

# FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

## Weekly Briefing



WEEK COMMENCING 20<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2020

### FE and HE

- The Department for Education [announced](#) new **Government funding for catch up tutoring in FE colleges, sixth forms and 16-19 providers**:
  - Disadvantaged pupils in schools and colleges will benefit from a **catch-up fund of £350 million for additional tutoring**.
  - Ringfenced grant of **£96 million for 16-19 providers** to provide small group tutoring for disadvantaged 16 –19 year olds.
- The **Association of Colleges** [published](#) the Summer Survey – **Colleges and Covid-19 Summer 2020**. 109 colleges responded to the survey which is 45% of all colleges. Key findings:
  - In **90% of colleges** all or most students under 19 have continued their **learning remotely** in the summer term for **students over 19 this was 74%**.
  - 95% of colleges have plans to enrol students online and 84% will offer online college induction in September.
  - **88% report increased student hardship** and 90% report that their bursary/hardship funds are under more pressure as a result of the pandemic.
  - **56% report that existing and additional bursary funding** from the DfE has been insufficient in enabling them to purchase laptops and/or connectivity to support all disadvantaged learners.
  - **78%** report they would **need additional resources** to support the provision of **free college meal vouchers** to eligible students over the summer.
  - **4 out of 5 colleges anticipate major transport difficulties** around September re-opening.
  - Additional **demand for mental health and wellbeing services** for students during the pandemic.
  - **46% of colleges are planning to make redundancies** by the end of the autumn term.
- The **Federation for Industry Sector Skills and Standards** published a [briefing note](#) – *Quantifying the hit to apprenticeships during lockdown*. Key points:
  - The fall in vacancies in April/May post-lockdown was steep and represented an 83.2% reduction on the same period in 2019.
  - **Apprenticeship starts have reduced by 47.9% during lockdown** compared to the same period last year.

- **Younger apprentices are more likely to have been furloughed** – 35% of under 19s compared to 24% of over 25s.
- **Universities UK and GuildHE [published](#)** a commitment to new **principles to tackle grade inflation**. Six principles for an algorithm for awarding degree grades:
  - Must provide an **appropriate and reliable summary of students' performance** against the learning outcomes that reflects the design, delivery and structure of a degree programme.
  - Must **fairly reflect a student's performance** without unduly overemphasising particular aspects, with consideration of the design stage of how each element within a method of classification interacts with other elements.
  - Must **protect academic standards** by adhering to current conventions and national reference points used to define classification bands and boundaries.
  - Must normally be **reviewed at least every five years** to ensure they remain relevant and appropriate.
  - Must be designed and reviewed in a way that is mindful of the **impact of different calculation approaches to classification for different groups of students**.
  - Must be **communicated and explained clearly to students**.
- The **APPG for Apprenticeships** published their annual 2019-2020 [report](#). Key recommendations to support and accelerate growth of the quality apprenticeships:
  - Develop a **cross departmental apprenticeship strategy** to respond to covid-19.
  - Set up an **apprenticeship working group** with employers, training providers, professional bodies and associations to develop ways to retain apprentices.
  - Training providers to ensure **learning materials are accessible online**.
  - Government should implement proposals to ensure young people are not exploited in the labour market by assessing long term employment progression.
  - Provide apprentices with **free travel by 2021**.
  - **Reform the apprenticeship Levy** – greater **flexibility** and allow funding to be spend on 'off the job' costs.
  - Ensure the **apprenticeship levy is sustainable** and provides employers with stability.
  - The DfE should **collect and publish data on provision of careers advice** in schools.
  - The DfE should work with schools to establish **knowledge and awareness programmes for parents and carers**.
  - The DfE to create a **Centre of Excellence to encourage best practice**.
  - IfATE should **simplify standards to support learning of essential skills** rather than specific occupations.
  - IfATE should **simplify and centralise apprenticeship applications** through a UCAS like system.

