

Office for
Students



Outreach and access to HE in England during the coronavirus outbreak

Chris Millward

Director for Fair Access and Participation, OfS

NEON Conference

30 April 2020

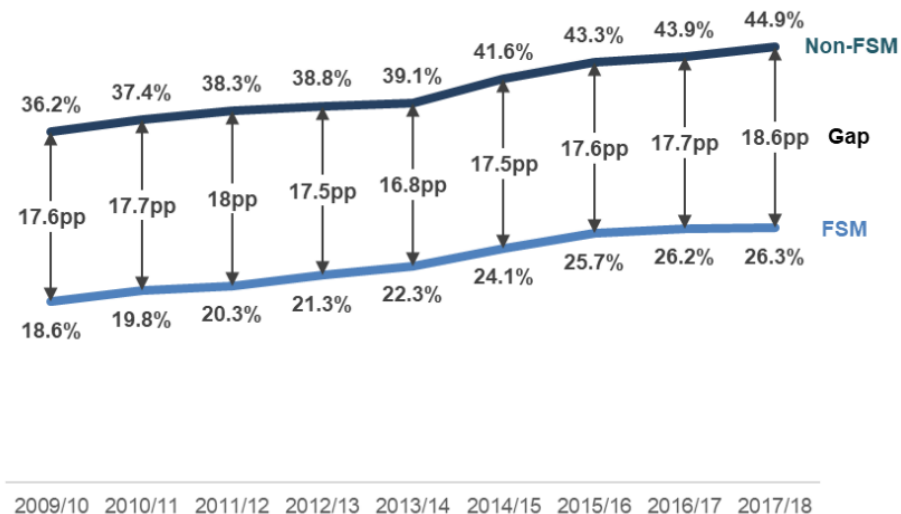
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Higher education entry

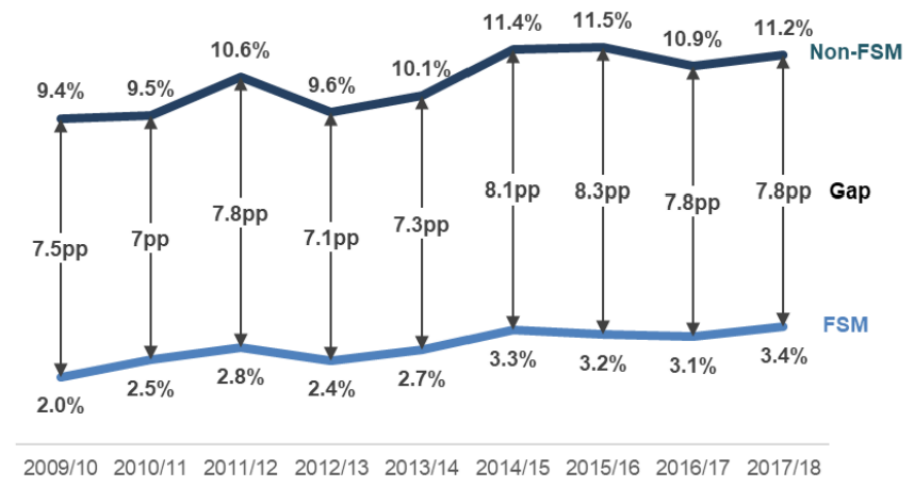
Percentage of 15 year old state-funded and special school pupils who entered HE by age 19 by Free School Meal status

