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# Covid-19 Update: 4 May

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Independent Higher Education*



# IHE Covid-19 Information Hub

## **IHE Covid-19 Information Hub**

<http://independentthe.com/activities/covid-19-hub>

Bringing together information and resources from across government, sector and commercial partners

## **FAQs**

<http://independentthe.com/activities/covid-19-hub/faq>

Collated from questions at Weekly Update and Member Drop-in sessions

## **Themed information and resources**

- Admissions and recruitment
- Finance and Human Resources
- International students and visas
- Regulation and the OfS
- Student welfare and support
- Teaching and learning



## IHE Drop-in schedule

- Monday a general update and drop-in webinar
- Wednesday a short general update and a specialist webinar with Q&A
- Fridays an email the essential information from the week
- We continue to update the IHE COVID-19 Information Hub with all the latest information.



# Webinar: TASO for independent providers

**When:** Tuesday 5 May, 12:00-13:00

**Who:** Eliza Kozman, Deputy Director (Research)

The Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) is a new independent hub for higher education professionals to access leading research and evaluation techniques to help widen participation and improve equality within the sector.

This webinar is an opportunity for independent higher education providers to learn more about the work of TASO and how they can get involved.

This webinar will cover:

- What is TASO and what does it do
- Gaps in current research base and where independent providers could help fill in the knowledge
- TASO's objectives / plans for the next year

If you are interested register [here](#)



# Last week's essential news

4 May 2020



# Higher Education Sector

The Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education [published](#) its [annual report](#).

Universities UK and MillionPlus released [a report](#), calling for the government to work with universities to mitigate against future capacity shortfalls in public services

London Higher released their [position paper](#) on the impact of Covid-19 on London's HE sector

HEPI have published a [paper](#) on the views of students entering the labour market.



# Finance and Human Resources

## *Bounceback loans*

- The Bounceback Loans Scheme was launched today:  
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-a-coronavirus-bounce-back-loan>
- SMEs can borrow between £2,000 and £50,000 with 100% guaranteed by Government
- 6 year terms, no fees, interest or repayments for first year

## *Useful resources*

[Newable Covid-19 SME Webinar Series](#) – with DIT

[BEIS Webinar Financial Support for Businesses](#) – 5 May



# Regulation

- Office for Students Deadlines and Forward look page:  
<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/deadlines/>
  - New dates for announcement of funding, prevent reviews update, student engagement funding
- Office for Students Registration Suspension – Providers in process should expect letters in the next few weeks.
- Institute for Apprenticeships new list of standards with temporary discretions or flexibilities:  
<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/covid-19/recent-announcements/list-of-standards-with-temporary-discretions-or-flexibilities/>



# Teaching and Learning

- QAA have released guidance on “No Detriment Policies”: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/support-and-guidance-covid-19/academic-standards-supporting-student-achievement> complete with a set of reflective questions for those considering them.
- QAA also have a new blog on Academic Integrity during COVID-19 which is important reading for those changing assessment models: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/blog/academic-integrity-in-canada-during-covid-19-reflections-from-the-university-of-calgary>
- Ofqual have a launched their consultation on proposals for awarding other general, vocational and technical qualifications which closes this week (8 May): <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/exceptional-arrangements-for-assessment-and-grading-in-2020>



# International Students

- The Home Office has issued new guidance on what to do if a migrants 30-day visa to work, study or join family has expired. TB tests must still be valid when the student does enter the UK. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-uk-visa-applicants-and-temporary-uk-residents#history>
- EU Students who access student finance as a **Migrant Worker** will be able to continue accessing finance even if they have lost their job due to COVID-19. We expect SLC to update their [guidance](#) shortly.
- The British Council has new webinars and COVID-19 education updates covering USA, India (exam dates), Nepal, Pakistan, Africa and wider Europe. Register to access information: <https://education-services.britishcouncil.org/user/register>



# Admissions and Recruitment

Blog from UCAS CEO – What is the Covid cohort saying about applying to university

Most applicants (69%) say the biggest effect of Covid-19 is financial

23% of respondents said that the outbreak has impacted on their mental health

86% sticking with their university choices

32% thinking about changes

87% believe they will still get a place

<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/what-is-the-covid-cohort-saying-about-applying-to-university/>



# Student Welfare and Student Support

DfE message – students should not be required to clear belongings from accommodation

OfS [published](#) - briefing note featuring IHE member Regent College. The briefing highlights the ways that providers have been supporting student mental health

Student Minds - blog for [student parents](#) and [updated their resources](#)

Universities UK - [briefing](#) developed to help universities continue to support staff and students at risk of domestic violence.