- IfATE and Ofsted should **enforce stronger rules and regulations** surrounding apprenticeships to **prevent exploitation, unfair pay and poor-quality training**.
  - Businesses should be encouraged to include requirements for technical and vocational qualifications that equate to degree levels for management positions.
  - Treasury should **pause expiry of Apprenticeship Levy funds** for at least six months during the pandemic.
- **Independent Commission on the College of the Future** published their [report](#) – *People, productivity and place: a new vision for colleges*. The vision argues that change is needed to unlock the full potential of colleges which will require: colleges to have a recognised and clear position in the education and skills system, colleges to work collaboratively with each other, Governments will be there to support colleges. The vision focuses on:
    - **People** - colleges will be a touchpoint for everyone throughout their lives as the world changes, **flexible and blended learning** and guidance will empower each person to get a job and progress in their career to be an active citizen.
    - **Productivity** - colleges will provide **strategic advice and support for employers** to drive business change, innovation and future workforce planning.
    - **Place** - colleges will have the **resources and funding** to play a greater role in fostering **healthy and connected communities**.
- The **Higher Education Policy Institute** [published](#) a report – *Miseducation: decolonising curricula, culture and pedagogy in UK universities*. The report establishes that the **decolonisation of UK universities is vital for the improvement of course curricula, pedagogical practice, staff wellbeing; and the student experience**. It makes the following key policy recommendations:
    - **Improve education about decolonisation** and end its conflation with equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives.
    - **Reprioritise:** decolonisation is necessary for pedagogy and for academic rigour.
    - **Fund BAME research** – there is currently little funding available for BAME scholars.
    - **Tackle Discrimination, hostility and unconscious bias** for students and staff in HE.
    - **Institutionalise decolonisation:** create departmental roles and engage students.
- The **Labour Party** [launched](#) **key tests for Higher Education** calling for the Government to support UK universities and guarantee students support to succeed and make degree courses available to anyone whatever their background or circumstances:
    - **No university should be allowed to go bust** and there must be equality of opportunity for all in every region.
    - Reduce barriers to learning.
    - **Protect and enhance domestic and international research**.
    - Enhance a co-operative and co-ordinated Higher Education sector across the whole of the UK.

- Prevent further **financial hardship for current students**.
- Provide comprehensive support for 2020 final year students.
- Promote universities as **civic institutions**.

### Parliament

- **Movements:**

- **Lord Morris of Handsworth** (Labour, life peer) retired from the House of Lords on 21st July.

- **Bishops: Duty – Chichester and Southwark**

- The **Bishop of Durham** asked the Government about access to scaling up funding for traineeships and apprenticeships across areas of the country within the North- East.
- The **Bishop of Winchester** asked the Government about funding for the provision of Free College Meals to all 16-19 eligible students over the summer period.
- The **Bishop of St Albans** asked the Government about the action they are taking to address the rise in knife crime following the publication of the ONS Crime in England and Wales year ending March 2002 statistics.
- The **Bishop of St Albans** spoke in the Committee stage of the Agriculture Bill. Bishop Alan highlighted the importance of maintain food security during the transition period and the need to improve cash flow systems for farming businesses.
- The **Bishop of St Albans** asked the Government about the compulsory wearing of face masks in places of worship.
- The **Bishop of Southwark** spoke in the second reading of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU withdrawal) Bill. Bishop Christopher asked about the points-based system and visa routes for minister of religion and other religious workers, the health surcharge, current ban on paid working for asylum seekers.
- The **Bishop of Bristol** also spoke in the second reading of the Immigration Bill. Bishop Viv highlighted concern about a lack of provision for victims of human trafficking, modern-day slavery and children and young people in the bill.
- The **Bishop of Chichester** asked the Government whether they will look again at the impact of student loans on recruitment and retention in key public service professions in light of their significance in recovery from the pandemic.

- **Written Questions for Answer:**

- **Fleur Anderson:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will make an assessment of the **potential merits of establishing a bespoke support package for universities** in response to the covid-19 outbreak. **Michelle Donelan:** The government understands that the COVID-19 outbreak poses significant financial challenges to the sector. In May 2020, the government announced a package of measures combining different ways to give further support to higher education providers at this time of

financial pressure. We have **stabilised admissions and are pulling forward an estimated £2.6 billion worth of forecast tuition fee payments to ease cashflow pressure** this autumn. We are also **bringing forward £100 million of quality-related research funding for higher education providers in England in the current academic year.** In July, the government announced the **higher education restructuring regime**, under which support for restructuring can be given, as a last resort, when other steps to preserve a provider's viability and sustainability have not proved sufficient. We are reminding providers, as part of existing programmes and using established procedures, that the **department will consider purchasing land and buildings where they can be used for new or expanding schools and colleges in England.** In this financial year, we have **budgeted up to £100 million to acquire sites for planned projects** in England. Our **review of the International Education Strategy this autumn** will respond to the new context and the challenges posed by COVID-19 across all education settings to ensure we can continue to welcome international students in the future. The government has worked with the Office for Students to help clarify that providers can draw upon existing funding to provide hardship funds and support disadvantaged students impacted by COVID-19. **Providers are able to use the funding – worth around £23 million per month for April, May, June and July – towards student hardship funds.** The Department for Education and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy have set up a **University Research and Knowledge Exchange Sustainability Taskforce** to consider how best to respond to the challenges universities face on research as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