UK Higher Education Providers and English Further Education Colleges



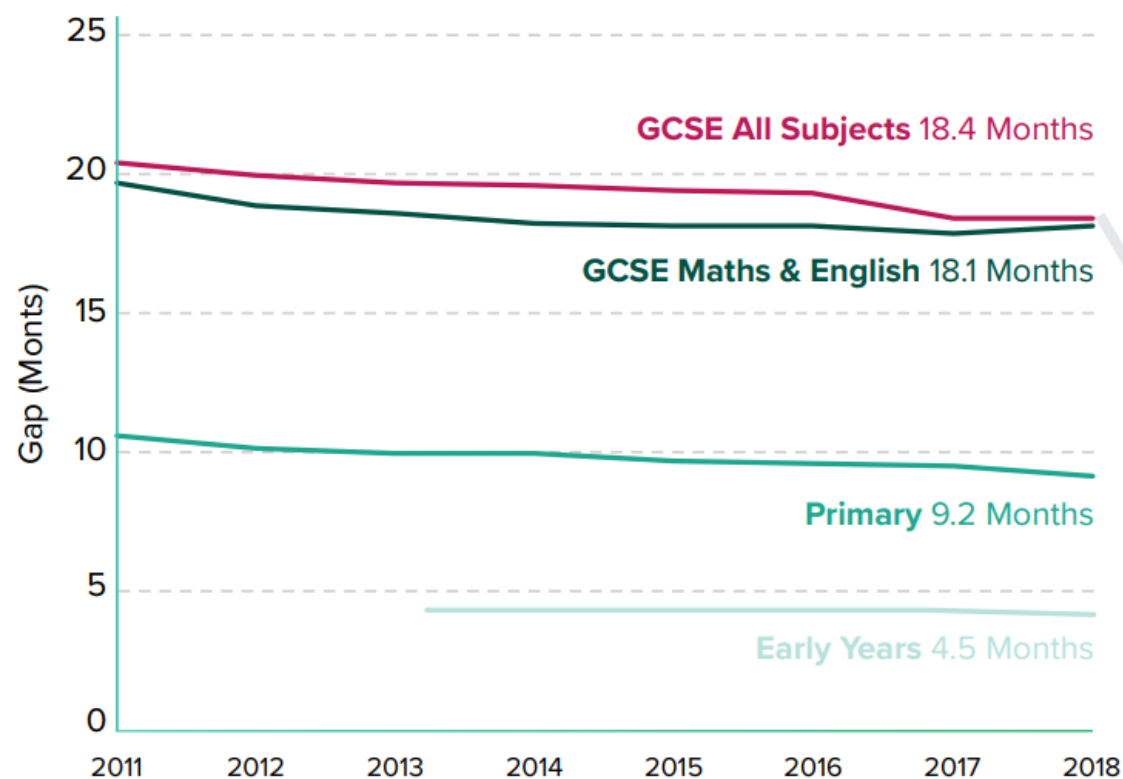
Percentage of 15 year old state-funded and special school pupils who entered high tariff HE providers by age 19 by Free School Meal status

UK Higher Education Providers



School attainment

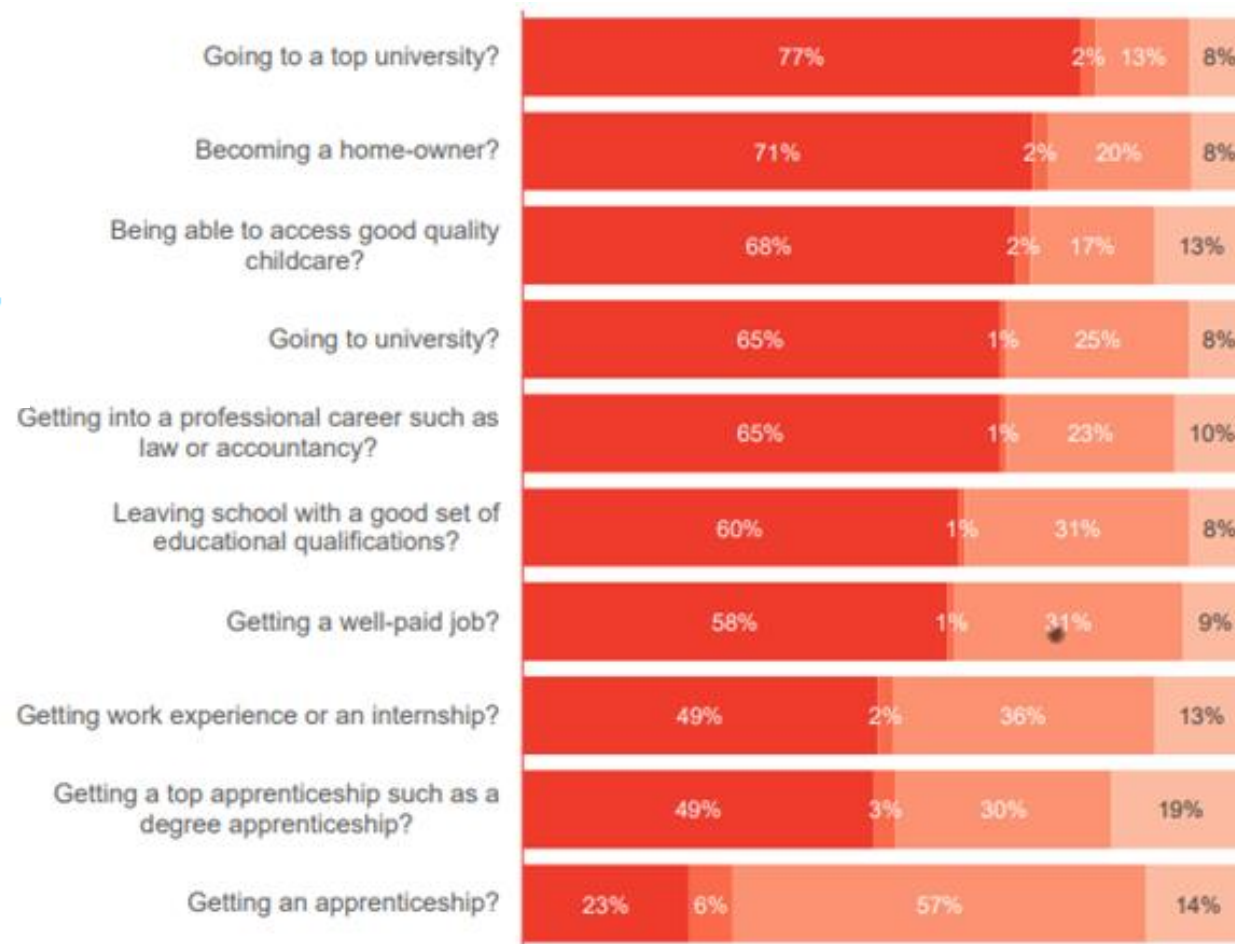
What has happened to the disadvantage gap?



