



INDEPENDENT
HIGHER
EDUCATION

Covid-19 Update: 24 June 2020

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IHE Covid-19 Information Hub

IHE Covid-19 Information Hub

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

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

FAQs

<http://independenthe.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



Weekly Covid-19 comms schedule

Wednesday – a general update with Q&A for all independent providers (members and non-members)

Friday – an email rounding up the week's essential information

... and we continue to update the IHE Covid-19 Information Hub on our website with all the latest information.



IHE Covid Essentials – Planning for uncertain times

What company directors need to know

When: 25 June 2020

Overview: This session will provide a Board room briefing from leading corporate lawyers Pinsent Masons, covering the most critical responsibilities of Company Directors during this period of heightened risk, including company meeting and reporting requirements, the new Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill, and considerations related to the Government's Covid-19 support schemes.

Register: <http://independentthe.com/archives/25-june-2020-ihe-covid-essentials>

Developing effective online learning environments and online learners

When: 2 July 2020

Overview: This session will explore the importance of learning design, distance learning pedagogy and student support when considering how to build online learning materials. The Open University will provide links to free material that they have produced to help this process

Register: <http://independentthe.com/archives/2-july-2020-ihe-covid-essentials>



IHE Covid Essentials – Planning for uncertain times

Financial stability through transformation

When: 9 July 2020

Overview: The impact of Covid-19 creates new challenges and opportunities for all providers in achieving sustainable growth. This session will consider how senior managers can lead their institutions in redefining their strategic intent, reshaping their business model and delivering transformation to create value and improve their operational and financial performance.

Register: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ihe-covid-essentials-financial-stability-through-transformation-tickets-108960513830>

Strategies for student recruitment

When: 16 July 2020

Overview: This session will consider how providers can best engage with two groups of students both at the foothills of higher education: those who had their sights set on this horizon but are now fogged with uncertainty; and those whose paths led them here unexpectedly in the aftermath of pandemic and recession.

Register: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/ihe-covid-essentials-strategies-for-student-recruitment-tickets-108960670298>



Last week's news

15-19 June 2020



Top Issue

Updates from the Home Office

- Distance/blended learning will be permitted for the 20/21 academic year provided students intend to transition to face-to-face learning as soon as circumstances allow.
- Those studying by distance/blended learning will be eligible to apply for the Graduate route provided they are in the UK by 6 April 2021 and complete their final semester of studies in the UK.
- Those that are applying in the UK for leave to remain under Tier 4 applies both to those extending their leave under Tier 4 and those switching into the route from another category.
- The ability to apply for a replacement 30-day visa for free should yours expire will last until end of 2020.

<https://bit.ly/37ZHlqc>



Finance and Human Resources

- The Government made significant amendments to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme – members should note the month by month changes that will take place from 1 July until the close of the scheme on 31 October.

<https://bit.ly/37ZHlgc>

- For providers with subcontracts based in Scotland, the Scottish Government has brought forward early access to £11.4 million of discretionary funds for publicly funded institutions only.

<https://bit.ly/2CChmQC>



Regulation and the OfS

- On 19 June the OfS contacted providers confirming the date of core data returns. These dates are available on the OfS website.

<https://bit.ly/2A4Ntri>

- The OfS has indicated that it may not bring in the new condition E6 on integrity and stability of the higher education sector in England until as late as July.

<https://bit.ly/3dvyrrW>



Regulation and the OfS

On 18 June HESA released the first set of data from the Graduate Outcomes Survey 2017/18.

- 81% of graduates were in employment or unpaid work.
- 76% of graduates who were working in the UK were in highly skilled occupations.

Alongside the release HESA published a quality report which gives more information on why these are experimental statistics, how they don't compare with the Destination of Leavers of HE (DLHE) or LEO data and how the collection of this data was fundamentally different from its predecessor surveys.

<https://bit.ly/3dvjAhx>



Teaching and Learning

- QAA has published new guidance on 'academic integrity'. The report outlines how many institutions have designed effective strategies and academic integrity practices to educate staff, support students, reduce opportunities to cheat and detect academic misconduct.

