I'm writing to you about your application to study BA Journalism Studies (P500) in the Department of Journalism Studies 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'll explain what this will mean for your studies on the BA Journalism Studies degree.

Course content

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You'll still develop a comprehensive grasp of practical multimedia journalism skills, an advanced understanding of media ethics and law, and a wide range of transferable skills. The first year will still be very practical, you'll be pleased to know.

However, due to the number of students we can have in the newsrooms, some of this practical work will be ‘field work’ and some of the teaching and feedback you'll be getting will be online – but live, just until social distancing measures are relaxed. Newsrooms across the world are adapting to this way of working, and we've been taking advice from major global news organisations about how they have had to adapt, and we are following suit.

You will be getting regular face to face contact, as well as live, interactive lectures, small group tasks with your peers and some online discussion. You'll also be going out to cover live news, but we will make sure these activities are fully risk assessed before letting you do so.

Please rest assured you'll still get to learn all about journalism, and you'll still acquire the knowledge, understanding and academic skills you'll need to progress onto Levels 2 and 3.

Teaching

The majority of our teaching comprises lectures, seminars and practicals, and we'll still be using these formats in 2020-21. Teaching will be spread across the usual two semesters and will start the week commencing Monday 28 September.

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 we'll be delivering them live as well, with an opportunity for students to submit comments and questions in real time.

For our interactive classes, we'll be using a combination of face-to-face and digital teaching, and you’ll have regular, timetabled sessions of 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 won't change in 2020-21. The digital sessions will be live and fully interactive, for example group video calls.

As you know, your degree involves a good deal of practical journalism work. Students taking BA Journalism Studies need to find stories around the city of Sheffield and produce real news content. As things stand we anticipate that this will continue to be the case in 2020-21. You may have seen TV news interviews conducted online or according to social distancing regulations, and in the latter stages of the 2019-20 academic year our students have already produced work along similar lines. We’re committed to giving you the best possible experience of real journalism work while following government guidelines to prioritise the safety of our students and our community.
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, and this includes all the core reading for our Level 1 modules. 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.

**IT equipment**

All students will need a laptop or desktop PC as well as a mic and webcam, so that you can participate in online teaching and learning. You will also need a smartphone. We anticipate that smartphones, along with other specialist equipment, will be available to borrow from the department.

**Assessment**

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

We’re still finalising our plans for exams, but we won’t be holding formal, invigilated exams in the semester 1 exam period in January/February. There are some tests, but these will be held online.

**Accreditation**

We’ve been working with the National Council for the Training of Journalists (NCTJ) and the Professional Publishers Association (PPA) to ensure that the new arrangements meet their accreditation guidelines. So you’ll still be an NCTJ- and PPA-accredited journalist when you graduate.

**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.

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 at 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’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 Admissions and Programme Assistant Evie Allsop at e.allsop@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's left of the summer and stay safe.

Best wishes

Professor Jackie Harrison
Head of Department
Journalism Studies