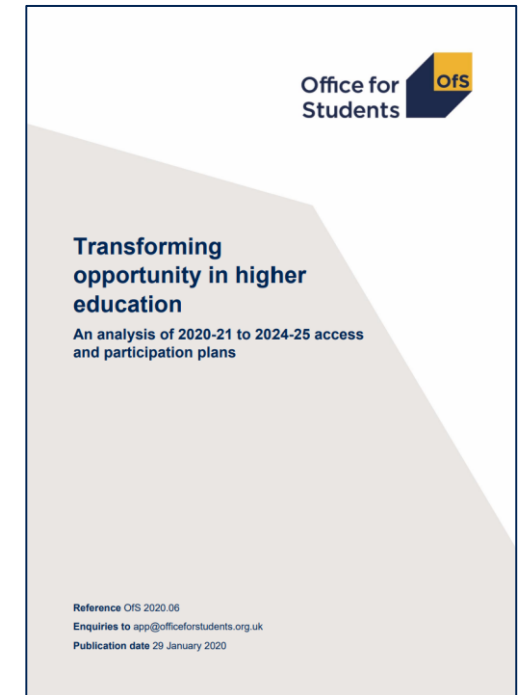
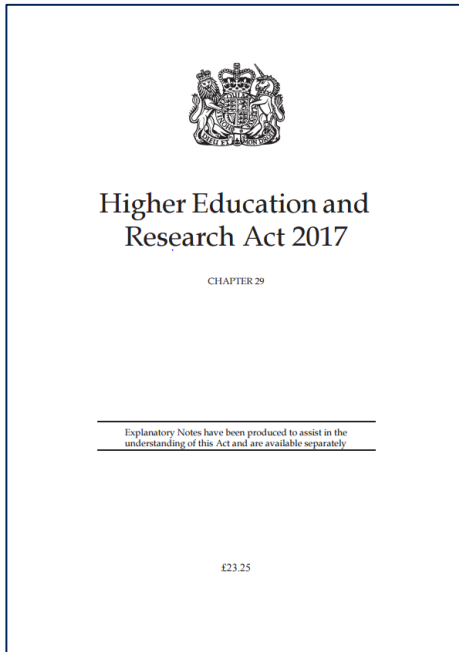
Student and family expectations

Thinking about the opportunities that people from different backgrounds have in life, how do you think the opportunities open to people from poor backgrounds compare to those open to people from better off backgrounds in the following areas?