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# IHE support proposals and Government decisions



# Overview of government proposals

## Government support package for higher education providers and students

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-support-package-for-universities-and-students>

### *Admissions:*

- Student number controls based on provider forecasts plus 5%
  - 10,000 additional places – 5000 of these to nursing and allied health courses
  - Will not apply to international (non-EU) students
  - May be more exemptions
  - Those who do not abide by controls will have sums available through student finance system reduced in the subsequent academic year
- 
- OfS given more power and is consulting on new temporary registration Condition
  - UCAS boosting clearing process



# Overview of government proposals

## *Finance for students:*

- Increase in hardship funds/use of discretionary funding for those with existing teaching grant. This is not new money but the existing £46 million set aside for disadvantaged students.

## *International Students*

- Education Sector Advisory group to update International Education Strategy by autumn 2020 to respond to the impact of COVID-19
- Graduate immigration route still going ahead by summer 2021



# Overview of government proposals

## *Finance for Providers:*

- **Student loan fee payments will be re-structured next year to provide 50% in first payment.** Providers must manage their cash flow as this is a one-off intervention for autumn only
- Providers can access government support schemes including Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS), Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CLBILS) and COVID Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF).
- Providers can access Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
  - Providers should not draw down more than the proportion of public funding, **including student loans**, that they receive.
- Working with OfS to prioritise funding allocations to specialist providers
- DfE will intervene to support a provider only where needed, where it is possible and appropriate, and as a last resort. Will use a restructuring regime.
- Bringing forward £100m in Quality-related Research funding and establishing a DfE/BEIS Ministerial taskforce on university research sustainability.



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*Preserving student choice  
and a diverse higher  
education sector through  
2020-21*

Published 1 May 2020



# IHE support proposals

## *Proposals to Government*

Formal letter to Universities Minister Michelle Donelan requesting support for independent and SME providers

### *18 measures proposed in four areas*

- A. Cash flow** – to protect SME providers from closure in 2020 and support investment in their 2020-21 provision
- B. Admissions** – to promote stability across the entire higher education sector while preserving the flexibility the economy needs
- C. Investment** – to promote economic mobility with a diverse, flexible and responsive tertiary education sector
- D. Visa policy** – to protect the UK's hard-won position and reputation in the international education market



# Cash flow and business continuity

## *Proposed measures*

1. **Guarantee 100% of loans** to appropriately regulated SME providers through the CBILS up to £500,000 or 25% of turnover, whichever is the lower.
2. Extend the government subsidy of **OfS registration fees** from Micro providers only to all SME providers for 2019-20 and 2020-21.
3. Issue all appropriately regulated SME providers with a rebate for the **VAT paid** on their higher education tuition fees in the 2019-20 academic year.
4. Extend the 12-month **Business Rates Holiday** to cover all SMEs with premises zoned D1 for education purposes.
5. Permanently reprofile **Student Loans Company (SLC) tuition fee payments** to better support the cash flow of SME providers and the financial models of providers with multiple start dates and accelerated courses.



Cash flow  
and business  
continuity

—

Government  
response

### *Agreed as of 4 May 2020*

HE providers confirmed (generally) eligible for existing CBILS and larger loan schemes

HE providers confirmed eligible for CJRS furlough; wage bill limited proportionally to “commercial” income (not home fees)

Agreed to pay more of SLC tuition fees in Term 1 – details TBC

DfE will consider buying land & buildings for schools capacity

### *More still to come*

DfE are considering and will respond in coming weeks to IHE proposals re. loan guarantees for SME HE providers, VAT rebate and Business Rates Holiday



