



Anna Dodridge

VERY IMPORTANT! : COVID-19 Business Continuity

12 messages

Anna Dodridge <ad88@soas.ac.uk> 12 March 2020 at 15:48

To: Anabelle Basterrechea-Jones, Anirudh Srivathsan, Charlotte Paige Keely, Ciro Puig Bonet, Hasan Zakria, Hisham Parchment, Imogen Kropf, Inaki Arrizabalaga, Katherine Elizabeth Saunders, Malena Bastida Antich, Maysa, Miriam Ines Amrani, Nare, Nidah Kaiser, Omer Wasim, Oscar Ward, Paulien Sara Broens, Rachel Lindfield, Serena Nikita Coulsor, Sohane Mousseid Yahya, talya scott, Valeria Racu, Maxine Thomas-Asante, Peadar Connolley-Davey, Youssra Omer Farouk Elmagboul

Hello,

Sorry to be having to send another email labelled 'important', however we're in an extraordinary situation and this is needed.

I'm emailing you as our Trustee Board, with some information and to start the conversation about how we move forward.

Hopefully you've seen the email (copied below) from SOAS about Covid-19.

I've been speaking with Peadar, Maxine, Valeria & Youssra about this all day, and have been in contact directly with the School.

We understand that their email is concerning news, and that clear information is important. Please do get in touch with me if you have questions, and we'll do our best to answer as much as we can as quickly as we can.

We've sent an initial email out to our non-student and student staff, and the sabbs are sending one out to all students. Of course, our priority is that everyone is as safe as possible, that we're taking this risk seriously, and making decisions putting our team and our students first. We also want to reassure you that we're listening to the best advice available, and that it's equally important not to unnecessarily worry anyone.

We're working hard to prepare for whatever might happen. We're keeping up to date with government updates, with SOAS updates and speaking to other students' unions. I'm joining a meeting this afternoon with SOAS senior staff, and will be attending daily meetings to keep up to date with the advice and decisions made.

As set out in the email from SOAS, they have been in close and regular contact with Public Health England, and have followed the advice given on this confirmed case. PHE has advised SOAS that their assessment in relation to the specifics of this case is that the risk to other students, staff and visitors is very low and that our activities can continue as normal.

At this stage we're working on the assumption that we'll be returning to our normal working patterns on Monday, however we will need to make plans for what happens if we need to remain closed, work from home and cancel events and activities. As the situation changes daily we will need to assess the situation daily and things may change quickly. As I hope you can understand, following 4 weeks of industrial action we are in a difficult situation and need to make some careful decisions, thinking about the short and long term impact on the Students' Union.

I'm recommending that we form a 'Contingency Planning' working group, so that we can make decisions quickly. If SOAS is advised to, forced to or makes the decision to close in some form or another we need to be able to respond to this. We will need to make decisions about finances, paying our staff, cancelling events, what we do with elections. Big decisions in other words.

The working group would need delegated authority from the Trustee Board to make decisions.

I'll be sending through a more detailed document with an updated risk assessment and recommendations for the working group delegations.

1. Can you let me know if you approve the formation of the group

2. Can you let me know if you want to be part of the group. To be clear, it will involve a fair amount of work and time potentially over the next week or so. Including regular meetings (in person or online), phone calls. We fully understand that you are volunteers and have your own lives and commitments, hence asking for your approval to put together a working group. However, also want to be clear that it is open for those who want to be involved.

I have asked for some student & non-student staff 'reps' to be involved in some of the decision making, so that we're clear on the potential impact of decisions.

As we need to make decisions before Monday I'll need a response as soon as possible, no later than tomorrow. Again, I'm sorry about rushing you for decisions, I hope you can understand why it's necessary.

Please get in touch if you have any questions/concerns etc.

Thanks

SOAS email sent today:

Covid-19: update 12 March: confirmed case at SOAS

Public Health England (PHE) have confirmed that a student at SOAS has tested positive for Coronavirus (COVID-19), the first confirmed case at SOAS.

We are following all PHE advice and action needed in this specific case in relation to the student and the small number of close contacts of the student, as explained below (see "Action taken in this case"). There are no additional preventive steps needed for the SOAS community, over and above those already in place.

I want to stress that PHE has advised us at SOAS that their assessment in relation to the specifics of this case is that the risk to other students, staff and visitors is very low and that our activities can continue as normal.

Our priority is providing support for the affected student and the close contacts, and continuing to offer the best advice and information on Covid-19 to other SOAS students and staff.

This news will be distressing for our staff and students and I want to confirm that we are following all PHE advice and we will not do anything to put health and safety at risk at SOAS.

In line with all PHE advice and practice we are not naming the student or their close contacts at SOAS. The origin of this case has been identified and is not within the SOAS community.

General advice and information is provided on [MySOAS for staff](#) and [MySOAS for students](#) and support continues to be available for students through Student Advice and Wellbeing and for staff through the Employee Assistance Programme.

We are putting this information on our public website at:

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/coronavirus>

Action taken in this case

We are liaising directly with Public Health England, who have assessed the individual who remains in self-isolation at home. They are not on campus, nor were they living in student accommodation.

Following all PHE advice, we have contacted the seven individuals who had close contact with the student on the one afternoon they attended for a teaching activity. We understand that the student concerned did not attend any other events or use other facilities at SOAS before they self-isolated and were tested.

In line with specific PHE advice on this case, the seven close contacts at SOAS are being fully supported and have been advised to contact NHS111 and follow their advice on self-isolation and symptoms to be alert for.

PHE have advised that we do not need to take any additional public health actions in light of this specific case, over and above the general precautions already in place. We will keep this under close review.

The seminar room used for the teaching activity has been closed off and is being sanitised by a provider whom we already had on standby for such an eventuality, in line with PHE advice.

Further updates on Covid-19 generally

Information for staff and students continues to be updated here on [MySOAS for staff](#) and [My SOAS for students](#), and further online advice can be found on the [NHS 111 online service](#).

We will continue to keep our community updated about Covid-19 risks facing the UK, following best advice from [Public Health England](#) (PHE) and the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office](#) (FCO).

We will provide further updates as needed on Covid-19 generally in light of latest developments in the UK and other countries.

Anna Dodridge
General Manager
Pronouns: she/her

During strike action I will not be working in my office, and the best way to contact me will be via email

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