

03 June 2020

Dear Student,

I hope that you and your loved ones remain well in these challenging times.

I am writing to you as the Head of the Department of Materials at Imperial. You currently hold an offer from us to commence study on the MEng/BEng programmes in October 2020 and we are looking forward to welcoming you to the Department at the start of the new academic year.

You should have received a communication from the President and Provost of the College earlier today. I would like to clarify our departmental position and explain what it might mean for you on a more personal level. Whatever your personal circumstances, we will offer you a high-quality educational experience and a safe learning environment.

Autumn Term 2020

Along with the rest of the College, we will be delivering a combination of remote and on-campus (mixed-mode) learning and assessment. The MEng and BEng Materials Science and Engineering programmes will begin on schedule in October and we plan to reopen the Royal School of Mines for some activities. We are looking forward to seeing you in person, if travel and visa arrangements allow.

Studying Materials Science and Engineering at Imperial is a combination of understanding fundamental scientific principles and exploring engineering processes. Following our new curriculum introduced in 2019, we were the only department in the Faculty of Engineering to offer a full term of teaching this summer to students. So our current Year 1 students have already had a flavour of what remote teaching will be like as they have been attending lectures, workshops (problem-solving sessions with about 20 students), tutorials (pastoral and academic meetings in groups of 4 or 5) and laboratory classes (practical sessions with a lab partner) – all remotely. They are happily engaged with the blended learning environment from their own homes – they also have access to ‘virtual common rooms’ where they can meet up with friends and relax. This experience of successfully delivering our learning objectives to current students, enhanced by their feedback, means that we are well-placed to deliver our programmes this autumn.

What will this look like in Materials

Typical week for 1st year undergraduates

We will expect you to follow a full timetable schedule with lectures, workshops, tutorials, laboratories and assessments – typically a week will involve up to 15 hours of lectures, three to four hours of workshops, a one-hour pastoral/academic tutorial, four hours of engineering practice and four hours of laboratory classes when they begin.

Lectures

These will be a mixture of ‘blended learning’ or traditional lectures – which will be online until social distancing rules are relaxed. Blended learning may involve the pre-release of materials (either videos or lecture notes) and small group (8 to 12 students) discussions/workshops/problem-solving during the timetabled hour. Traditional lectures may involve a live presentation with mini breaks to answer questions. We believe both have worked well this term with many Year 1 students preferring the increased interactions that are possible online via Microsoft Teams.

Workshops and Tutorials

If you are with us on campus, then your workshops and tutorials will take place face-to-face where possible and social distancing can be observed. However, if you are unable to join us on campus, these will be offered remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Laboratory classes

These will be carefully redesigned to deliver experiences that fully meet the module learning objectives for all students – whether they are delivered remotely or face-face on campus. Current Year 1 students have already encountered four different laboratories this summer term. The successes and valuable lessons learned from these labs will help us plan and deliver labs more effectively.

Social

We were the first department in College to offer a virtual platform (common room) for our students to relax and enjoy each other's company from the comfort of their own homes. Our academic and well-being representatives (we have three elected officers for each year group) have taken a proactive approach to organise coffee mornings (where a few have even played their musical instruments), games evenings, quiz afternoons and other group events (last week, two of our Year 1 students took part in the 'Imperial's got Talent' show and won the competition).

Our community

We want to make you feel welcome and be a part of our active Materials community. Our team is highly experienced in delivering the programme and we have the facilities and resources to guarantee that you receive an outstanding education and enjoy an enriching experience during your undergraduate study. As usual, we will be working hard over the summer to be ready to welcome you and your new student colleagues during induction week.

How we can answer your questions

We know that you probably have many questions. To this end, please remember that our Admissions Tutor is hosting virtual Q&A events for offer-holders on Thursday 4th June and Friday 5th June 2020, where you will have the opportunity to meet a few of our current students.

It's not too late to Register

Follow this [link](#) to register for the event where you will be able to select a day and time of your convenience. Please feel free to submit your questions early so that we can ensure the topic is covered – you will have opportunities to ask questions live at the event also.

If you cannot join at these times, the presentation will be recorded, and you will be able to view it later. We will also add a [FAQ page](#) to our website after the event where we will answer the most common questions.

Thank you for choosing Imperial. You'll be joining an inclusive community of some of the brightest and interesting minds in the world. We are enthusiastic about you joining our outstanding student body and look forward to welcoming you in the autumn.

With all good wishes,

Yours faithfully,



Professor Peter D. Haynes
Head of Department of Materials