



University of  
Nottingham

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Creating a connecting thread  
while witnessing a pandemic in  
progress

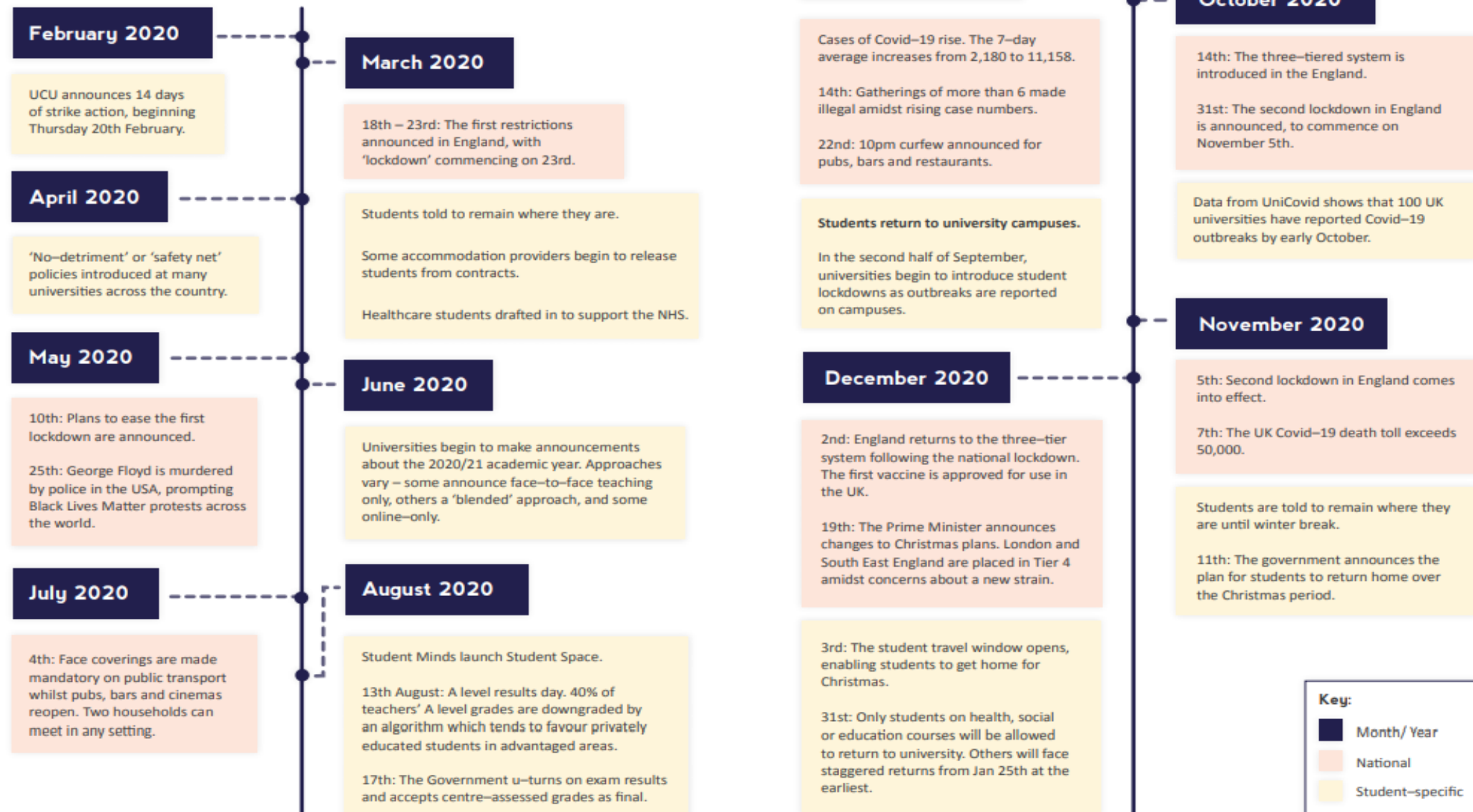
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# Running up that hill

## Timeline of Events







# Running up that hill

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University Mental Health: Life in a Pandemic

## January 2021

4th: A third national lockdown is announced.

22nd: The UK Covid-19 death toll exceeds 100,000.

Students on courses training for health, social care or education roles can return to campus despite the national lockdown. All other students are told to remain where they are.

## April 2021

12th: Stage two of lockdown restrictions easing – outdoor hospitality and non-essential retail reopens.

## February 2021

21st: The PM announces the 'roadmap' out of lockdown

2nd: The Government announces an additional £50m of hardship funding for students in England

## March 2021

9th–13th: Campaigns and protests across the country following the murder of Sarah Everard.

29th: The 'Rule of Six' returns for outdoor gatherings.

8th: Students on 'practical' courses are allowed to return to university for in-person teaching.