<https://bit.ly/3dvjAhx>

IHE is currently working with QAA to develop guidance for small and specialist providers. Contact joy@independenthe.com to feed in.

- Jisc published two blogs on hybrid learning and diversifying the digital learning offer.

<https://bit.ly/2AVV8IY>

https://edtechnology.co.uk/category/comments/?mc_cid=b102db38f8&mc_eid=bbd4c6bd5e



Admissions and Recruitment

- The UCAS Hub has a series of live sessions to support 2021 applicants – covering including personal statements and leagues tables.

<https://bit.ly/2VdL9FE>

- UCAS also has a useful Covid-19 resources and updates section of their website.

<https://bit.ly/3dv6yjY>



Student Welfare and Support

Student Mental Health: Student Space

- OfS has made up to £3 million available for Student Minds to lead the development of a new targeted programme of support, it will:
 - offer immediate help for students in distress through therapeutic interventions
 - provide educational resources to help students manage stress and maintain good mental health and wellbeing
 - curate a range of quality-assured online resources, such as guidance, apps, peer support platforms, and volunteering opportunities.
- The platform will be available to all 2.3 million students from OfS-registered providers in England and from registered Welsh institutions.
- The programme will run for six months, from July to December 2020. In addition, Student Minds plan for many of the resources to be useful well beyond the initial six-month period.

<https://bit.ly/2Y7f18C>



Student Welfare and Support

- Universities UK released the findings of a survey of their members which found that most universities will teach in-person this autumn.

<https://bit.ly/2CztQIB>

- The OfS has published a briefing on getting graduate students in to employment.

<https://bit.ly/2Z3vObZ>



International Students and Visas

- New Pearson Test of English centres have opened. Pearson's website has a list of countries which are not open, including the UK, as well as a tool to find what is open.

<https://bit.ly/2Z23xIW>

- UUKi and UCAS have been communicating to international applicants yet to firm their choices for 2020. They have published a letter and held joint Facebook Live sessions.

<https://bit.ly/3ezZXGg>



HE Sector news and opinion

- Jo Johnson's report on international students highlights the challenges and recommends the introduction of a 2-4 year post-study work visa.

<https://bit.ly/3evYdh9>

- HEPI hosted an event with Michelle Donelan MP.

<https://bit.ly/3dwhRbs>

- Earlier this week the Government published a paper examining the impact of Covid-19 on BAME communities.

<https://bit.ly/2NoOQDY>



New this week

24 June 2020



Government update

Announcement on EU, EEA and Swiss nationals and eligibility for home fee status from 2021/22

- The Department for Education has confirmed that EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals will no longer be eligible for home fee status, undergraduate, postgraduate and advanced learner financial support from Student Finance England for courses starting in academic year 2021/22.
- This change will also apply to Further Education funding for those aged 19+, and funding for apprenticeships.
- It will not affect students starting courses in academic year 2020/21, nor those EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals benefitting from Citizens' Rights under the EU Withdrawal Agreement, EEA EFTA Separation Agreement or Swiss Citizens' Rights Agreement respectively. It will also not apply to Irish nationals living in the UK.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-06-23/HCWS310/>



Government update

Q&A to follow:

I am an EU national, can I defer starting my course from academic year 2020/21 entry to 2021/22 due to COVID and still receive student finance?

- Eligibility rules are changing for EU, other EEA and Swiss nationals and their family members who wish to commence courses in England in the Academic Year starting in August 2021
- ... This change will also apply to Further Education funding for those aged 19+, and funding for apprenticeships. It will not affect students starting courses in academic year 2020/21. This will not apply to students from Ireland whose right to study and to access benefits and services will be preserved on a reciprocal basis under the Common Travel Area arrangement.
- EU nationals (and their family members) who start a course in England in the 2020/21 academic year or before will continue to be eligible for home fee status and undergraduate and postgraduate student financial support from Student Finance England for the duration of their course, provided they meet the residency requirement.
- This means that those with course start dates later in the 2020/21 academic year up to July 2021 would continue to have access to home fee status and student support.



