



INDEPENDENT  
HIGHER  
EDUCATION

# Covid-19 Update: 1 July 2020

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# 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



# Weekly Covid-19 comms schedule

**Wednesday** – a general update webinar 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

## 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>

## 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>



# IHE Covid Essentials

## 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 essential news

Week ending 26 June 2020



## Top issues from last week

- New guidance on SNCs clarified that part-time, postgraduate and international students are not included in the scope of SNCs and that for all practical purposes, apprenticeships will be excluded from SNCs. HNC students moving to HND in the same provider are also not considered new and therefore excluded as well. **The guidance also confirms that only providers in Approved (fee cap) as of 4 May 2020 will be subject to the new control for 2020/21.**
- There were also important clarifications around subcontracting and fee limit reductions if providers exceed their number controls, which is especially relevant to providers who charge less than their relevant fee cap.

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



## Top issues from last week

- The Department for Education 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 benefiting 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. EU, EEA and Swiss nationals asking about deferrals to 2021/22 should be informed that they will no longer have access to student support if they choose to defer.

[https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-06-23/HCW\\_S310/](https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-06-23/HCW_S310/)



# Finance and Human Resources

- If you're claiming for furloughed staff under the CJRS there is new guidance about temporary NI numbers.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-for-wages-through-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#history>

- Government has published new safe working guidance for “close contact services” including health, well-being and holistic locations.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/updates>

- The Government has announced a further reopening from 4 July and the changes to physical distancing will be of interest to many of our members and will have implications in spaces like libraries and shared community spaces.

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



# Finance and Human Resources

- The Student Loans Company updated their practitioner FAQ with new questions on students interrupting study, those in financial crisis with overpayments, changing term dates, student maintenance, and Nursing students whose placements have been terminated.
- They also updated questions on postgraduate students unable to complete, applying for DSA, and how to contact SLC.

<https://www.heinfo.slc.co.uk/engagement/hep-news/faq-covid-19.aspx>



# Regulation and the OfS

- OfS published technical guidance on the payment of registration fees.

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

- OIA released additional guidance relating to complaints handling in light of Covid-19. It complements previous OIA and OfS guidance, while restating that consumer protection legislation has not changed. The guidance highlights that while initial divergence from normal practice may have been necessary in responding to the Covid-19 crisis, providers have now had time to adjust and prepare for the new year.

<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/>



# Teaching and Learning

- QAA published ‘Building a taxonomy for digital learning’, aiming to help providers describe their online or digital offers to students.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/news/qaa-publishes-building-a-taxonomy-for-digital-learning>

- QAA Scotland’s Alisa Craig wrote a blog post on learning from disruption, which linked to their recent online International Enhancement Conference. In it she discusses student engagement, wellbeing and kindness and avoiding ‘panic-gogy’.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/news-events/blog/learning-from-disruption-exploring-what-counts-in-higher-education>



# Admissions and Recruitment

- SLC launched a new digital evidence submission for new students applying to student finance. For the first time undergraduate students can submit evidence by uploading it to their portal rather than having to post it. Students are still required to post ID and residency evidence.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/slc-unveils-new-digital-evidence-submission-service>

- UCAS published data on applicants confirming whether they will start university this year or defer to next year - there are currently more applicants holding a firm offer to start a course this autumn than at the equivalent point last year, and fewer people accepting an offer for a deferred place.

<https://www.ucas.com/corporate/news-and-key-documents/news/rise-number-students-planning-start-university-autumn>



# Student Welfare and Support

- OfS published a note that highlights how providers are supporting graduates to find 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/>

- Universities UK published a report on supporting graduates. They argue that support must be given to new and recent graduates who are about to enter a recovering job market that has fewer opportunities and increased competition, and make several recommendations including that government provide funding for universities and businesses to set up paid internships for graduating students.

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2020/supporting-graduates-covid19-economy-june-2020.pdf>



# International Students and Visas

- A joint ministerial letter and messaging was published last week by DfE, DIT and devolved administrations. We encourage members to send this letter to their prospective international students and the messaging to their agents overseas.

<http://independentthe.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Letter-to-prospective-International-students-FINAL.pdf>

<http://independentthe.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Phase-2-Messaging-script-for-prospective-international-students-FINAL.pdf>

- UCAS has updated its FAQ for international students, including information on delayed exams in country advice for students trying to book SELT.

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

- UKCISA has published a helpful list of VACs set to open from 28 June, as well as those which opened earlier in the month.

