



BRIEFING PAPER

Number 9142, 23 February 2021

Coronavirus: HE/FE return to campus in England 2021

By Sue Hubble
Paul Bolton

Contents:

1. 2021 spring return delayed
2. Higher education
3. Student accommodation issues
4. Other student issues
5. Further education



Contents

Summary	3
1. 2021 spring return delayed	4
1.1 Covid: Road Map announcement February 22 2021	4
2. Higher education	6
2.1 Re-opening guidance	6
2.2 COVID-19 response spring 2021 – masks and testing arrangements	8
2.3 Children’s Task and finish Group: Paper on Higher Education Settings	8
3. Student accommodation issues	10
3.1 Where did students spend the winter break and where are they living now?	10
3.2 Rent reductions	11
3.3 Difficulty paying rent and hardship funding	11
3.4 Refunds for fees and accommodation	12
4. Other student issues	14
4.1 Fines for house parties	14
4.2 Maintenance loans for students still at home	14
5. Further education	16
5.1 Covid: Road Map guidance for colleges February 22 2021	16

Summary

On **4 January 2021** the Government announced a **third national lockdown** due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Prior to the lockdown students were expected to return to FE colleges on 18 January and HE students were planning for a staggered returning to campuses from 25 January 2021.

The lockdown rules **prevented the majority of students from returning to campuses** – only HE students taking specific courses relating to **key health areas** were allowed to return for teaching and FE students who were **vulnerable students, the children of critical workers or taking vocational courses that were about to be completed** where assessments could not be done remotely. The remainder of courses reverted to online delivery.

On **28 January 2021** Gavin Williamson the Education Secretary announced that colleges and universities would return **from 8 March at the earliest**.

On **22 February 2021** the Prime Minister announced a **road map for ending lockdown** restrictions in England. The roadmap set out that from **8 March all schools and colleges will be able to fully open** and that **students on higher education courses requiring practical teaching, specialist facilities** will also be able to return to campus.

This briefing paper discusses announcements affecting the HE and FE sectors in England from January 2021.

Details of earlier Covid-related restrictions for the sector and their impact are given in the following briefing papers.:

- CBP 8859, [Coronavirus Bill: childcare and education settings](#), 20 March 2020
- CBP 8893, [Coronavirus implications for the further and higher education sectors in England](#), 11 April 2020
- CBP 8908, [Coronavirus: Update implications for the further and higher education sectors](#), 21 May 2020
- CBP, 8932, [Coronavirus: Easing lockdown restrictions in FE and HE in England](#), 2 September 2020
- CBP 9030, [Coronavirus: Higher and further education back to campus in England in 2020/21?](#) 6 January 2021
- CBP 8989, [A level results in England and the impact on university admissions in 2020-21](#), 2 September 2020
- CBP 9122, [Coronavirus: Student accommodation issues](#), 25 January 2021
- CBP 8954, [Financial impact on higher education](#), 15 January 2021

1. 2021 spring return delayed

On 4 January 2021 the Government announced a third national lockdown due to the coronavirus pandemic. Prior to the lockdown students were expected to return to FE colleges on 18 January 2021 and most HE students were planning for a staggered returning to campuses from 25 January 2021. The lockdown rules prevented the majority of students from returning to campuses – only students taking specific courses relating to key health areas were allowed to return for teaching. The remainder of courses reverted to online delivery.

On 28 January 2021 Gavin Williamson the Education Secretary announced that colleges **would return from 8 March at the earliest:**

Education is a national priority and we want schools, colleges and universities fully open as soon as the public health situation allows.

As confirmed by the PM we hope to get pupils & students back from 8 March.¹

Mr Williamson said that the 8 March was chosen as the return date because by this date the government hoped that everyone in the top four vaccination priority groups would have developed immunity from the virus.

1.1 Covid: Road Map announcement February 22 2021

On 22 February 2021 the Prime Minister [announced](#)² his **road map for ending lockdown in England** (the devolved nations will set out their own arrangements) – the details of the plan are set out in [COVID-19 RESPONSE – SPRING 2021](#).³

The roadmap outlines four steps for easing restrictions. Before proceeding to the next step, the Government will examine the data to assess the impact of the previous step.

