I'm writing to you about your application to study the BA Education, Culture and Childhood (X300) in the School of Education 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 Education, Culture and Childhood BA.

Course content

There's no change to the overall learning outcomes of the course. You'll still obtain an advanced understanding of education from a number of key perspectives, including sociological, historical and psychological and philosophical, and develop a wide range of transferable skills. However, to accommodate the new protocols for the 2020-21 academic year, we have made some adjustments to the content and structure of Level 1.

The core modules are all the same but we have made some changes to the range of optional modules we'll be offering. Adjusting our teaching methods over the summer, and then delivering the new blended model in the autumn, will place considerable extra demands on our staff's time, and we aren't going to be able to offer all the options we were hoping to. Unfortunately, the following module won't be running this year: EDU106 Histories of Education.

Finally, we've removed the 40 'unrestricted' credits available at Level 1, where students could study any Level 1 modules, not just the options listed in the BA Education, Culture and Childhood regulations. Because of the challenges of managing module selection during the pandemic, the University has suspended unrestricted credits for 2020-21. In their place, we've added to our list of options a number of modules drawn from a number of other courses, including the Departments of Psychology, East Asian Studies and Sociological Studies. We are finalising additional modules and these will be shared with you soon.

You'll also still be able to choose a language module, whether continuing from previous study or at beginner level.

Please rest assured that there will still be a wide selection of modules for you to choose from and you'll still acquire the knowledge, understanding and academic skills you'll need for Levels 2 and 3.

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 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.
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.

**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. It's likely we'll use an 'open book' format instead, where exam questions are made available online and you have a certain amount of time, for example two days, to answer them. You'd complete your answers electronically at home, and you'd be able to consult your books and notes. Some other universities use open book exams as a matter of course. We'll confirm the arrangements for Semester 1 exams 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. 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'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 one of our Programme directors, Dr Jessica Bradley or Dr Yinka Olusoga at jessica.bradley@sheffield.ac.uk and e.olusoga@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 Elizabeth Wood
Head of Department
School of Education