

NEWS FROM OVERSEAS OU AMBASSADORS



Will Beckinsale (C 99) and Sam Hatt (F 99) at St Hilda's College, Buenos Aires, Argentina

As educators, it has been hard to adjust to these unprecedented circumstances, especially the loss of the classroom's social dynamic.

Buenos Aires' record breaking cuarentena is starting to get tremendously tedious, but for those living in the vast shanty towns it has become a stark, tragic choice; break the lockdown or face starvation.

Our lockdown snaps are no doubt not too dissimilar to other teachers around the world; laptop, books, planner and some form of caffeine!



Charles Atherton (C 54), Athens, Greece

Charles reported that the end of lockdown restrictions are progressing well in Greece.

We recently shared news of Charles's book on the OU Network on LinkedIn 'From Startup to Success', where he shares his experiences on starting a new business, from the initial idea to running a profitable company. Available on Amazon at <https://amzn.to/2zTreEx>

Feel free to get in touch with Charles directly at charles@charlesatherton.org, he'll be pleased to answer any questions.



Anthony Couse (SH 79), Singapore

We are in week 10 of the lockdown in Singapore which is wearing thin to say the least. The good news is my 5-month-old son is keeping me entertained!



Simon Prosser (F 72), New York, USA

Currently working remotely in Southampton, Long Island while my home neighborhood Chelsea is boarded up from the protests. Prior to this month, stayed in the city which was weirdly quiet until last week.

Philip 'Trev' Baker (Fgh 77), California, USA

Needless to say, there are many worse places than Newport Beach in which to suffer lockdown. It is a bit like an extended holiday, but I have to say that the novelty has worn off and I am looking forward to getting back to some normalcy! Clearly, retirement is something that will not suit me at all!



John Bird (L 67), Fremantle, Western Australia

During lockdown, Western Australians could go out but not mingle with others - ideal for walking dressed in warm clothes in this cooler weather.

Note – John is wearing his Uppingham bobble hat!

Tom Ray (Hf 00), Sydney, Australia

To be honest, I've been working from home almost two years now, so COVID has had a minimal impact on work/life. We moved out of Sydney to the Blue Mountains back in Jan. As you can see from the photos, it's not a bad place to be – where it's just nature and minimal humans, means social distancing is easy, so I still run and work as usual.



Ben Dowson (LH 79), Jakarta, Indonesia

Photo taken during Friday prayers at my local mosque in Cipete, South Jakarta. It's fifty yards down the street from my place, so you can't get more local than that. Actually, I was quite surprised to see the faithful all dutifully masked, and hand sanitizer being provided at the entrance. Mask-wearing has been officially mandated in public areas - and of course, being Asian, Indonesians are big on mask-wearing even in normal times. In the current situation, even I put a mask on to go to a supermarket. But here in the kampung, you don't tend to see too much of it.

Generally speaking, the lockdown in Indonesia has been piecemeal, and late. We have a low death rate, so I assume a low infection rate too - probably thanks to the obsessive mask-wearing, perhaps combined with the hot and humid climate. Jakarta was sealed off from the rest of Java about a month ago, but the blockades are arbitrary and porous. Indonesians were not allowed to go home for the Idul Fitri holiday at the end of Ramadan two weeks ago, which caused some consternation, but generally people have been quite understanding. Up in the Philippines, the situation is quite different - but the police have guns there, and Duterte condones (some would say encourages) their use. I'm supposed to be moving to Mindanao to run a project there. Bit scary, to tell you the truth.

Pratapsinh 'Mickey' Gaekwad (WD 85), Mumbai, India

In India, the real threat of the covid-19 started from Feb 2020 and from the 23rd March the entire country has been under a strict lockdown. Initially the PM announced a 2 day voluntary curfew, after which a 21 day lockdown was announced. Thereafter we have remained under a very strict lockdown till date.

The covid-19 virus has been something that has been imported into the country, as a result the first cases were found in large cities like Mumbai and New Delhi which have a lot of international flights.

The idea behind the lockdown was to stop community transmission, give time to medical services providers to gear up and flatten the curve of the growth of the virus. Unfortunately, in Mumbai the numbers still seem to be rising and the medical services providers are getting overwhelmed.

The lock down has also had a severe impact on the economy, and the real fallout of this is still unknown. There are many companies laying off employees, cutting costs, and migrant workers / daily wage earners have had to deal with serious hardships as they struggle to make ends meet. While we have tried to flatten the covid-19 curve, we seem to have flattened the economic curve too.

For me personally the lockdown was a time to reflect, and also reassess many aspects of my life, personal as well as business related.

While some of our businesses were closed, our veterinary business / Crown Vet continued to run all through the lockdown, as it was classified under essential services. Every day was a challenge, while we had to put in new protocols for the safety of our teams and clients, we also had to become a logistics company, as there was no public transport and we had to work out the most efficient routes to pick up and drop our team members!

In the month of April one of our drivers fell ill, and on testing was found to be covid-positive! This brought out new challenges – firstly how do we deal with a covid-19 employee, how do we get him admitted into a hospital and provide him with the necessary treatment, while at the same time quarantine his wife and 3 children. It was quite a traumatic experience trying to coordinate these things, but it taught us what we needed to do if we had such cases in future.

Once the news of this spread, suddenly we had a large no of employees that stopped coming to work but we were determined to keep our clinics open and support our patients / clients through this period. We restructured our teams, we cut down some of our services, but we never allowed our clinics to shut.

Today, fortunately our driver who had tested positive has received the necessary treatment and has been discharged by the hospital and we are looking forward to getting him back to work, and many of our staff have also returned.

The lockdown is now coming to an end, and everyone is gearing up towards this. Unfortunately, the number of cases in large cities like Mumbai, which are so densely populated, are not showing signs of coming down, but we are all coming to terms with the fact that this is here to stay for some time. So we have a choice, stay isolated till they find a vaccine OR accept the reality – wear a mask, wash your hands, maintain a distance and get on with life – we are moving forward with the latter.

Our thanks to everyone for contributing photos and news.

Our Ambassadors act as a point of contacts for those travelling to different countries or seeking advice. A full list is [available here](#), drop us a line if you'd like to get in touch.