Step One will start on **March 8** and in this phase **pupils and students in all schools and further education settings will return to face-to-face education. Higher education students on courses requiring practical teaching, specialist facilities, or on-site assessments will return to campus from 8 March - arrangements for all other students will be reviewed by the end of the Easter holidays. Students and institutions will be given a week's notice ahead of any reopening:**

Students on practical Higher Education courses at English universities who would be unable to complete their courses if they did not return to take part in practical teaching, access specialist

¹ Department for Education blog, [Prime Minister announces that schools and colleges will return from 8 March at the earliest](#), 28 January 2021

² [HC Deb \[Covid-19: Road Map\] 22 February 2021](#)

³ HM Government, [COVID-19 RESPONSE – SPRING 2021](#), February 2021 CP 398

facilities, or complete assessments will also return from 8 March. Research labs and libraries can be kept open if needed.

For those Higher Education students that do not need to take part in practical teaching, and do not require access to specialist facilities or equipment as part of their studies, the Government will review, by the end of the Easter holidays, the options for timing of the return of these students. This will take account of the latest data and will then be a key part of the wider roadmap steps. Students and institutions will be given a week's notice ahead of any reopening. The Government recognises the difficulties and disruption that this may cause for many students and their families where they remain unable to return to Higher Education settings, but it is necessary to limit the number of students who return to university at this stage to minimise travel and manage the risk of transmission.⁴

⁴ HM Government, [COVID-19 RESPONSE – SPRING 2021](#), February 2021 CP 398 paras 89-91

2. Higher education

The DfE has published two guidance documents for HE providers on students returning to campuses in the spring – [Higher education: operational guidance](#) and [Students returning to, and starting higher education in Spring Term 2021, Guidance for higher education providers](#), February 2021.

The HE guidance [Students returning to, and starting, higher education in Spring Term 2021](#) was **updated on 22 February** to reflect the road map changes for students.

The Office for Students (OfS) has also published guidance for providers, [Returning to university in 2021](#).

The [STUDENTCROWD](#) website contains a list of the latest plans for teaching delivery in each higher education institution.

2.1 Re-opening guidance

The “students returning” guidance in early February updated previous guidance and added **policing** to the list of courses which were **important for the supply of critical workers** and allowed students on these courses to return to campus along with students on the following courses:

..prioritising the return to face-to-face teaching only for courses which are most important to be delivered in-person in order to support the pipeline of future critical workers.

On this basis, face-to-face teaching should be restricted to the following, and only where face to face teaching or placements are needed to deliver learning outcomes. Wherever possible, teaching and learning should still be provided online:

1. Medicine & dentistry
2. Subjects allied to medicine/health
3. Veterinary science
4. Education (initial teacher training)
5. Social studies (social work)
6. Policing
7. By exception only, a very limited number of courses which require Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) assessments and /or other PRSB mandatory activity which is scheduled for the Spring term and which cannot be rescheduled (although the presumption is that in the majority of cases, these will be rescheduled outside the period of national restrictions).

All other students were to return by **8 March at the earliest**:

Return of remaining students

All remaining courses should continue to be offered online as they have been from the beginning of term. Given the ongoing national restrictions, the return/arrival of all other students should be postponed until at least 8 March. The Government will announce shortly whether any further students can return to face-

to-face teaching from 8 March onwards. Providers should not offer in-person teaching before then, or later if further guidance to this effect is issued, and should encourage students to remain at their current accommodation until the resumption of their in-person teaching, wherever possible.

The changes in the guidance in early February were discussed in an article on the Wonkhe website, [DfE revises its guidance for higher education](#), 3 February 2021.

The road map changes announced on 22 February will allow **more students to return to campus** and this has been welcomed by Universities UK:

Professor Julia Buckingham, President, Universities UK said:

"This announcement is a long-awaited boost for students in England on practical and practice-based subjects, whose access to specialist facilities – laboratories, studios, workshops and performance spaces – is essential. Universities look forward to welcoming these students back to Covid-secure campuses from 8 March, where safety measures including serial asymptomatic testing and social distancing will be in place to ensure the risk of transmission remains low.