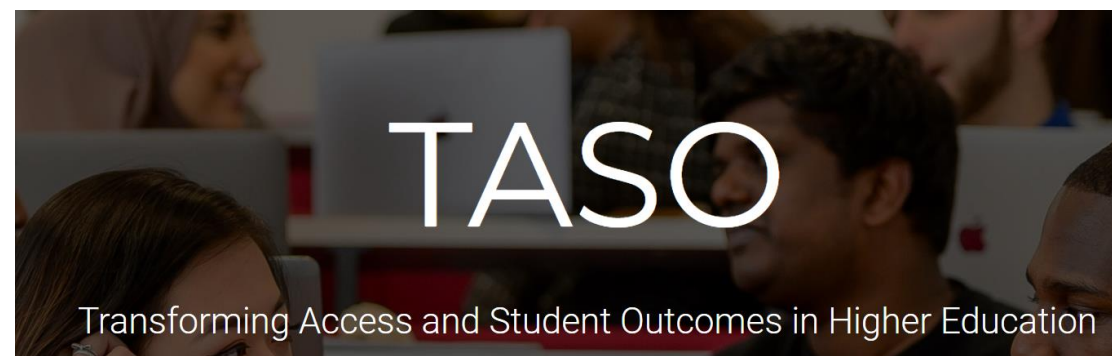
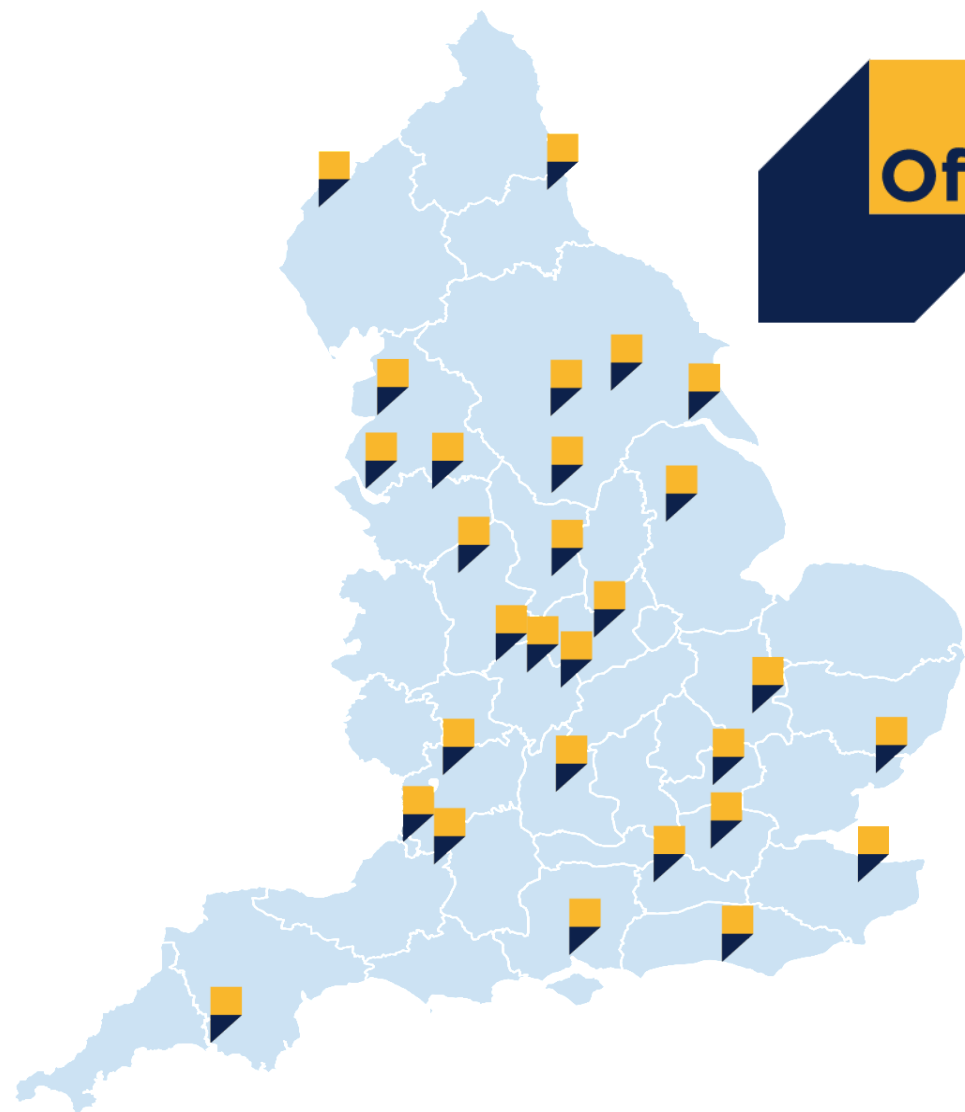
- People from poor backgrounds have less opportunity
- People have equal opportunities, regardless of background
- People from better off backgrounds have less opportunity
- Don't know



