

# Foreign Secretary advises all British travellers to return to the UK now

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) advises against all British travellers to return to the UK now. Read our latest [coronavirus travel advice](#).

- all British travellers abroad who are usually based in the UK advised to return now
- international travel is becoming highly limited with the further closure of air routes, land borders and domestic restrictions introduced daily
- British travellers should contact their tour operator or airline now. Commercial flight options are still available at present

All British tourists and short-stay travellers currently abroad should return to the UK where and while commercial flight options are still available, the Foreign Secretary announced today.

Last week, the [FCO announced an unprecedented change in travel advice to advise against all but essential international travel](#), initially for a period of 30 days. Today's update reflects the pace at which international travel is becoming more difficult with the closure of borders, airlines suspending flights, airports closing, exit bans and further restrictions being introduced daily. Further closures to air routes may come in the next 48 hours, possibly without notice.

Some British tourists abroad are already finding difficulties returning to the UK because of international travel restrictions and domestic policies around the world. The FCO is working around the clock to support all British travelers in this situation come back to the UK.

The UK government is working with airlines to keep routes open and is calling for international action to keep air routes open for a sufficient period of time to enable international travellers to return on commercial flights.

Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said:

We are strongly urging UK travellers overseas to return home now where and while there are still commercial routes to do so. Around the world, more airlines are suspending flights and more airports are closing, some without any notice.

Where commercial routes don't exist, our staff are working round the clock to give advice and support to UK nationals. If you are on holiday abroad the time to come home is now while you still can.

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, said:

This is a very difficult time for British citizens travelling overseas, or those with families and loved ones abroad. We're in close contact with airlines, who are working tirelessly to ensure British citizens travelling overseas can safely return to the UK. We are also working closely with other government departments, including the FC0 to ensure airlines are able to operate to bring people back home.

British travellers should contact their tour operator or airline now to arrange a commercial flight if they want to leave. There is an unprecedented demand on the FC0's consular services so all British tourists abroad should go online for the latest in-country advice.

This advice is aimed at British people travelling abroad, rather than those who are permanent resident overseas who are urged to follow the advice of the local authorities in their host country.

- the FC0 updated its COVID-19 Exceptional Travel Advisory Notice to include the following: If you live in the UK and are currently travelling abroad, you're strongly advised to return now, while there are still commercial routes available. Many airlines are suspending flights and many airports are closing, preventing flights from leaving.'
- further instructions for British travellers to return home can be found on the [coronavirus travel advice page](#)

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## Universities told not to alter applicants' offers

Universities should act to maintain the stability of the university admissions system to ensure students' best interests are safeguarded, the Universities Minister has said today (23 March).

Michelle Donelan is asking providers to refrain from changing their offers made to undergraduate students for the next two weeks, such as converting conditional offers to unconditional offers or changing entry requirements.

Since exams were cancelled – including A levels, BTECs and other Level 3 qualifications – a small number of universities have changed a significant proportion of their offers to undergraduate students from 'conditional' to 'unconditional' in a bid to secure their attendance for the 2020/21 academic year.

This practice risks destabilising the admissions system, increasing financial uncertainty and volatility for all institutions at a time when universities are already facing significant pressures.

The Minister is urging universities to act responsibly to maintain the integrity of the higher education system, and avoid actions which might not be in students' best interests, simply to maximise their intake over other universities'. The Minister's message aims to create a period of stability and support the financial health of the system as a whole.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

We are facing unprecedented circumstances as a country, but it is essential that we create a period of stability for both students and universities.

As universities seek to secure attendance for the next academic year, I would ask them to refrain from changing existing offers to unconditional offers as it risks destabilising the entire admissions systems.

We must also look out for students too, who in these uncertain times may be feeling anxious about their futures. I want to reassure students that we will provide them with the grades they need. No student should feel pressured into making a quick decision which may end up not being in their best interest.

I am asking for a two week pause while we work with the sector over this period on admissions arrangements.

Supporting the announcement on university admissions, Office for Students chief executive Nicola Dandridge said:

It would be quite wrong for any university or college to respond to the coronavirus crisis by making unconditional offers that may undermine the sustainability of the university system and increase the financial pressure on other providers.

Many universities and colleges have been responding to the enormous challenges of coronavirus with innovation and ingenuity. But it is critical that every university and college puts the student's interest first in these difficult times.