- **Karin Smyth:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment he has made of the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on the provision of adult skills. **Gillian Keegan:** We are aware that the COVID-19 outbreak has caused disruption to people of all ages in education, in particular lost teaching time. We want to get all further education learners back into education settings as soon as the scientific advice allows because it is the best place for them to learn, and because we know how important it is for their mental wellbeing to have social interactions with their peers and teachers. Many further education providers are already open for some learners who are 16 to 19 and adults, subject to the required safety measures being met. **From Autumn 2020, all learners will return to a full high-quality education programme delivered by their college or post-16 learning provider.** We announced on 20 July that we will be providing a one-off, ring-fenced grant of up to £96 million for colleges, sixth forms and all 16 to 19 providers, to provide small group tutoring activity for disadvantaged 16 to 19 year old students whose studies have been disrupted.
- **Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South):** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what assessment his Department has made of the **potential effect of the Kickstart Scheme on apprenticeship starts**; and if he will publish that modelling. **Gillian Keegan:** The Kickstart scheme is distinct from an apprenticeship and the types of opportunities employers offer under each scheme will be different. Kickstart will offer a subsidised six-month work placement for a young person who otherwise might not have got into work or be ready for an apprenticeship. Further guidance on the Kickstart Scheme will be issued in due course. Through their apprenticeship, apprentices will gain

the technical knowledge, practical experience and wider skills they need to achieve full competence in a recognised occupation. We are supporting employers, apprentices and training providers during this challenging time, so that people can continue to access high-quality apprenticeship opportunities, to continue to build the skills capabilities the country needs now and in the future. To help businesses offer new apprenticeships, they will be able to claim £1,500 for every apprentice they hire as a new employee from 1 August 2020 until 31 January 2021- rising to £2,000 if they hire a new apprentice under the age of 25 - in recognition of the particular impacts of COVID-19 on the employment prospects of this group. The new payment means it's a great time for employers to offer new apprenticeship opportunities and take advantage of existing flexibilities to train their apprentices in a way that suits their needs.

- **Paul Girvan:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps his Department will take to **ensure academic standards are maintained by UK universities that amend course material to comply with Chinese National Security Laws.** **Michelle Donelan:** It is absolutely critical that universities ensure all students have access to the teaching materials they need to continue their studies and fully immerse themselves in our world leading education system. Academic freedom and freedom of speech are cornerstones of the UK's world-class higher education system, and are fundamental to a student's experience, wherever they may be based. Providers in England are required to uphold these freedoms through a combination of legislation and regulation by the Office for Students and we expect all universities to comply with these expectations whilst also ensuring they abide by any local regulations. Following my letter to Universities UK, and given the importance of these values, departmental officials are supporting a Universities UK-led programme of work to assist universities manage and mitigate the security risks associated with any international collaboration and to maintain UK higher education values. A key output of this work is the production of guidelines to support the sector, to be published this autumn.
- **Lord Taylor Of Warwick:** To ask Her Majesty's Government what discussions they have had, if any, with Universities UK about combating racism in medical schools. **Lord Parkinson Of Whitley Bay:** Racism is abhorrent and we all have a part to play in combating it, in higher education and more widely. Universities have a responsibility to ensure they provide a safe and inclusive environment for all staff and students. The government expects institutions to take their responsibilities, including those under the Equality Act (2010), seriously and to have in place appropriate policies and procedures to tackle racism. **The government continues to work with Universities UK (UUK) to support work on implementing its 'Changing the Culture' framework.** UUK has an advisory group to tackle racial harassment in higher education institutions, chaired by Professor David Richardson, and in March announced the appointment of independent external advisers to strengthen the work of this group. My hon. Friend, the Minister of State for Universities, wrote to Professor Richardson in April to thank him for his continued work to address racial harassment in higher education and to express her interest in the outcomes of the advisory group's work. In addition, officials at the Department for Education regularly meet UUK to discuss progress on tackling these important issues.

- **Stephen Hammond:** To ask the Secretary of State for Education, whether EU nationals who hold (a) settled and (b) pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme and start a foundation diploma in academic year 2020-21 will remain eligible for (i) the home rate of tuition fees and (ii) access to student finance when they progress to a higher education course in academic year 2021-22. **Michelle Donelan:** We have agreed with the EU that current EU principles of equal treatment will continue to apply for those covered by the citizens' rights provisions in the Withdrawal Agreement. This means that **EU nationals resident in the UK before the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020 will be eligible for support on a similar basis to domestic students.** Those EU nationals with settled or pre-settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme and who meet the relevant eligibility requirements in force at the time of course commencement will have access to home fee status and student financial support.