



Ebola: advice and risk assessment for universities and further education establishments

There is currently an outbreak of Ebola Virus Disease occurring in West Africa. It was first reported in March 2014 in Guinea and since late May has now spread to involve four countries: Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria (so far all the cases in Nigeria have been linked to transmission from a single imported case; there is no evidence of wider transmission in that country).

Ebola is a rare but serious viral infection. However, people in the UK are not at risk of Ebola as the virus is only transmitted by direct contact with the blood or bodily fluids of an infected person. **There have been no cases of Ebola Virus Disease contracted in the UK** during the current outbreak and the risk of Ebola arriving in the UK is **very low**.

A British national who has been diagnosed with Ebola was repatriated from Sierra Leone in August 2014 under highly controlled conditions for treatment in the UK. It remains unlikely but not impossible that persons infected in Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone could arrive in the UK. The affected countries have introduced exit screening at airports to ensure that individuals who are unwell do not board flights. This is in line with World Health Organization (WHO) guidance and is one of many measures to reduce the risk of international spread of disease. However, as the time between contact with an infected person and symptoms first appearing can range from 2 – 21 days, it is possible that students returning from affected countries could develop symptoms up to three weeks after arrival.

In summary:

- the risk of Ebola arriving in the UK is **very low**
- there have been several previous outbreaks of Ebola in other parts of Africa, but none have led to cases occurring in Europe
- transmission of Ebola from person to person is by direct contact with the blood and body fluids of an ill person with the disease; the virus is not spread by the airborne route
- the time between contact with the infected person and the time that first symptoms appear (incubation period) of Ebola ranges from two to 21 days
- any persons arriving back in the UK having travelled from any of the affected countries, and who are free of symptoms, are **not infectious** and there should be **no restrictions** on their education or normal activities.

The attached algorithm has been developed to assist universities and other further educational establishments who may have students returning or visiting from affected countries.

All staff who have contact with students should be aware of what to do if a student falls ill and there is [guidance](#) on infection control in non-hospital settings.

Responsibility for any additional assessment of medical students, nursing students and other healthcare students deployed to hospitals and other health care facilities will lie with the occupational health services in those settings.

There is little evidence that the provision of protective equipment is effective in general settings, including within the university and college context.

Further information about the Ebola outbreak can be obtained from your local health protection team and on the following websites:

To find your local health protection team

[http://legacytools.hpa.org.uk/AboutTheHPA/WhatTheAgencyDoes/LocalServices/Postcode Search/](http://legacytools.hpa.org.uk/AboutTheHPA/WhatTheAgencyDoes/LocalServices/PostcodeSearch/)

Public Health England (including the outbreak and maps of affected area):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/ebola-virus-disease-clinical-management-and-guidance>

WHO:

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/index.html>

Ebola: environmental cleaning guidance for potential contamination (excluding healthcare settings)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ebola-environmental-cleaning-guidance-for-potential-contamination-excluding-healthcare-settings>

Foreign travel advice

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

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Ebola risk assessment in further educational establishments

This algorithm is to inform the assessment of unwell students in further educational establishments, and will assist the public health response and ensure the appropriate organisations are informed. If the student is unable to answer questions, please seek information from an appropriate adult.