Regulating higher education



Funding higher education



CONSULTATION

Exceptional arrangements for exam grading and assessment in 2020

Consultation on specified general qualifications – GCSEs, AS, A levels, Extended Project Qualifications and the Advanced Extension Award

ofqual

Press release

Universities told not to alter applicants' offers

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan is asking higher education providers not to change their offers to students for two weeks to maintain stability.

Published 23 March 2020

From: [Department for Education](#) and [Michelle Donelan MP](#)



Universities should act to maintain the stability of the university admissions system to ensure students' best interests are safeguarded, the Universities Minister has said today (23 March).

Office for
Students

OfS

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3 April 2020

Dear accountable officer

Moratorium on unconditional offer-making

Two weeks ago, I wrote to you about the moratorium on unconditional offers and other changes to existing offers. I am reassured that universities and colleges have adhered to the moratorium. I thank the sector for responding so constructively.

The Universities Minister has today announced an extension to the moratorium on unconditional offers for undergraduate study in the 2020-21 academic year. This extension will continue until 20 April 2020. This letter contains further information about the extension, the exceptions where offers may continue to be made, and the steps the OfS will take as a result.

These are difficult times so we recognise that universities and colleges will be concerned about the next academic year and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on recruitment. However, acting in ways that may put pressure on students' decision making and harm the stability and integrity of the higher education sector will only make things worse.

Reasons for an extension of the moratorium

The Department for Education and Ofqual have today published guidance for schools, pupils and parents to provide clarity about the process for the award of A-level qualifications this year. The guidance is clear that the grades awarded to students will have equal status to those awarded in other years and should be treated in this way by universities and colleges. The date for A-level results will be announced shortly.

Chair – Sir Michael Barber


Chief Executive – Nicola Dandridge CBE

Office for
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RESEARCH BRIEF | APRIL 2020



COVID-19 and Social Mobility
Impact Brief #1: School Shutdown

THE SUTTON TRUST

Carl Cullinane and Rebecca Montacute

KEY FINDINGS

- 23% of pupils are reported to be taking part in live and recorded lessons online every day. However, pupils from middle class homes are much more likely to do so (30%), compared to working class pupils (16%). At private schools, 51% of primary and 57% of secondary students have accessed online lessons every day, more than twice as likely as their counterparts in state schools.
- 60% of private schools and 37% of state schools in the most affluent areas already had an online platform in place to receive work, compared to 23% of the most deprived schools. 45% of students overall had communicated with their teachers in the last week. At independent schools, the figure is 62% for primaries and 81% for secondaries.
- Despite the challenges faced, parents are in general positive about schools. 61% of children learning at home had parents who were satisfied, as were 65% of those who are still in school as the children of keyworkers. Middle class parents were more likely to be satisfied than working class parents (66% of ABC1 children v 56% of C2DE children).
- The home learning environment is likely to play an even more crucial role as most learning is now done in the home. More than three quarters of parents with a postgraduate degree, and just over 60% of those with an undergraduate degree felt confident directing their child's learning, compared to less than half of parents with A level or GCSE level qualifications.
- While 44% of pupils in middle class families were reported to spend more than 4 hours a day learning, this was true for 33% in working class families.
- In the most deprived schools, 15% of teachers report that more than a third of their students would not have adequate access to an electronic device for learning from home, compared to only 2% in the most affluent state schools. 12% of those in the most deprived schools also felt that more than a third of their students would not have adequate internet access.
- Parents have also been spending money on their children's learning since the lockdown. While most had spent less than £50, 14% had spent more than £100 in the first week of the school shutdown. 19% of children from middle class homes had £100 or more spent on them, compared to 8% in working class homes. For households earning over £100,000 per year, a third of a third of more than £100 spent on their learning.
- Two thirds of children who pre private tuition were reported to receive such support, while a third of tuition through online services changes has been to narrow the gap, this is likely to be temporary.
- Inequalities in support are being widened by amount and quality of work received. 50% of teachers in private schools reported receiving more than three quarters of their class compared with 27% in the most deprived schools, and just 8% in the least deprived schools. 24% say that fewer than half of their class are returning work.
- Teachers in the most deprived schools are more than twice as likely as those in the least deprived to say that work their students are returning is of a much lower quality than normal.
- Schools are already working to address school closures on inequality by providing specific advice about supervised learning. Their school is providing pupils with devices, with significant inequalities between secondary (31%) and primary (15%) schools. However, concerning disadvantaged state schools had pupils in need, compared to private schools where need is less likely to be reported.
- Teachers were asked for their views on how to prevent some pupils from falling behind during the period of shutdown. Over half of teachers cited the provision of tech devices as providing less well than other options. Half of teachers also supported staggered return to school, or 'bubbles' for disadvantaged pupils to increase the chance of restarting school on the same day.