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



## HE Sector news and opinion

- The Centre for Education & Youth published a thoughtful blog on what widening participation teams should do to recover from Covid-19.

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

- The Academy for Contemporary Music published a blog setting out the stark impact that this year's Student Number Controls will have on their widening participation applicants.

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



# New this week

1 July 2020



# Finance and Human Resources

## Updated guidance on CJRS

- New information on eligibility for claims before 1 July 2020
- Flexibly furloughed employees can be recorded as on furlough during time spent on holiday.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/check-if-you-could-be-covered-by-the-coronavirus-job-retention-scheme#history>



# Government update

## **Government announces guidance for return to sport**

- Information for outdoor and indoor sports facilities on who can open from 4 July.
- Coaches can work provided no more than 6 people from different households are involved.
- Providers teaching sport or providing sport to students will want to read document in full.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-on-phased-return-of-sport-and-recreation>



# Admissions and Recruitment

## Ofqual confirms plans for autumn A-levels

- Ofqual has announced the outcomes of its consultation on the autumn exam series.
- Confirmed that exam boards must make exams available in all GCSE, AS and A level subjects.
- Excluding art and design, grades will be based on exam performance alone.
- Ofqual has also published research about the impact of coursework on different groups of students.
- Exact timing of autumn exams will be announced in due course, with an aim for AS and A levels to be held in October and GCSEs in November.
- Ofqual has further announced a consultation on statutory guidance in relation to appeals under the General Qualifications Covid-19 regulatory framework, the consultation will run until 14 July.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-an-additional-gcse-as-and-a-level-exam-series-in-autumn-2020>



# Teaching and Learning

## **QAA release new blog on achieving consistency when talking about digital learning**

Senior staff at De Montfort University outline their efforts to support staff in understanding the new language of digital delivery and to bring together different workstreams on training, technology, pedagogy and academic innovation.

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/news-events/blog/what-is-a-lecture-and-other-mysteries>



# Teaching and Learning

## QAA Webinar on Contact Hours with Joy Elliott-Bowman

- QAA member only event discussing how contact hours should be considered in the new digital or blended environment.
- Joy Elliott-Bowman, Director of Policy and Development for IHE, will speak on the panel alongside university, art college and student representatives.
- If you would like to feed in your questions, concerns and ideas on contact hours please email [joy@independenthe.com](mailto:joy@independenthe.com)

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/news-events/events/we-need-to-talk-about-contact-hours>



# Student Welfare and Support

## **Student Minds new FAQ on Student Space**

Student minds has introduced an FAQ on student space including information on:

- Student Space is designed to supplement university support services during the pandemic – may absorb some of increased need.
- Student Minds are collaborating with AMOSSHE to shape the activity.

<https://www.studentminds.org.uk/studentspace.html>



# Admissions and Recruitment

## UCAS Updates

- Applications received after 30 June will be automatically entered into Clearing.
- Providers have been advised to extend the deadline for students to meet the academic conditions of their offer. Instead of 31 August, UCAS have advised them to now give students until 7 September.
- Clearing opens on 6 July.

<https://www.ucas.com/advisers/supporting-you-through-confirmation-and-clearing>



# Admissions and Recruitment

## Minister at NEON Summit on Widening Access and Mobility

- Highlighted current challenges for students from disadvantaged groups who may not be able to rely on their schools, colleges or teachers for information, advice and guidance.
- Highlighted initiatives such as UpReach - Assessed Virtual Internships that have delivered opportunities for over 1000 disadvantaged students. They provide training in areas from communication skills to coding, with top performers recommended for graduate positions at
- Social mobility isn't about getting more people into university it is allowing people to choose the path that will lead to their desired destination and enabling them to complete that path.
- Launched Uni4me - new, online hub bringing together over 50 HE providers and uni-connect consortia to offer support including virtual online and blended learning courses, online tuition and support in core GCSE and A Level subjects and plus Live events involving leading academics, students and specialist HE advisors.



# International Students and Visas

## Government grants concessions for future international students

- Government announced today a new “Office for Talent” based in No. 10 with delivery teams across government departments including the Home Office.
- As well as R&D, focus will be on enhancing the student offer including
  - Immediate review of the effectiveness of the current rules and customer service of immigration system.
  - Role for office to help those coming to UK understand opportunities on offer and break down barriers
  - New 3-year post study work visa for PhD students
  - Extend the window for visa applications
  - Remove study time limits at PG level
  - Allow all students to switch to another type of visa from within the UK.
  - Existing students and those starting this autumn will benefit from changes once they’ve been introduced.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-fires-up-rd-across-the-country-to-cement-the-uk-as-science-superpower>



# International Students and Visas

## IELTS testing in China – phased opening

- IELTS has confirmed that it will phase in the opening of testing across China. This has been agreed with the National Education Examinations Authority. This re-opening process will include:
- Computer-delivered IELTS and IELTS for UKVI tests from 9 July at test centres in three cities across China, as well as a new computer-based IELTS test centre in Shanghai.
- Paper based IELTS testing will begin from 11 July in centres across China. Additional health and safety measures will be introduced at the centres.

