacity.

Demand measures. The Home Office recently granted a student visa concession, allowing students to defer their arrival into the UK. Furthermore, some students may wish to share rooms in Managed Quarantine Facilities and share the cost of quarantine. These students would be required to travel together, and this option may therefore be applicable to only a small minority for arrivals. Further detail on room sharing, in light of the need ensure appropriate safeguarding, will be provided through further guidance.

How MQS for student arrivals from RED countries will work

The key principles for RLC student arrivals into England are as follows:

- All adult arrivals from RLCs, including students, will quarantine in facilities provided by the MQS programme unless they have a separate exemption unrelated to their student status;
- Universities and FE colleges are encouraged to stagger arrivals into the UK, in order to avoid a sharp peak of arrivals, based on their judgment on the suitability for individuals and courses for temporary remote studying;
- Students should be encouraged to first liaise with their universities to confirm expected arrival dates, then book travel and quarantine within the CTM system, as normal;
- All RLC arrivals are expected to quarantine in England if they arrive at an English Red-port, in accordance with current policy;
- MQS will provide services at RED-list quarantine locations, including transport, security, medical care, catering, testing and tracing;
- Universities should provide remote pastoral care as applicable to students while they are in quarantine. Please note that MQS Safeguarding training is deployed across the entire MQS estate, including to general managers, senior leadership teams, liaison officers and security staff;
- On quarantine exit, MQF will offer to transport students back to their port of arrival, in accordance with normal policy. However, students may inform MQS and their university if they prefer to make their own arrangements for onward travel. Universities may wish to support their students with this;
- Students are expected to pay for quarantine, as per policy for RLCs, unless exemptions unrelated to student status are agreed. Universities may also choose to

reimburse students for quarantine costs. MQS will not apply differential treatment for students.

My officials are engaging in parallel on guidance regarding Amber student arrivals and those under the age of 18, and we will issue further communications on these issues shortly. My department is also supporting efforts to provide a more coordinated view for local authorities on the use of hotels for a variety of other Government objectives.

International students are a highly valued cohort, and it is our aim to ensure that we welcome them, providing a safe and high-quality quarantine experience, whilst also undertaking our duty to protect public health. The Government believes the approach outlined above satisfies both of these needs effectively.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid.', is centered on the page.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP