



Advice for University Students

During this global outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19), it is inevitable that students will have concerns for their health and safety and that of their loved ones. It is completely normal to be worried at this time and we should validate these feelings.

We need to ensure that we promote good mental and physical health during this time. For many of us, the extensive media coverage and inaccurate claims received through social media may trigger obsessive or paranoid thinking, panic feelings and unhelpful behaviours. Those with pre-existing mental health conditions, such as Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, are at a particular risk.

Many universities offer counselling services that are now providing support via online and video call platforms. If you have not used help before, reach out to your personal tutor in the first instance and they will signpost you to a counsellor. Your counselling support is handled in confidence and will not have an impact on your studies or degree classification. You can just ask for a referral to the counsellor. You might find it helpful to talk to your GP to discuss your concerns, who may offer treatment and/or refer you for talking therapy.

Things may be more challenging if you are an international student or based far away from your family. Check in with the international office to see what further support they will be providing. If you are an international student or based far away from your family, please also email akeb@iuk.org for support.



Helpful links:

The following is a list of published guidance on what to do to manage our anxieties and look after our mental health and wellbeing:

- [Anxiety UK - Health and other forms of anxiety and coronavirus](#)
- [BBC - Coronavirus: How to manage anxiety and OCD during the pandemic](#)
- [Mind - Coronavirus and your wellbeing](#)
- [Student Minds - Support for a friend](#)

A few things to remember

- **Social interactions really matter:** Simple and sensible actions prevent us from feeling lonely and becoming depressed. These include staying in touch with our family and friends over the phone, on social media and through video calls. Set up video conferencing meetings with your peers for study and social interactions - [Zoom](#) is free and easy to use.
- **Plan a varied routine and look after yourself:** Schedule a routine for yourself which includes time for study, healthy eating, exercise, rest, relaxation and prayer. Exercise releases endorphins (happy hormones) that can help to keep your mood up. Think about creative ways of incorporating exercise into your daily routine - there are a host of free exercise videos online. We can still do a lot of activities that we enjoy or use our time to discover a new hobby or learn a new skill.
- **Meditation or mindfulness:** Take time to practice meditation or mindfulness, helping to build your resilience and mental health. There are many mindfulness videos online and AKHB will be posting mindfulness videos every Monday on Al-Saha.
- **Eating a balanced healthy diet:** Having healthy meals and snacks is essential. You can share recipe ideas with friends and family.
- **Ismaili Student Network (ISN):** Your ISN representative will be in touch to set up a virtual meeting - if you haven't connected with ISN this is a chance to make new friends. If you are not sure who your ISN representative is and would like to be involved in these virtual meet ups, or have any questions, please email info@isn.org.





Nurture a growth mindset

Disruption to your studies will induce all sorts of concerns, whichever stage you are at in your degree. Remember universities are doing everything they can to support your studies and your progress and have also moved to online teaching. Some courses will still have coursework submissions and exams may even be moved online. Details are still being confirmed and communicated but please make sure you reach out to your personal tutor if you are unsure about next steps.

During this time, there are many things you can do to help your studies and future prospects:

- **Find ways to keep progressing with your education:** Take up extra online courses that can enhance your career prospects. Find online courses and opportunities that help to refine your 'soft skills', the critical skills for the twenty-first century stated in the [World Economic Forum](#). Any further studying you can do now will put you in a strong position for recruitment. [Headstart](#) offered by AKEB has a range of courses.
- **Consider looking for online internships or creating internships:** The disruption to the economy means interns will be highly valued by companies. As we head into the summer take the initiative to reach out to companies and offer your skills as an intern.
- **Build your online networking skills:** Stretch yourself to get familiar with sites such as [LinkedIn](#). Follow influencers and learn how to build your profile and strengthen your network. This connectivity is as powerful as your existing social platforms and will help you to plan for the future and build useful networks.
- **Take the opportunity to get involved with helping others:** Proactively check in with your university and the students' union to see if there are any activities you could take part in during this period. We need to remember that we can still play an active role in helping others, which will not only help in reducing the risk and suffering of those who are more vulnerable than us, but is also a very fulfilling experience.



We are pulling together further resources to help you navigate your way through your degree programme. If you would like to stay in touch and access this information or have questions related to anything in this article please email akeb@iiuk.org. Alternatively, you can contact the Coronavirus Support Helpline on 0208 191 0911 or by emailing coronasupport@iiuk.org.