



INDEPENDENT
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EDUCATION

Covid-19 Update: 30 March

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Independent Higher Education



IHE Hub

- IHE Covid-19 Hub
 - <http://independentthe.com/activities/covid-19-hub>
 - Bringing together information from across government, sector and commercial suppliers
- FAQs
 - <http://independentthe.com/activities/covid-19-hub/faq>
 - Pulled together from the questions asked at the daily drop-in sessions



Recap from last week: Government

- Letter from Universities Minister
 - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/office-for-students-sets-out-slimmed-down-regulatory-requirements-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>
- OfS regulatory revisions and requirements
 - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/office-for-students-sets-out-slimmed-down-regulatory-requirements-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>
- Financial and economic support for businesses
 - <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/>
- Home Office guidance and information
 - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents>
 - Online learning: [https://www.carterthomas.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020.03.26_UKVI-Coronavirus-COVID-19-Update - Guidance-for-sponsors.pdf](https://www.carterthomas.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/2020.03.26_UKVI-Coronavirus-COVID-19-Update_-_Guidance-for-sponsors.pdf)
- Department for Education – travel for students and accommodation
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-advice-for-educational-settings/coronavirus-travel-guidance-for-educational-settings>
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-isolation-for-residential-educational-settings/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-isolation-for-residential-educational-settings#university-or-college-halls-of-residence-for-students-aged-18-or-over>



Recap from last week: Sector

- JISC Covid-19 information and resources including tips for online learning
 - <https://www.jisc.ac.uk/coronavirus>
- HESA updates, including Graduate Outcomes training and events and Liaison Team information
 - <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/coronavirus>
- UCAS updates for students, advisers and providers
 - <https://www.ucas.com/coronavirus-updates-hub>
- QAA support and guidance including standards and quality and degree-awarding body advice
 - <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/support-and-guidance-covid-19>



Office for Students: New FAQ

- OfS have updated their FAQ:
 - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/coronavirus/provider-guide-to-coronavirus/questions-and-answers/>
- This now includes new information on Degree Apprenticeships:
 - **“What are the current expectations of providers delivering degree apprenticeships?”**

The Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education has stated that:

‘Every effort should continue to be made to ensure that apprentices can continue with their apprenticeship and be assessed in accordance with current EPA (End-Point Assessment) plan and EQA (External Quality Assurance) requirements if possible. Where this is not possible, providers should first consider whether it is appropriate to extend the apprenticeship in order to reschedule the EPA.’

You can find more information on the Institute for Apprenticeship’s and Technical Education’s response to Covid-19 and FAQs related to the delivery of apprenticeships on their website.”



Department for Health

- The Department for Health and Social Care as released guidance on mental health support during the outbreak.
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing/guidance-for-the-public-on-the-mental-health-and-wellbeing-aspects-of-coronavirus-covid-19>
- The guidance covers a wide range of support including positive steps to maintain good mental health and wellbeing, practical information about staying home, information for those on medication and where to get further support.



Cabinet Office

- The Cabinet Office has created a FAQ page on what the public can and cannot do at the moment.
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do>
- We understand that the Chancellor is working on a rescue package for charities affected by Covid-19. We don't yet have any details but charities are noting significant loss of earnings due to fundraising events being cancelled and shops closed.



HEPI

HEPI have published a blog on [*Eight interventions for mitigating the impact of Covid-19 on higher education*](#) which are suggestions on possible interventions to minimise institutional damage

1. Suspend the market in undergraduate applications
2. Address the impact of Covid-19 on retention and progression rates
3. Move immediately to announce rent support for students
4. Develop a fair and appropriate model for contextual admissions
5. Abandon the National Student Survey (NSS) for 2020
6. Stabilise the research base as funding will have been interrupted and deliverables lost
7. Establish a Digital Learning Leadership Fund
8. Higher education as a public good



IHE Survey

- IHE members (via Nominated Reps) and other independent providers will shortly receive an email with the link to the IHE Covid-19 Survey. Study Abroad providers will also have a specific survey to explore their issues.
- The survey has been created to record independent providers' experiences throughout this pandemic, as well as the economic impact of the restrictions put in place and will provide vital information for a number of sources:
 - Government departments including the Department for Education and the Home Office
 - Sector bodies including: Office for Students, QAA, and others
 - To add wider working groups with other representative bodies including Universities UK, Association of Colleges and Guild HE
 - Universities Minister - in particular economic impact
 - Independent HE – as we lobby on behalf of all independent providers