So, I want to make it very clear to any university or college – and its leaders and governors – that if any university or college adjusts any offer to students, or make any unconditional offers, during this two week moratorium we will use any powers available to us to prevent such offer making on the grounds that it is damaging to students and not in their interests.

Universities UK Chief Executive Alistair Jarvis said:

Universities are doing all that they can to support students with great examples across the country. It is important that these efforts are not undermined by inappropriate admissions practices increasing worry and pressure for applicants.

It is vital that the admissions process remains fair, consistent, and in the best interests of all students – who have a right for their work and performance to date to be fairly reflected.

We support today's call and believe universities will respond positively to ensure that no student feels rushed into a decision at what is already a difficult time.

The request from the Universities Minister will apply to unconditional offers being made by universities, as well as existing conditional offers being amended.

The two week period will allow time for further advice to be given to students and providers about how the new system of awarding A-Level grades will work, and how the admissions arrangements will work.

The Government's priority is to ensure affected students can move on as planned to the next stage of their lives, including starting university, going on to employment, or starting an apprenticeship in the autumn.

Students who accept an unconditional offer will be able to release themselves as part of the UCAS self-release process to explore other options during Clearing. This process was introduced last year to support student choice and promote flexibility, and nearly 30,000 students used this functionality.

Work will continue between the Government and the higher education sector over this two week period to provide further clarity on the best way to support applicants and HE providers to ensure that the admissions system remains fair and equitable.

While this request applies to institutions in England, government would welcome other nations to follow the same approach.

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## **Portugal: Coronavirus (COVID-19) State of Emergency**

On 18 March 2020 the President of Portugal, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, announced a State of Emergency to be brought in by the Portuguese Government. The State of Emergency legislation published on 20 March brings into force a series of measures to limit the spread of the virus (COVID-19). Cases of

coronavirus (COVID-19) have been confirmed in Portugal.

The measures include significant restrictions on movement throughout the country, affecting public places and transport. They will be in place for an initial two weeks, and can be extended. Public gatherings are banned, most shops other than those selling food or other essential items such as pharmacies have been closed. People in the country have been instructed to remain at home unless they need to carry out one of the following activities:

- to buy food or other essential items
- to go to work if unable to work from home
- to go to hospital or health centres
- to carry out caring or similar duties or in case of real need
- to return to their primary residence
- to exercise outdoors and walk pets, for short periods and never in groups

An informal English translation of the decree, covering the key areas that affect British nationals in the country, is found attached. The [full legislation \(Portuguese\) is found here](#).

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## [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): letter from the Minister of State for Care to recruitment agencies](#)

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## **Bona Vacantia Referrals, Applications and Kin claims**

Please note we are currently unable to process Postal Referrals, Applications or Kin Claims and can only deal with matters by email. Please follow the guidance below for any new referrals/kin claims/discretionary grant applications and restoration repayments.

Please send any new referrals of deceased estates and dissolved company assets or cash balances by email rather than by post to the appropriate following email addresses:

Deceased person's estates to [bvestates@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvestates@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

Dissolved company assets (not cash assets) to  
[bvcompanies@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvcompanies@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

Dissolved company cash assets (bank accounts, etc.) to  
[bvcbt@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvcbt@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

If you need to send us copies of documents, letters etc. please send us scanned copies in PDF format and attached to your email.

Please note that if you have already received confirmation of a case reference from the Bona Vacantia Division, correspondence should be emailed directly to your allocated case officer using the email address quoted on the correspondence received.

### **Applications for Kin Claims**

Kin claims can be submitted via email. This also includes any supporting identification documents which may be required. Documents should be scanned in date order into a single PDF, including a family tree and sent to [bvestates@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvestates@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

### **Applications for Discretionary Grants where a Company can be restored (CB2) and where a Company cannot be restored (CB3)**

Applications can be submitted via email for both types of discretionary grant. Completed forms and supporting documentation including any identification documents required should be scanned into a single PDF and sent to [bvcbt@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvcbt@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

**Applications for a repayment after restoration of a Company (CB4)**

Applications can be submitted via email. Completed forms and supporting documentation including identification documents required should be scanned into a single PDF and sent to [bvcbt@governmentlegal.gov.uk](mailto:bvcbt@governmentlegal.gov.uk)

If we require further information or any original documents we will contact you.

Thank you for your cooperation.