1

SOCIAL MOBILITY AND COVID-19

Implications of the Covid-19 crisis for educational inequality

Dr Rebecca Montacute
April 2020



25 March 2020

Dear [name of Accountable Officer]

Regulatory requirements during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

I wrote to you on 17 March to let you know that the OFS will adapt its regulatory approach to support providers at this time. I am very grateful that the vast majority of providers are working flexibly and innovatively to protect the interests of their students in the current unprecedented environment.

This letter contains more detailed information about the regulatory requirements we have suspended and the specific information we need from you to allow us to meet the objectives set out in last week's letter. Those objectives are that we will:

- support the government's objectives by sharing information with providers and enabling them to respond effectively
- protect students by working with providers to develop practical ways to maintain teaching quality and standards, enable adequate exams and assessment, and support financial sustainability
- seek to minimise long-run disruption to the English higher education system – reducing permanent damage and laying the foundations for the sector to recover as quickly as possible once the pandemic is over.

These regulatory changes take place in a context where we do not know how long disruption will last. The requirements we are suspending and the additional information we are requesting are therefore temporary but open-ended by nature. While we will seek to minimise regulatory burden throughout this period, we may need to adjust these requirements to deal with changing circumstances.

Chair – Sir Michael Barber Chief Executive – Nicola Dandridge CBE

Guidance for providers about quality and standards during coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Summary

1. This document provides guidance for registered providers about how the OFS will approach the regulation of quality and standards matters during the period of disruption resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This guidance is in place until further notice.
2. We are taking a different approach in the current circumstances because it is difficult to anticipate the issues that may arise and normal approaches may not be appropriate in the extraordinary circumstances in which providers and their staff are operating.
3. Providers have made enormous efforts to ensure students can continue with their studies and we are confident that most registered providers have rigorous arrangements in place to maintain quality and secure standards. We would expect providers to need to adapt normal arrangements to respond to the disruption and to put in place different approaches for teaching and assessment. If providers work within the scope of the guidance set out in this document, students and other stakeholders can be confident that the outcomes delivered for students are meaningful and reliable.
4. Providers should make all reasonable efforts to enable students to complete their studies, for achievement to be reliably assessed, for qualifications to be awarded securely, and to enable a fair and robust admissions process for entrants to courses in 2020-21. Providers will be making, or will have already made, these arrangements and we do not expect to take any regulatory action where we consider that reasonable efforts have been made to protect the interests of students and where standards have been not been compromised. We will, as a matter of course, take into account the impact of the pandemic on a provider's ability to satisfy conditions of registration.
5. In this context it is important that all providers consider how their approaches to the current situation will affect all students, and in particular those who might be most vulnerable to disruption. This includes students suffering from coronavirus or who need to self-isolate, international students, and students unable or less able to access remote learning for whatever reason, together with care leavers, those estranged from their families, and students with disabilities.
6. During this period, we are using two primary mechanisms to ensure we are able to identify cases about which we may have regulatory concerns. First, we are requiring a provider to report to us when it intends or expects to cease teaching some or all of its courses to one or more groups of students. Second, we will continue to encourage students and other third parties to notify us of any concerns about the arrangements put in place by an individual provider.
7. We are mindful that providers may have reduced capacity to respond to new regulatory action at this time. We do not therefore expect to initiate any action in relation to performance on

