# COVID-19 preparations: Information for applicants

You will be aware that universities, in common with everyone else, are having to adapt their plans in order to continue to operate safely whilst the risk of COVID-19 infection remains at large. Such planning is necessarily responsive to changing advice and regulation from Government, and from the central authority within the collegiate university. At present we are not in a position to state exactly how teaching on the MSt in Building History will be delivered in the coming academic year (2020-21). We are, however, committed to running the course, and this note is to give you some sense of our expectations for the year ahead.

We have had the opportunity to make some amendments already. After lock-down was announced, and with the support of our many course contributors, external as well as internal, we transferred our third residential course of the year to an online platform. This had to be achieved in a matter of only a few weeks, and both we and the students approached it with perhaps understandable trepidation. The outcome, however, was highly successful, and we have had overwhelmingly positive feedback from our students. This gives us confidence to believe that for as long as online delivery is essential for the safety of our students and staff, we can continue to offer a high-quality and undiminished teaching experience.

A key attraction of the MSt in Building History is its reliance upon field visits and exercises. Currently these are suspended, and we have concluded that with prolonged requirements for social distancing it will be impossible to resume them as soon as October. We will therefore begin the new academic year with an online course. Fortunately, in the nine years since the course was launched we have accumulated a large archive of illustrative and research materials for the sites we visit. This material enables us to devise virtual visits and exercises of comparable range and intensity. However, it remains our intention to reinstate field visits at the earliest opportunity. We have some scope to reorganise the timetable, and to provide a richer diet of visits in the latter part of the year when these have been curtailed in the early months. Exercises may also be timetabled differently from our usual pattern in order to minimise dependence on online delivery.

On top of these preparations, you should be confident that the Faculty of Architecture and History of Art within which we operate, and the wider collegiate university, are making huge efforts to maintain the high quality of student learning which you would expect from Cambridge, and to maximise the range of digital learning resources. These are unprecedented times, and we are taking all possible steps to ensure that teaching continues to be effective, and that your learning experience remains rich and fulfilling.