I'm writing to you about your application to study for an MSc in the Department of Psychology at the University of Sheffield.

As you know, the University will be adjusting how it delivers its courses in the autumn to accommodate the social distancing measures required to combat the coronavirus pandemic. For your course, the current plans involve a blend of digital delivery, supported by face-to-face teaching in small groups in Sheffield, where social distancing can be maintained.

Course content

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You'll still obtain proficiency in cognitive neuroscience, a wide range of transferable skills, and an advanced understanding of computational neuroscience, neuroimaging, and systems neuroscience, depending on your chosen specialism. There will be no changes to the list of modules that you will take, and no substantial changes to the range of topics that you will cover.

Teaching

As you know, the majority of our teaching comprises lectures, seminars and practicals, and we'll still be using these formats in 2020-21. Teaching will start a few weeks later than usual, in the week commencing Monday 26 October. There will be no other changes to the Semester dates. However, Semester 1 teaching will continue after the Christmas break into January/February, to ensure that we can deliver the full course content.

It's not possible to social distance in a crowded lecture theatre, so we'll be delivering all our lectures online. Lectures are primarily presentations by one of our subject experts, and online delivery suits the format well. We've made recorded lectures available online for several years, but in 2020-21 this will be supplemented with live delivery of sessions where appropriate, and there will be an opportunity for students to interact with the lecturer, and submit comments and questions in real time, while the lecture happens or shortly after the lecture content is available.

For our interactive classes, we'll be using a combination of face-to-face and digital teaching, and you'll have timetabled sessions of each form. Assuming it is safe to do so, the face-to-face sessions will take place in small groups, so that we can use our larger teaching rooms and still maintain social distancing. The digital sessions will include live and fully interactive classes, for example group video calls with the capacity for break out groups to facilitate student participation and peer interaction.

Our academic staff will be available as usual for tutorials and other one-to-one meetings, and will still hold their regular office hours. It may not be possible for these sessions to take place in person, but if not you'll be able to make an audio or video call.

Learning resources
Most of our learning resources are already available online. Our physical libraries will be open as soon as it's safe to do so, and our librarians are committed to providing as full a service as possible, taking into account social distancing requirements and all the latest government advice.

**Assessment**

Coursework assignments are already completed electronically, and submitted and marked online.

We're still finalising our plans for exams. However it's likely that Semester 1 modules normally assessed using exams will instead be assessed by equivalent coursework assignments, and these will be distributed appropriately across the Semester. As with any other coursework assignment, you'd complete your answers electronically at home, and you'd be able to consult your books and notes. We'll confirm the arrangements for Semester 1 assessments in the individual module handbooks you'll receive when you join us.

**Costs**

The tuition fee for the course will stay the same, and we don't expect students will incur additional costs as a result of the changes we're making. You'll be able to participate in all the online activities using a regular laptop or tablet connected to the internet, although you will need a microphone and camera to contribute fully in virtual discussions. Access to a laptop or desktop computer at home will be necessary to ensure that you can complete assignments that require the use of any specialist software, potentially via remote login to a desktop machine that is running that software in the Department of Psychology.

**Further information**

I hope this email has given you an idea of what to expect when you join us in the autumn. As you'll be aware, this pandemic is a fast-moving and unpredictable phenomenon, and we might need to make further changes as the situation develops and the University responds to updates in public health guidance. Please be assured that we'll be approaching the next year as a single departmental family of staff and students together, and we're committed to ensuring that you're supported, and that you still receive a world-class university education here at Sheffield.

If you have any questions or concerns, please get in touch with our Student Support Officer for Postgraduate Taught Programmes, Rachel Durance, at psypgt@sheffield.ac.uk, who will be able to help you directly or send your query on to the relevant Course Director for your programme. Please keep looking out for emails from the University and checking our [frequently asked questions](#), which are updated regularly with all the latest developments. We also have some on demand content from our recent [online open day](#) which you might find useful.
I hope you enjoy what’s left of the summer, and stay safe.

Best wishes

Professor Glenn Waller
Head of Department
Department of Psychology