Provider guide to coronavirus

Sections in this guide

1. Overview

2. Questions and answers

3. Unconditional offer-making

4. Regulatory requirements

5. Funded projects monitoring changes

6. Contacts

Questions and answers

These frequently asked questions will be regularly reviewed

Regulatory requirements

- [See our page on regulatory requirements](#)

Unconditional offers

- [See our page on unconditional offers](#)

26 March 2020

Dear [Uni Connect partnership Chair and Lead]

Uni Connect programme: An update from the Office for Students

I am writing to update you on next steps for the Uni Connect programme. Universities and colleges are facing huge pressures and uncertainties in responding to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We want to support your efforts to minimise its impact on the students and schools you are supporting, and to avoid placing any unnecessary burdens on you.

Our update to accountable officers on 26 March¹ set out how our regulatory requirements are changing during the period of the coronavirus outbreak. This letter sets out in detail how this will apply to Uni Connect. To summarise:

- **Year one funding (2019-2020)** – We will continue to fund partnerships to maintain capacity and continuity. Financial re-profiles agreed up to July 2020 in the recent winter monitoring will be maintained.
- **Year two funding (2020-2021)** – The Office for Students (OFS) board has agreed in principle to continue funding Uni Connect partnerships during 2020-21. We aim to confirm the position on these allocations in the coming weeks.
- **Targets** – We will not be holding partnerships to account for their 20 per cent engagement targets for the remainder of the academic year.
- **Alternative delivery models** – We expect partnerships to explore alternative modes of engagement and delivery in response to the current environment. In particular, we would like you to identify:
 - How your approach could support broader groups of underrepresented students, not just those in your target schools and wards.
 - The information, advice and guidance needs of students applying to higher education in the current admissions cycle.

¹ See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-requirements-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-pandemic/

Chair – Sir Michael Barber Chief Executive – Nicola Dandridge CBE

‘Providers are expected to seek to deliver their approved access and participation plans. Providers are particularly expected to deliver in full the financial commitments they have made to current students under a 2019-20 plan and future students under a 2020-21 onwards plan....

There may be occasions where it is not possible to deliver commitments as originally planned – for example the delivery of face-to-face outreach activity in schools which have been closed as a result of the coronavirus outbreak....

When making regulatory decisions in the future, we will look at whether a provider made reasonable decisions about its delivery of the commitments in its plans.’

'It is important that providers consider how their responses to the current situation will affect all students and, in particular, those who might be most vulnerable to disruption. This includes students suffering from coronavirus or who need to self-isolate, international students, and students unable or less able to access remote learning for whatever reason, together with care leavers, those estranged from their families, and students with disabilities....

- Guaranteed appropriate accommodation.
- Continued access to established financial support, and to immediate hardship funding if necessary.
- Practical support to access food, medical and cleaning supplies.
- Ongoing access to a first point of contact for student queries and concerns.
- Ongoing access to student support networks, mental health support and academic support where required.

'We expect Uni Connect partnerships to explore alternative modes of engagement and delivery in response to the current environment.

In particular, we would like you to identify:

- How your approach could support broader groups of underrepresented students, not just those in your target schools and wards.
- The information, advice and guidance needs of students applying to higher education in the current admissions cycle.'

Uni Connect partnerships are already engaged with online activity e.g.

- Online mentoring and tutoring
- Live and pre-recorded workshops
- Webinars
- 1-2-1 emails, videos and phone calls
- Low impact evaluation activities

All partnerships are making activities virtual, some going live after Easter holidays, but have reported the need to take care with:

- Overwhelming parents and teachers with volume of online activity
- Safeguarding and GDPR
- Engaging learners (especially younger) with pre-recorded content / webinars
- Volume and quality of third-party providers.

And coming rapidly into view...

- Graduate employment
- Academic year 2020-21
- Economic, public service and community recovery
- For which we need to:
 - not assume the same policies and approaches as before
 - build on local and national partnership and resilience

Thank you for listening

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