Universities, Schools and Colleges join the fight against COVID-19

- Universities UK are asking their members to share the things they are doing to [help in the fight against COVID-19](#). This includes research and innovation, medical students, and community projects such as performances, volunteering etc.
- IHE would like to do the same. Please let us know what actions you and your students are taking to support your communities, fight COVID-19 and boost spirits in this difficult time.
- Tweet us at @Independent_HE



This week's specialist themes

- On Wednesdays and Fridays we have special themes for the second half of the sessions. Join us and invite your colleagues to this week's themed sessions:
 - Wednesday – Admissions
 - Friday – Regulation



Contact IHE

- Info@independenthe.com



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Covid-19 Update: 1 April

Joy Elliott-Bowman & Megan Wells
Independent Higher Education



Home Office

1 April

- The Home Office has made temporary changes to right to rent and right to work checks.
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/temporary-changes-to-right-to-rent-and-right-to-work-checks>
- Until further notice, employers and landlords do not need to see original documents and can complete Right to Work/Rent checks over video calls.
- Renters or workers are able to submit scanned documents instead of original documents.
- Once the temporary changes end, landlords and employers will be asked to carry out the full checks on existing tenants and employees who rented a property or started work during the pandemic.
- Members noted challenges checking documents for External examiners – addressed by these changes



British Council Update on China

1 April

- The British Council has published an update on the reopening of schools and universities in China.
 - <https://education-services.britishcouncil.org/news/market-news/provinces-china-announcing-dates-staggered-reopenings-of-schools-and-universities>
- China is starting to re-open many of its schools and universities previously in lockdown over the next few weeks. The British Council have pulled together reopening dates based on location which is happening in a staggered approach.
- For TNE providers in China or those with partnerships, it is worth getting in touch with your partner to check the local situation.



Office for Students – Transparency Return

1 April

- [OfS have announced](#) that they are suspending requirement to submit transparency information in April 2020, and withdrawing the requirement to do so that was set out in the F1 Notice issued on 19 February 2020.
- Instead they will draw on HESA and ILR data to publish a reduced set of transparency information during this period.
- For providers that have already made a submission OfS will not undertake any further work on this or require any further information.
- The requirement to publish transparency information in June 2020 is suspended.



QAA

1 April

- QAA have new guidance up on their site, some publicly available and others just for QAA members.
- They have identified their priorities going ahead after the [Quality Discussion Forum](#).
 - Academic standards including teaching and assessment and academic integrity
 - Work based learning including placements, partnerships and study abroad
 - Accelerated degrees
 - Practice and Lab-based work
- IHE is supporting the creation of this guidance, please get in touch if you have any feedback.
- Draft guidance shared on 3 April (to members and sector bodies), published on 8 April latest for public
- The publication of the guidance will be accompanied by a series of webinars for QAA members
- New [Blog by QAA CEO today](#) on maintaining standards in challenging times



NUS

1 April

- The National Union of Students has called for all non-essential exams to be cancelled.
 - <https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/nus-uk/coronavirus-covid-19-hub/press-lines-and-communications/nus-calls-for-non-essential-exams-to-be-cancelled>
- This covers non-essential formal exams for first- and second-years students and have asked institutions for flexible solutions to progression for these students.
- They have set put a set of proposed options including:
 - Final year students can choose to complete and graduate with a grade given based on their prior attainment
 - If final years want to graduate or complete their courses this academic year and want the opportunity to take an exam or submit a dissertation, they should be given this through a redesigned, open-book exam format or a flexible submission deadline.
 - Students who wish to, should have the option to extend their time in education to complete their degrees.



Shakespeare Martineau

1 April

- Commercial Partner, Shakespeare Martineau is running a webinar on Friday 3 April at 12:30pm on [Coronavirus and the Student Experience](#)
- Smita Jamdar, Partner at SHMA, has also written an article in Wonkhe on assessing student rights and provider conditions after Covid-19
 - Explores the force majeure clause or a right to vary clauses often found in an institution's terms and conditions.
 - Discusses whether losses by students must be caused by the institution's breach of contract and not the wider disruption caused by the pandemic.
 - <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/student-rights-and-provider-conditions-after-covid-19-2/>



UK Council for Graduate Education

1 April

- The UK Council for Graduate Education has published guidance on conducting vivas online.
 - www.ukcge.ac.uk/article/supporting-members-during-covid-19-coronavirus-pandemic-454.aspx
- There is a series of free online events to support providers conduct these vivas and providers can either register on zoom or watch live on YouTube if the session is full.



Research Libraries UK

1 April

- Research Libraries UK has published a letter to ministers, calling for support for librarians and tutors in HE who feel the move online may breach content licences.
 - <https://www.rluk.ac.uk/letter-to-ministers-copyright-and-enabling-remote-learning-and-research-during-the-covid-19-crisis/>
- They are calling for copyright rules to be relaxed for the foreseeable future to enable online and remote learning during Covid-19 pandemic.



