I am writing to you about your application to study the LLB Law and Criminology (M930) in the School of Law 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. The current plans involve a blend of face-to-face teaching in small groups in Sheffield, where social distancing can be maintained, supported by digital delivery. In this email, I will explain what this means for your studies on the LLB Law and Criminology.

Course content

There is no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You will still obtain proficiency in legal reasoning and criminology research, an advanced understanding of law and criminology, and a wide range of transferable skills.

In your first year of your programme, you are taught through a fixed set of core modules. These core modules are all the same as previously advertised. Please rest assured that at Level 1 you will still be covering the same wide selection of subject areas as per normal, and you will still acquire the knowledge, understanding and academic skills you will need for Levels 2 and 3.

Teaching

As you know, the majority of our teaching comprises lectures and seminars, and we will still use these formats in 2020-21. Teaching will be spread across the usual two semesters and will start the week commencing Monday 28 September.

It is not possible to socially distance in a crowded lecture theatre, so we will deliver all our lectures online. Lectures are primarily presentations by one of our subject experts, and online delivery suits the format well. We have made recorded lectures available online for several years, but this year those lectures will be delivered in ways designed to make them easier to watch online and will be accompanied by supporting text and in some instances online tasks.

For our interactive classes, we will use a combination of face-to-face and digital teaching, and you will have regular, timetabled sessions in each form. 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. Our face-to-face teaching has always taken place across the University's campus, and this will not change in 2020-21. Digital sessions will be live and fully interactive, for example group video calls.

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 be possible for these sessions to take place in person, but if not you will be able to make an audio or video call.

Learning resources

Most of our learning resources are already available online, and this includes all the core reading for our Level 1 modules. Our physical libraries will be open as soon as it is 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

In the School of Law the most common forms of assessment are coursework and exams. Coursework assignments are already completed electronically, and submitted and marked online.

We will not hold formal, invigilated exams in the Semester 1 exam period in January/February. We will use an 'open book' format instead, where exam questions are made available online and you have a certain amount of time, for example four days, to answer them. You will be able to complete your answers electronically at home, and you will be able to consult your books and notes. Some other universities use open book exams as a matter of course, and we used them successfully for last year's Semester 2 exam period.

We will confirm the arrangements for Semester 1 assessments in the individual module outlines you will receive when you join us.

Accreditation

The arrangements that we have put in place for next year are consistent with the requirements of the Solicitors Regulation Authority and the Bar Standards Board, and will count towards your accreditation as a solicitor or a barrister when you graduate.

Costs

The tuition fee for the course will stay the same, and we do not expect students will incur additional costs as a result of the changes we are making. You will 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. If you are concerned that you might not be able to afford equipment or have a broadband connection to study remotely, please contact the University's Financial Support Team (financialhelp@sheffield.ac.uk). The University can provide laptops on loan or a grant depending on your circumstances.

I hope this email has given you an idea of what to expect when you join us in the autumn. As you will 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 are approaching the next year as a single departmental family of staff and students together, and we are committed to ensuring that you are very well 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 Experience Office at law-seo@sheffield.ac.uk.

Further information

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 online applicant open days which you might find useful.
I hope you enjoy what is left of the summer and stay safe

Best wishes,

Graham Gee
Professor of Public Law
Head of the School of Law