Cash flow  
and business  
continuity

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Government  
response

## *The last resort?*

*“We expect access to the business support schemes, reprofiling of public funding and student number controls should be **sufficient to help stabilise most providers’ finances**, and that should certainly be the first port of calls for providers.”*

*“Should that not be sufficient, such that a higher education provider finds themselves at risk of closure, we will only intervene further where we find there is a case to do so, and only where we believe intervention is possible and appropriate, and as a **last resort**.”*

*“In such instances, DfE will be working with HMT and other Government departments to develop a restructuring regime, through which we will review providers’ circumstances and assess the need for restructuring. Where action is required, **this will come with attached conditions**.”*



# Admissions and stability

## *Proposed measures*

1. Introduce responsible admissions framework for 2020-21
  - joint agreement of regulators and higher education representative bodies
  - providers to manage growth in domestic undergraduate enrolments for stability
2. Protect students in validation and subcontract relationships
  - ring-fence forecast numbers from lead partners
  - moderate increases in validated numbers for financial stability of smaller partner
  - student continuity as defining principle; clear sanctions may be needed
3. Adjustment process by which providers can responsibly revise forecasts
  - reflect up-to-date partnership activity, new programmes and start dates |
  - respond to emerging industry needs and more demand locally
4. Review admissions practices for long term
  - evidence-based, deliberate and collaborative process
  - different approaches in sector, needs of students across different provision
5. Maintain the current arrangements for the funding and mobility of EU students throughout the entirety of the 2021 calendar year.



# Admissions and stability

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# Government response

## *Agreed as of 4 May*

- Temporary student number controls of forecasts + 5% for UK/EU full-time undergraduates will include “certain specified exemptions”
- Additional 10,000 places for DfE to allocate (adjustments)
  - 5,000 for healthcare
- New “temporary” OfS registration condition is due to include protections for subcontracts and validation

## *Next steps*

- IHE will feed into detailed guidance to follow on SNCs, exemptions, extra allocations
- OfS consultation on registration condition



# Investment and transformation

## *Proposed measures*

1. Properly resourced & available **OfS registration service**
  - route for new & existing providers to access loans & visas
  - including a modified process this year
2. Fast-track the introduction of a **national skills fund**
  - retraining economically displaced workers
  - centred around professional short courses
  - Lift ELQ barrier for progression onto formal qualifications
3. Invest in a **blended learning transformation fund**
  - support SME providers to prepare for online and blended learning
4. Targeted support for **specialist institutions**
  - including those currently without public funding



## Investment and transformation

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## Government response

### *Agreed as of 4 May 2020*

DfE working with OfS to prioritise registration applications currently in process

“We are also continuing to work with the OfS to prioritise funding allocations to specialist providers.”

### *Next steps*

Modified registration process to be agreed for 2020

DfE to respond to IHE proposals in coming weeks



# International students

## *Proposed measures*

1. Boost confidence of prospective international students choosing the UK:
  - confirm they can study online or in person throughout 2020-21
  - allow them to apply for a visa for arrival within 9 months (when VAC reopen)
2. Maximise flexibility for international students up to 31 August 2020:
  - allow them to switch between all immigration routes
  - allow 'track record' providers to assess English language ability for all courses
  - allow CAS issued during this time to be used to apply up until 31 December
  - allow start dates to be modified after use where affected by Covid-19
3. Ensure that current international student is disadvantaged by Covid-19:
  - discretionary waiving of the time limit for study below and above degree level
  - waiving all fees for students extending leave to repeat modules or the year
4. Promote UK as first choice for international education in post-Covid world
  - pilot new flexible Blended Learning Visa allowing multiple entries and exits
  - responds to evolving public health measures globally for duration of the course.



