

Scotland begins student virus tests before Christmas

November 28 2020, by Stuart Graham



The centuries-old university has set up the centre as part of a rollout of Covid-19 tests for students across Scotland

As an unusual term comes to a close and Christmas holidays draw closer, students at the University of St Andrews in Scotland filed in and out of a

sports hall that has been transformed into a mass coronavirus testing centre.

"It's a huge piece of mind just to be able to go home and be with my family, knowing that everything is safe," Fiona Waddell, a 19-year-old psychology student said before the centre opens for testing on Saturday.

"We're lucky enough that we are able to be together at Christmas and I just don't want anything to compromise that," she told AFP.

The centuries-old university on Scotland's northeast coast has set up the centre as part of a rollout of COVID-19 tests for students across Scotland before the end of term.

The facility, where students self-test with one of the million lateral flow test kits that have been provided to Scotland by the UK government, has the capacity for 1,500 students each day.

It will remain open until December 18 with students who plan to return home for the festive break asked to take two tests three days apart.

The UK government in London, which sets [health policy](#) for England, and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have unveiled plans to allow students to return home for Christmas.

All want to minimise the chance of spreading the virus as they travel.

Students in England and Wales have been asked to return home during a week-long travel window after taking [coronavirus](#) tests.

In Scotland a staggered return is planned across the seven-day window.



A survey by the St Andrews Students' Association found some 80 per cent of students are planning to go home for the holidays

'Good opportunity'

Alastair Merrill, vice-principal for governance at St Andrews, said the asymptomatic testing initiative meant when students returned home they can "keep their families and communities safe when they do so".

Results from the lateral flow tests are shown within 30 minutes and processed and sent to students within 24 hours.

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percent of students are planning to go home for the holidays.

Rebecca Clunie, a 22-year-old chemistry [student](#), who swabbed her throat and the back of her nose to self-administer the test, said taking the [test](#) earlier meant she could self-isolate before going home—if that was necessary.

"Even if it is positive I've still got time to self-isolate before I have to go home," she explained.

Anna-Ruth Cockerham, a 20-year-old studying mathematics, said it was going to be good to get home after a term where [social interaction](#) had been limited because of the virus.

"I think as well many students, myself included, haven't had the opportunity to really mix with other people so to be able to go home and see your family is a good opportunity," she added.

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