Government update

New guidance on Student Number Controls

- Part-time, apprenticeship, postgraduate and international students are not included in the scope of SNCs. For all practical purposes, apprenticeships will be excluded from SNCs.
- Students studying for a Higher National Certificate (HNC) who then go onto study for a Higher National Diploma (HND) at the same provider are not new entrants. If they go to a different provider to study for the HND, they would be a new entrant at the second provider.
- A student who tops up to a full-time bachelor's degree in the following year, having previously studied for a foundation year at the same provider, is not counted as a new entrant.



Government update

New guidance on Student Number Controls

- On franchise- decisions about how to stay within the SNC are the choice of the franchising organisation to make after discussion with their sub-contractors. No further support or guidance on SNCs is available from DfE for those delivering HE under franchised arrangements.
- Fee limit reductions- apply to the maximum fee limits, the Secretary of State for Education has the power to amend the maximum fee limits, not the actual amount charged if it is lower.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-number-controls/student-number-controls-further-guidance>



Government update

Government announces changes to physical distancing rule

- Where it is not possible to stay 2m apart, guidance will allow people to keep a social distance of ‘one metre plus’.
- Reduced distancing rules will have implications for HE libraries, and shared community spaces.
- Announcement also set out the reopening of the cultural and arts sector, including opening galleries, cinemas, outdoor gyms and libraries from 4 July

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-announces-easing-of-lockdown-restrictions-23-june-2020>



Admissions and Recruitment

The Centre for Education and Youth blog on Wonkhe

Four pillars of good practice that will help WP teams recover from Covid-19

- Whole team planning
- Theory of change
- Flexible, reflective evaluation
- Strong partnerships and sharing learning

<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/four-pillars-of-good-practice-that-will-help-wp-teams-recover-from-covid-19/>



Admissions and Recruitment

Oliver Sussat from ACM in Wonkhe

Student Number Controls and the harm that they do to WP students

<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/student-number-controls-harm-access-in-ways-you-might-not-realise/>



Admissions and Recruitment

Letter from Michelle Donelan to prospective students in England

- Universities Minister, Michelle Donelan wrote to prospective students encouraging them to finalise their decisions and submit their university applications to UCAS.
- The letter highlighted the benefits and opportunities that attending university brings, and emphasised the continued high quality teaching and learning experience on offer, noting that universities will likely offer a mixture of online and face-to-face tuition, in accordance with health advice.
- The letter goes on to point to resources students may wish to consider regarding accommodation, including collecting belongings. It also suggests students look at their accommodation contracts before they sign them to check that they provide for how the impact of Covid-19 may affect the contract.

<https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/after-you-apply/coronavirus-covid-19/information-students-england>



Student Welfare and Support

The Standalone Pledge: Developing Support For Estranged Students in Higher Education

- A majority of English-domiciled care-experienced and estranged students are not confident that they can meet their basic bills over the summer.
- There is no consistent source of support and a majority have had no financial help from either their local authority or university.
- Government employment support schemes have not reached most care-experienced and estranged students.
- A majority of those on furlough are still experiencing financial hardship.
- Those who are graduating in 2020 are in urgent need of assistance – only 5% have a job that intends to go ahead as planned.

[http://www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk/images/thestandalonepledge/filer/Financial survey analysis - with case study.pdf](http://www.thestandalonepledge.org.uk/images/thestandalonepledge/filer/Financial%20survey%20analysis%20-%20with%20case%20study.pdf)



Regulation and OfS

OIA Guidance 2 on handling complaints in Covid-19

- Compliments both previous guidance and OfS guidance.
- Consumer protection legislation has not changed
- What providers did initially is likely to be different from normal but providers have now had time to adjust and prepare for the new year. It is reasonable for students to now have higher expectations.
- No blanket refund policy or blanket deferral policies
- Some students are more affected than others
- Where refunds are granted this may be to the SLC
- Complaints MUST be heard