# International students

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# Government response

## *Agreed as of 4 May*

- Learning online or in person currently permitted (“temporary concessions”)
- Flexibility on switching currently only up to 31 May 2020
- Home Office considering extending self-assessment of English language to foundation and pathway courses
- Home Office considering visa applications more than 3 months in advance but first priority is reopening Visa Application Centres

## *Next steps*

- DIT and DfE Education Sector Advisory Group meeting next week to consider steps needed and revision of International Education Strategy for autumn



# New this week

4 May 2020



# Office for Students Consultation

## *Consultation on the integrity and stability of the English higher education sector*

- New time-limited (365 days) condition of registration E6:
  - **The provider must not engage in any form of Conduct which in the opinion of the OfS could reasonably have a material negative effect on the Stability and/or Integrity of the English Higher Education Sector.**  
(Continuum of events back to 11 March 2020)
- Use of monetary penalties up to maximum level. Penalty for each instance of a breach.
- Providers may have to withdraw offers that have not yet been accepted by students
- OfS may take enforcement action on other conditions (e.g. C1)
- **[Complete the survey](#) by 26 May 2020; Proposals in late May or early June 2020**
- **IHE Webinar DATE**
- **[https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/aad2441c-6fd5-43f9-a2d7-f07e0f517ce2/consultation\\_reg\\_condition\\_finalforweb.pdf](https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/aad2441c-6fd5-43f9-a2d7-f07e0f517ce2/consultation_reg_condition_finalforweb.pdf)**



# Office for Students Consultation

## **The short-term stability of English higher education providers**

International student number decline may prompt providers to draw domestic students from other providers, exposing them to financial risk.

## **Recruitment practices that are not in the interests of students**

Incentives, gifts or discounts; switching conditional offers to unconditional ones or very low conditions; lowering academic or language requirements for international students

## **Providers seeking to obtain an unfair advantage over other providers**

Using the epidemic to take advantage of a temporary reduction in regulatory requirements

Making misleading statements about other providers or failing to comply with public commitments.

## **The wider interests of students and the public interest.**

“seeking financial support from government lending schemes at the same time as paying dividends to shareholders”

Behaviors can be found in Annex A



# UCAS Admissions changes

## UCAS changes Clearing 2020

<https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/more-personalised-options-and-support-ever-students-clearing-2020>

- Both 'placed' and 'unplaced' students will continue to have the opportunity to change their choice of provider/course including once they receive their grades
- New service that can suggest alternative opportunities, based on their achievements, their course interest, and other preferences
- Working with BBC Bitesize to give students enhanced advice on applying to university and Clearing
- Students can access new personalized service from early July



IDP  
International Student  
Crossroads:  
Demand for On-  
campus Education  
amidst COVID-19

6,900 international student applicants' attitudes and motivations for studying in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and United States in light of Covid-19.

- 21% of respondents intending to start their studies in the UK in Autumn remain unsure as to whether they should start their course as planned, defer or withdraw
- 57% of applicants to the UK feel it is not currently safe to travel to the UK

Demand remains strong but there is pressure on institutions to adapt term dates and provide face-to-face teaching by January

There is a significant split in attitudes to delivery dependent on the intended level of study of the applicant, with post-graduate applicants much more committed to face-to-face than undergraduate applicants

<https://www.idp-connect.com/newspage/editors-choice/international-students-crossroads-COVID19-applicant-survey/>



# Regulation

## Freedom of Information

- FOI matters are devolved. Those subject to FOI in Northern Ireland, Wales and England have elected to follow the UK Act.
- Scotland has its own legislation. In April they extended the statutory time limit for responding to FOI from 20 to 60 working days.
- The UK Information Commissioner has confirmed that she plans to take a ‘pragmatic and empathetic approach’ during this period, and not penalising public authorities for” prioritizing other areas or adapting their usual” approach in this period. Providers should record decision making.
- <https://ico.org.uk/media/about-the-ico/policies-and-procedures/2617613/ico-regulatory-approach-during-coronavirus.pdf>



# Education Committee Inquiry

## The Education Committee continues its enquiry on **The impact of COVID-19 on education and children's services**

*Secretary of State Gavin Williamson gave evidence*

- Did not provide definitive answer on support for independent training providers with ESFA funding
- Outlined government actions on Apprenticeships
- Identified issues for BTEC students with job assessment criteria as part of their qualification
- Noted government proposals for Higher Education were on their way
- Noted English-language concessions by Home Office for international students.
- Noted that HE providers should be providing learning, education and assessment to providers if they were still collecting fees.



# Contact IHE

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