## May 2021

17th: Stage three of lockdown restrictions easing – indoor hospitality and social distancing guidance relaxed.

10th: The Prime Minister confirms that all remaining university students can return to on-campus study from the 17th May.



**University Mental Health: Life in a Pandemic. Student Minds Report, 2021,** pp.9-10. Nicola Frampton and Dom Smithies with contributions from Myles Smith–Thompson and Chloe Maughan. Designed by Krishna Lad.

[Life in a pandemic - Student Minds](#)



# Lesson Learned No. 1

## Acceptance of an impending uphill and its unknown consequences ahead

- ❑ constant changes, accompanying a pandemic in progress, will make it more challenging to establish a community using our in-person, points of references.
- ❑ Adapting our established routines is inevitable.



## We experience

- A sense of fragmentation due to the physical distance but also while using online avenues that were unfamiliar and impersonal.
- A reality incompatible with our established routines. Virtual platforms become the main route to create a new approach to engage and support our staff and students.



# Lesson Learned No. 2

## Choosing to make it work. Reclaiming agency

- ❑ Supporting students in ways which set them up to succeed.
- ❑ Recognising students will have different needs and preferences when engaging with their learning.
- ❑ Demonstrating flexibility and sensitivity to individual circumstances.



- Live Chat alongside in person enquiries within our library buildings.
- Upgraded study space booking system to ensure robust management of spaces and capacity.
- Click & Collect and extended eligibility to everyone for copy/scan direct, Free postal loans & returns.



# Lesson Learned No. 3

## Focusing our energy where it makes an impact and reflects our institution's values

- ❑ Our inability to plan far ahead gave way to consulting metrics, applying micro plans that can be easily adjusted by witnessing the impact our services have to the student experience each step of the way.



## Our values



### Ambition

We set the highest standards for ourselves and our work and support each other to achieve them



### Fairness

Our decisions and actions are consistent, impartial and ethical



### Inclusivity

We are a community where everyone can contribute and be appreciated for who they are



### Openness

We adopt a straightforward and transparent way of communicating with each other and with the world, championing the free exchange of ideas



### Respect

We have regard for each other's rights and feelings, and demonstrate this in our behaviour, treating each other with kindness

- Creating H&S Roles & Responsibilities encouraging shared responsibility in reviewing and updating our master risk assessments routinely.
- Use of Microsoft O365 for easy access to documentation and enhancing collaborations. Smooth transition: Working from home and on campus.
- Preserve Lean approach to projects for continuous improvement.





# Lesson Learned No. 4

**Reclaiming our sense of purpose** assessing how our contributions help sustain its relevance despite the far-reaching impact of a pandemic

- ❑ Despite everything feeling unstable, we are aiming for constancy that acts as a 'bridge' between the new reality of 'not business as usual' and an essential diachronic purpose.



What's the purpose of University?

“To gain decent employment, to achieve personal growth, and to contribute to improvement in society... Promoting democratic and critical engagement, while also furthering collective, rather than solely individual, ends.”

London School of Economics Blog, [\*'What's the purpose of University?'\*](#) [\*published\*](#), Gupta, Achala, January 21, 2021.



# Lesson Learned No. 5

**Visible Leadership,** observing and actively taking notice while encouraging solidarity & collaborations.

- ❑ Leadership that acts as a connecting thread to keep a community together amidst the uneven ground of overlapping change.
- ❑ Ongoing real time dialogue provide the narrative so negativity and assumptions don't creep in to fill the void instead.



- Talking to people that will not appear in your diary.
- Communicating expectations - openly discuss feedback and maintain dialogue via our engagement plans.
- Its ok to allow ourselves to be a work in progress.
- Libraries Wellbeing activities – involve colleagues in initiatives taking place in the day light. On-demand exercises and activities available to access any time/anywhere. Building positive associations to our professional roles ultimately channels through to customers.





# Lesson Learned No. 6

**Restricting our respiration should not stop us from reinventing** and multiplying our ways of inspiring individuals to develop their own learning strategies and working routines.

❑ There is no one way or method that fits all.



- Planning for multiple inductions that are tailored made for specific types/modes of study throughout the year.
- Physical spaces to be redesigned to accommodate virtual collaborations even within campus.
- Introduce short rather than long 'themed' online webinars to respond to key moments in the year.



- ❑ **Acceptance of an impending uphill** and its unknown consequences ahead.
- ❑ **Choosing to make it work** and reclaiming agency.
- ❑ **Focusing:** our energy where it makes an impact.
- ❑ **Reclaiming our sense of purpose** assessing how our contributions help sustain its relevance despite the far-reaching impact of a pandemic.
- ❑ **Visible Leadership**, observing and actively taking notice while encouraging collaborations.
- ❑ **Restricting our respiration should not stop us from reinventing and multiplying our ways of inspiring** individuals to develop their own learning strategy and working routines. There is no one way or method that fits all.

Thank you

