

Dear Student,

A big welcome to the 2020-2021 academic year and I hope that you have been keeping healthy over the last few weeks with the strange circumstances that we all find ourselves in. The University has had to adjust the way in which we deliver our teaching and the way we use our campus (click [here](#) for more information on the University). This is an exciting time for you and indeed a very strange time with the Coronavirus pandemic influencing everything that we do, including University life. The purpose of this email is to give you information on your programme and wider University. Please take the time to read this information, if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me.

On your programme, most modules are delivered within Cardiff School of Technologies (CST), however some of your modules are delivered by Cardiff School of Management (CSM). For your CST modules, we will be teaching your modules over a four-week block, with just the one module being taught within those four weeks. After the first module has been taught you will then move on to the next module and so on for the rest of the academic year. This method of delivery will give you the opportunity to better manage your time, prioritise your work and will also give us the flexibility to make sure that you can study in a safe environment. In addition to this, we will be delivering your modules using a blended style of delivery, where some parts of the modules will be taught on campus and some will be taught online, with some only online. Again, safety is paramount, but at the same time we understand the need for you to be on campus and engage with other students for both social and academic activities. Campus of course will look and feel very different to the usual look and feel of a University campus, with social distancing and PPE in place, as the University is following the government guidelines. Information on social distancing and the safety measures implemented by the University can be found [here](#). Due to these safety measures any classes that you have on campus will have less students in class, for example a room that usually accommodates 24 will now only accommodate 8-12 depending on the room capacity. Of course, any online classes that you have would have no such restrictions and you would be able to attend those at home.

In terms of the sessions that you will be attending, they will be structured in this way:

- **Studios.** These are similar in nature to a lecture, but they will be more interactive and give you more opportunity to engage with the theory and technical aspects of the module. This is a move away from the standard lecture, which had limited opportunity to engage with the lecturer and fellow students.
- **Workshops.** These will be like previous workshops that you have attended before the Covid19 pandemic. They will be an opportunity for you to work in groups, solve problems and work through exercises.
- **Student Huddles.** In these sessions you will again work on exercises and will have peer support from Student Coaches (which I'll tell you more about later).

Each of the above sessions will be four hours in length and you will have one of these sessions every week for four weeks. Most modules will start with a Studio and be followed by Workshops and Huddles, however, there may be one or two modules that don't follow this format and the module leader will explain how they will deliver the module. We have worked hard to give you the opportunity to attend on campus where possible, however if you feel that you are unable to attend due to Covid19 concerns or health issues you can still attend online. If you wish to do this, please notify your module leader, personal tutor and myself as programme director.

At the time of writing, it is anticipated that only the Workshops will be on campus and the Studio and Student Huddle will be online. If Government guidelines suggest that we cannot have on campus classes, then we will move the classes completely online. If guidelines are relaxed, then it is anticipated that the Student Huddles will move to on campus sessions. We are also aware that there may be some students who are shielding or have concerns about being on campus and in this instance, you would be able to study completely online after discussing things with your Personal Tutor, Module Leader or myself as Programme Director. We are aiming to give you the opportunity to be on campus at least once a week where possible. Timetables will be available the week commencing the 28th of September.

The delivery of your CSM modules may be slightly different, with delivery over the 12 week Term. Your Module Leader for these modules will explain their delivery in the first week.

We will be approaching your online learning through **Microsoft Teams** and it is important you are prepared for this prior to your first session. You can find out how to download Teams by going to the [Microsoft Teams](#) page on Study. The [Digital Communication](#) section of the Digital Skills Moodle module has more on using Teams, and you are encouraged to complete the [Digital Essentials](#) re-induction and Intro to Teams training. You have already been contacted to do this so please check your emails for more information. We will also be using Moodle as an online platform in conjunction with the use of Teams.

Timetables will be finalised before your return and will be available w/c 28th September. Those sessions not on campus, will not have a room number but will have "Online" to identify this session as a Teams Meeting that will occur online. You will be added to Teams Group for the Module and your specific Workshop/Huddle Group. The timetable sessions will be set up in these Teams and will appear in your calendar in Outlook/Teams for you to accept so that you can join the class at the specific time within your calendar/timetable. You will see the invites in your Outlook/Teams calendar so please accept them (you may not receive email notifications). For the on-campus sessions, two room numbers will be provided; you will be emailed confirmation of which room to attend before teaching starts.

Attendance is expected of you at each session, whether it is online or on campus. Teaching in Blocks does give the advantage of giving you greater focus in your learning, but at the same time you need to fully engage as you will otherwise quickly fall behind. We have designed the programme in this way to give you more control of your learning, but at the same time you will need to attend every class to ensure that you give yourself the best learning experience. Any non-attendance will be recorded and you will be notified of your lack of engagement.

Student Coaches have been introduced to the programme to offer peer support. They are fellow students who would have usually progressed to the next year or master's students who can offer you peer support. The idea of peer support is being used across many universities and they would be able to offer advice from the perspective of a fellow student. You will be aware of them mainly in the Student Huddles but as restrictions relax you will also see them around the Cardiff School of Technologies building.

Personal Tutors Every student at the University has a personal tutor to support you with pastoral and academic advice and you will be allocated one on joining the School. You can find out your Personal Tutor via the [Personal Tutor Portal](#). A specific PT Group will be set up within Teams for you to contact your Personal Tutor. You will meet your Personal Tutor on your first day (28th September) and you will also be asked to arrange a one-to-one meeting with them during that week, which you can book via the [Personal Tutor Portal](#). This will be a great opportunity for you to ask any questions, share

concerns and to plan your study for the coming months. If you would prefer a welsh-language Personal Tutor, please notify cstadministration@cardiffmet.ac.uk as soon as possible.

In terms of **Hardware and Software** you will need to be sure that you can run the appropriate software on your computer at home. Please check your Moodle modules for details of any specific software that you should use on your modules so that you can install it on your home computer. It would be easier for you to make use of your own computer as much as possible to prevent any spread of viruses. Additionally, if you feel that you have any issues with hardware, software or internet access, please let your personal tutor know.

Communication should be done through your University e-mail account and through Teams. Please keep a close eye on your emails and Teams and make sure you read anything sent to you. These are the official communication channels for the University and it is very important for you to continually check any communication that is sent to you and please check at least once a day and, better yet, set it up on your phone. Your personal e-mail account should not be used.

University begins on the 28th of September with taught classes starting on the of 5th of October. Please make sure that you understand your timetable and work with your personal tutor and myself to make your first weeks at University as smooth as possible.

I have summarised the above in this [podcast](#) and of course if you have any questions please contact using the contact details below. Additionally, School Reps are appointed by the Students' Union (SU) as the figurehead rep for each school. It is their responsibility to recruit and manage the rep structure within the school and to act as a link between the school and SU. They represent students at school and University level. Your School Rep for this academic year is Ian Smith: CSTRep@cardiffmet.ac.uk. You will have an opportunity to meet Ian during Induction Week.

I look forward to seeing you at the start of term and I hope you're looking forward to starting the academic year with the exciting new changes and a new way of learning.

Dr. Thanuja Mallikarachchi, Ph.D.

Lecturer in Data Science and Informatics

Programme Director for BSc (Hons) Computer Science, Business Information Systems

Email: TMallikarachchi@cardiffmet.ac.uk