<https://www.oiahe.org.uk/resources-and-publications/latest-news-and-updates/oia-briefing-note-2-our-approach-to-complaints-arising-from-the-effects-of-coronavirus-covid-19-june-202/>



Regulation and OfS

OfS has published technical guidance for paying registration fees

- Info for micro providers and new providers
- Fee bands from 1 August 2020 included in Annex
- Payment details and direct debit mandate

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/payment-of-annual-ofs-registration-fees/>



Regulation and OfS

OfS Chair to leave in March 2021 and lead review of digital learning

- Sir Michael Barber will not seek second term as Chair
- Will lead new review for DfE on Digital Learning at the request of Education Secretary Gavin Williamson, MP.

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/sir-michael-barber-highlights-achievements-of-ofs-as-he-agrees-new-digital-role/>



Regulation and OfS

Research Excellence Framework - March 2021 deadline confirmed

- The revised submission deadline and impact assessment period for REF have been confirmed, following a recent survey gathering views from the higher education sector.
- The revised submission deadline is noon, 31 March 2021, for all elements of submissions and updated guidance on any revisions to the exercise will be published by the end of July, following a further period of engagement with the HE sector and wider partners. The staff census date of 31 July 2020 remains unchanged.
- In recognition of ongoing uncertainty about the effects of Covid-19, the funding bodies have set a review date in November 2020.

<https://www.ref.ac.uk/news/march-deadline-confirmed-for-submissions-to-ref-2021/>



Regulation and OfS

OfS latest briefing: support for graduates in employment

- Highlights how universities are supporting students during the pandemic and focuses on how universities, colleges and employers are working to support final year students and recent graduates to find employment during the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.
- Highlights students' perceptions of the impact of the pandemic on both their employment prospects and the wider economic climate, and includes case studies showing the different approaches that universities, colleges and employers are taking to help students progress from higher education into employment.
- This includes adapting careers advice and services; launching digital platforms; delivering internships and placements online; and developing assessment methods to enable flexible learning for apprentices.

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/supporting-graduate-employability-during-the-pandemic/>



International Students and Visas

UCAS updates FAQ for International Students

- Includes information on delayed exams in country
- Advice for students trying to book SELT

<https://www.ucas.com/search/frequently-asked-questions/coronavirus>

UKCISA publishes a list of VAC set to open from 28 June

- Includes Abu Dhabi, Addis Ababa, Al Khobar, Athens, Beirut, Bucharest, Budapest, Copenhagen, Dar es Salaam, Doha, Dubai, Jerusalem, Kampala, Kigali, Kuwait City, Moscow, Muscat, Nairobi, Rome, Sofia, St Petersburg, Tel Aviv, Vienna, Warsaw, and others

<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students>



International Students and Visas

Joint ministerial letter to prospective international students

- Agreement Michelle Donelan MP has published a joint ministerial letter with the ministers from the devolved administrations to prospective international students.
- The letter outlines the Government's new Graduate route, as well as its commitments to student health and wellbeing.

<https://bit.ly/2VaeXTy>

Messaging to international students

- Includes messages for HE providers to give to students in conversations, digital open days and other events.

<https://bit.ly/2BEeu5m>



HE sector news and opinion

New campaign – SHAPE

- The London School and Economics and the British Academy have launched a new campaign - ‘Social Sciences, Humanities and the Arts for People and the Economy’. It is designed to provide a coherent narrative to promote the value of these subjects, similar to the ‘STEM’ acronym.

<https://thisisshape.org.uk/>

Advance HE on leadership and Covid-19

- Advance HE has published a blog on leadership in the pandemic. This focuses on notion of ‘connected leadership’.

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/connected-leadership-disconnected-world>



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Today's experts

- Dan Tinkler, Membership Manager, Advance HE
- Nick Skeet, Assistant Director Membership (England & International)

- **Find out more about membership of Advance HE**

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/membership/membership-for-institutions-in-the-UK>

- Find out more about the Advance HE project on **Creating Socially Distanced Campuses and Education**

<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/advance-he-membership-benefits/resources-support-you-during-covid-19-pandemic#socialdistancing>