<https://www.ielts.org/news/2020/covid19-information-for-our-global-test-taker-community>

## Reopening of UK visa application centres in India

- Beginning on 6 July, UK Visas and Immigration is beginning a resumption of services. The Visa Application Centres in India listed on the UKVI website will also be open from the same date.
- Independent Higher Education has held a discussion with our member Committee on this announcement.

<https://www.vfsglobal.co.uk/in/en/news/re-opening-of-selected-uk-visa-application-centres-in-india>



# International Students and Visas

## New guidance for New Zealand Applicants

- Government has issued specific guidance for students and staff who have applied for a UK visa in New Zealand but were unable to travel.
- These applicants will need to post documents to the VAC in Auckland.
- There is no super priority visa being offered in New Zealand but some are offered that option by mistake due to a system error.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/new-zealand-apply-for-a-uk-visa/apply-for-a-uk-visa-in-new-zealand#if-you-have-been-unable-to-travel-to-the-uk-due-to-coronavirus-covid-19>



# International Students and Visas

## UK NARIC Member Survey

- More than half of respondents so far are worried about falling demand from international students.
- Two thirds said their main challenges will be ensuring that individuals continue to come and providing reassurance to those coming from overseas.
- 37% foresee challenges with offering places to students who have not sat their final examinations.
- 52% of respondents think that staggered or delayed starts to the academic year will be one of the biggest knock-on effects for educational institutions arising from the pandemic.

<https://www.naric.org.uk/naric/News%20Story.aspx?NewsID=1085>



# International Students and Visas

## UK NARIC Recorded Sessions – now available

Including:

- Briefing on standardised test in the USA education system
- Briefing on the long-cycle programmes in the French education system

[https://www.participant.co.uk/naric/recorded\\_webinar\\_01082020#init](https://www.participant.co.uk/naric/recorded_webinar_01082020#init)



# Regulation and OfS

## **OfS registration process shows movement**

- This week OfS have started announcing registration decisions for the first time in over four months.
- Four providers were refused from the register, none of whom have current students funded under SLC.
- The Dyson Institute of Engineering and Technology was added to the register

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/news-blog-and-events/press-and-media/registration-decisions-june-2020/>

## **New temporary registration condition E6**

- Details expected to be published on Friday



# Parliament

## House of Commons debate on ELT and COVID-19

- Caroline Ansell MP will lead an adjournment debate in the House of Commons today. Like IHE, English UK are calling for Business Rates to be waived for their members to help COVID-19 recovery.

<https://calendar.parliament.uk/calendar/Commons/All/2020/7/1/Daily>

## House of Lords “regret” SNCs

- Lord Bassam of Brighton has called a motion to regret on the legislation to re-introduce SNCs. 26 Members of the House of Lords will speak on the motion tomorrow. **Do you know any?**

<https://calendar.parliament.uk/calendar/Lords/All/2020/7/2/Daily>



# HE Sector news and opinion

## HEPI Students' views: impact of Coronavirus on HE experience

- Two-thirds of students feel positive about the communications, three times higher than the proportion who feel negative.
- Nearly half of students feel they have received clear communications about the next academic year from their higher education institution.
- Fewer students are satisfied with the online learning that has replaced face-to-face teaching than they were in March.

<https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2020/06/30/new-poll-finds-students-want-better-communication-about-the-next-academic-year-but-have-realistic-expectations-of-what-is-to-come/>

## Universities UK - #WeAreTogether: Proud to help

- UUK has launched 'Proud to help', the next phase of the #WeAreTogether campaign – designed to promote an inclusive global higher education community whilst tackling Covid-19.
- The 'Proud to help' phase aims to highlight individual stories about staff and students who have done something exceptional to support others during the pandemic.

<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/covid19/supporting-national-effort/Pages/we-are-together-campaign.aspx>



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## Today's experts

- **James Earl-Fraser - Jisc**
- **Toby Yeung - Jisc**

**Find out more about Jisc:**

<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/>