Welsh Minister on support for students

1 April

- Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education at the Welsh Assembly has written to Welsh HEIs on providers supporting students through this time.
 - <https://gov.wales/letter-minister-education-kirsty-williams>
- She reemphasises calls about supporting students still residing in student accommodation, particularly for those who are feeling isolate.
- The letter also states that the Welsh Government are reviewing with all student support policies and working with SLC on this, or that the admissions cycle should be impacted by calculated grades.
- They are also in contact with HEFCW about regulatory requirements for HE institutions in Wales and HEFCW will be in contact with providers shortly.



Mental Health

1 April

- The Times have reported on the mental health implications in education following lockdown and the upheaval of learning as a result.
 - <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/young-in-limbo-as-university-studies-halted-by-coronavirus-hit-career-ambitions-b30dbznqq>
- It looks at the how students across the country are coping with changes to courses, uncertainty about grades and final exams and isolating in student accommodation.
- Next Thursday (9 April), members Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust will be leading a webinar on *How to Support Staff and Student Psychological Wellbeing during Covid-19*.
- Details will be sent around shortly to members



Student Protection Plans

1 April

- Wonkhe have published an article about Student Protection Plans and their place in this pandemic.
- They say that whilst providers have set out these plans to protect students, often they did not cover all the risks with many arguing that the risk of failing was ‘vanishingly small’.
- Can they be applied when they were intended for a handful of providers to face challenges, not all providers?
- The article argues that as the risks have changed so much, so should the student protection plans and the guidance on them too.
 - <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/if-the-risks-have-changed-then-so-should-the-protections/>



Institute of Economic Affairs

1 April

- The Institute of Economic Affairs have uploaded a video looking at those who can work at home their productivity.
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oYt6nFa6JQ&feature=youtu.be
- They have also published a report on productivity levels of workers from home
 - <https://iea.org.uk/publications/pass-the-remote/>



No detriment petitions

1 April

- Over the last week, hundreds of thousands have signed petitions calling for “no detriment” or “safety net” policies to be applied to final year assessments studying at providers across the country.
- The students are calling for policies ensuring no student would receive a grade which is worse than their current performance across the degree so far.
- Providers have noted the implications for PSRB requirements which dictate which work must be graded for accreditation.
- Wonkhe look at if and how these principles could be applied by institutions.
 - <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/can-universities-safely-implement-no-detriment-policies/>



Accessibility of online provision

1 April

- Many questions are being raised about the accessibility of moving provision online for many students.
- Wonkhe has published an article about the impact moving courses online has on students with hearing impairments, as well as those students who do not have the sufficient IT equipment and connections to access their learning.
 - <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/ethical-debt-and-the-great-online-pivot/>
- IPPR have also put out research looking into the accessibility of resources for school aged children which has lessons for all levels of education:
 - https://www.ippr.org/files/2020-03/1585586431_children-of-the-pandemic.pdf



Shift from expansion to teaching

1 April

- The Times has published an article on arguing that universities will have to shift their current thinking from expansion to teaching provision in light of Covid-19.
- With expansion increasing quickly over the last few years, the article suggests that teaching is going to be the most important factor moving forward to have a better-education workforce and invest in contact hours, mental health provision and quality not quantity of delivery.
- The also advocate for more sandwich courses, internships and degree apprenticeships.
 - <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/if-universities-want-a-bail-out-they-need-to-change-their-ways-k8rtpcsvz>



BEIS

1 April

- BEIS is calling on businesses to offer support to the response to Covid-19 where possible.
 - <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus-support-from-business>
- Support needed includes
 - medical testing equipment
 - medical equipment design
 - protective equipment for healthcare workers, such as masks, gowns and sanitiser
 - hotel rooms
 - transport and logistics, for moving goods or people
 - manufacturing equipment
 - warehouse or office space, for medical use or storage
 - expertise or support on IT, manufacturing, construction, project management, procurement, engineering or communications
 - social care or childcare



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

1 April

- The Foreign and Commonwealth Office has partnered with airlines to repatriate British travelers stuck abroad.
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-government-partnership-with-airlines-to-fly-back-more-tourists-stranded-abroad>
- The aim is to bring back tourists and those who are stuck abroad to the UK who have not been able to get home since the lockdowns across the world and travel restrictions.
- They are prioritising countries with large numbers of stranded travelers and the needs of them.
- If any students or staff are stuck aboard, can check out if they can get home through the FCO travel advice pages.
 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-government-partnership-with-airlines-to-fly-back-more-tourists-stranded-abroad>



ONS

1 April

- The Office for National Statistics has a Coronavirus (Covid-19) roundup bringing together the latest information on Covid-19 and the impact on the economy and society.
 - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/coronaviruscovid19roundup/2020-03-26>



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Information on Admissions

1 April

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Director of Policy and Development



OfS: Unconditional offer making

- The [Office for Students has asked](#) all providers to pause all unconditional offer-making and changes to existing offers for two weeks from 23 March. [They have published guidance on what this means on their website.](#)
- The moratorium applies in the following cases:
 - any activity to adjust existing offers, including to make them unconditional
 - offer-making for mature and other applicants who are not reliant on A-levels, BTECs and similar qualifications, or who already have confirmed results from A-levels, BTECs and similar qualifications in previous years
 - offer-making for UK, EU and international applicants
 - where providers were intending to make unconditional offers to applicants before changes to A-levels for this year were announced.



OfS: Unconditional offer making

- This guidance/moratorium does apply to changes to existing offers and those not primarily based on A-level and BTEC grades
- New conditional offers can be made – must be reasonable
- DfE, OfS, UCAS, and UUK are working to develop any adjustments which may be needed after the moratorium is lifted



Department for Education: entry qualifications

23 March

- GCSEs, AS and A Levels have been cancelled by the Education Secretary – what does this mean for HE providers?
- Calculate grade from predicted grade, teacher assessment and prior attainment. Calculated grade will be the formal grade used for FE and HE entry.
- Ofqual will develop and set out a process that will provide a calculated grade to each student which reflects their performance as fairly as possible
- Advice is to be flexible on admissions but not to start making new unconditional offers.
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020/coronavirus-covid-19-cancellation-of-gcses-as-and-a-levels-in-2020>



UCAS

23 March

- UCAS have brought together resources for students, advisers and providers on the admissions related Covid-19 implications.
- <https://www.ucas.com/providers/coronavirus-update>
 - Includes information for Level 3 results from UK nations
 - Includes information where available on international assessments
- Includes information on the exam announcements of all four nations, as well as impact on international qualifications
- Updated information on UCAS events cancelled.



UCAS

- UCAS Teacher Training and DfE Apply for Teacher training on hold for four weeks from 20 March
- UCAS for International Students:
 - One stop shop of UCAS information and some information on COVID-19
 - <https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/ucas-undergraduate-international-and-eu-students>



UCAS Engagement

- **Insight to support you** – we'll issue regular analysis full of insight to shed light on the behaviours of applicants and providers. This will focus on issues affecting international applicants, course variations, offer making, withdrawals, and acceptances. The first of these will be published on Friday 27 March on the [provider pages](#) on [ucas.com](#).
- **A student's view** – as you recruit this, and next year's students, reflecting their mood in both your communications and decision making is going to be key. Join us, and our partners, YouthSight, over the coming months, for a series of free webinars full of insight on how students are feeling and what they are looking for from those around them.
- **Increase your recruitment reach** – we're making Unibuddy on [ucas.com](#) free to providers until 1 August, except for a small set-up fee. The peer-to-peer network gets your existing students in front of those looking for courses or unis, meaning you can keep connecting with prospective students. Unibuddy will support your onboarding and launch – so within days you'll be up and running.
- **Promotion of your virtual events** – if you've moved from open days to a virtual offering, then don't forget to update your event information. We'll then promote the events you're running across our networks free of charge.
- **Benefit from UCAS' social feeds** – we've got 280k followers on Facebook, so if you're planning a live event, for example Facebook Live, let us know and we'll promote it for you, and then, where possible, share it while it's streaming live.



QAA: Covid-19 guidance

25 March

- Admissions
 - Providers should keep in mind a range of factors for applicants anyway, not just grades.
 - Any changes to your admission processes would then need to be flagged to all applicants. You should also consider whether this requires a more in-depth appeals process.



ACSL

1 April

- The Association of College and School Leaders has published guidance on teacher-assessed grades
 - <https://www.ascl.org.uk/News/Our-news-and-press-releases/ASCL-publishes-guidance-on-teacher-assessed-grades>
- This guidance is to support schools and colleges prepare for the new system for calculated grades in lieu of summer exams.
 - <https://www.ascl.org.uk/ASCL/media/ASCL/Help%20and%20advice/Leadership%20and%20governance/CV-Emerging-principles-and-guidance-regarding-teacher-assessed-grades,-summer-2020-30-March-2020.pdf>



UUK-led working group

- IHE member of working group
- Issues tracker – what are the issues key to you
- Ofqual calls for multiple start dates
- Responsible admissions
- Moratorium on unconditional offers: What next?
 - Student Number Controls?



Contact IHE

- Info@independenthe.com