"While today's news is positive for some students, it will be disappointing for others that had hoped the government would have allowed them to return. University staff will continue working hard to keep all students motivated, supported, and progressing towards their qualifications. There will also need to be a further focus on supporting students' mental health and wellbeing in the weeks ahead."⁵

An [article](#) on the Wonkhe website comments on the lack of clarity around exactly which students will be able to return to campus on 8 March:

That qualification around students "who would be unable to complete their courses" is problem number one. Courses or years? Basically, the road map reads like this is an exemption only for single and final year students. But neither the PM's commons statement, nor the press conference, nor the DfE guidance details that particular bit of prioritisation.

One of the questions that many asked on hearing the PM was how universities are to make decisions about which students and courses can recommence with onsite, "in-person" attendance. Generally, this looks like it's being left up to providers to determine – the guidance just says that providers should not ask students to return if their course can "reasonably be continued" online.

The lack of clarity may be an issue. Given time and access to facilities is tight, one provider with lots of students on practical courses may be keen to ration their facilities to final and single year students. Another may be keen to get everyone back for "something" face to face.

But the trouble is that expectations have now been set and students across the country will compare. DfE is going to need to

⁵ Universities UK, [Universities welcome UK government roadmap announcement](#), 22 February 2021

clarify whether the permission is for all courses with practical components, or just for students nearing completion.⁶

The Wonkhe article also points out that “for most students on taught programmes teaching will be all but over by the time they’re “allowed” back after Easter” and that “for hundreds of thousands of students they never needed student accommodation at all this year, as many will complete the year having experienced a tiny number of, or no, on site teaching hours”.

2.2 COVID-19 response spring 2021 – masks and testing arrangements

In universities there will be **twice-weekly testing for all students and staff on-site**. The roadmap document gives the following information on testing:

Rapid testing in education settings is now well established, with more than 3 million rapid COVID-19 tests conducted in schools and colleges in England since 4 January. This includes two tests for those secondary school pupils and college students who have returned, and regular testing for all staff. At universities, 600,000 tests have also been taken on site since last year; they are encouraged to offer twice-weekly tests to everyone attending.⁷ When more pupils and students return to face-to-face education in schools and colleges on 8 March the Government will introduce twice-weekly testing of secondary school and college pupils, starting with testing on site in the first two weeks and then home testing.⁷

The Government also recommends that the use of face coverings in higher education, further education and secondary schools is extended for a limited period to all indoor environments - including classrooms - unless 2m social distancing can be maintained.⁸

2.3 Children’s Task and finish Group: Paper on Higher Education Settings

A [report](#) for the Department for Education (DfE), provides an update on evidence related to COVID-19 in HE settings. The paper contained the following findings on the transmission of Covid among HE students and the impact on student wellbeing:

- Multiple data sources (including ONS, PHE and COG-UK) show that the rates of COVID-19 **infection rose among many HE student populations in October 2020** (moderate evidence, moderate data), with rates of infection subsequently **reducing in November**
- Evidence from ONS outbreak investigations, PHE surveillance data, genomic and antibody studies in a number of HE settings **suggest a higher risk of transmission in residential settings**, and

⁶ Wonkhe, [\(Some\) students on practical courses in England can return to campus in early March](#) 22 February 2021

⁷ HM Government, [COVID-19 RESPONSE – SPRING 2021](#), February 2021 CP 398 para 157

⁸ *idib* paras 91-92

particularly in some halls of residence (medium confidence). ONS **outbreak analyses** from Exeter and Loughborough **found greater transmission spikes in halls of residence than private accommodation**

- Evidence from genomic studies in a limited number of universities suggests that **mitigation measures were successful in minimising transmission**.
- Limited, anecdotal evidence from 10 universities presented by ONS suggests that **when face-to-face learning was happening, minimal cases of transmission** were attributed to face-to-face learning environments.
- There is strong evidence that the **majority of HE students (those aged 18-24 years), because of their age, are less susceptible to severe clinical disease than older people** (high confidence).
- Survey evidence related to COVID-19 indicates **disruption to research and learning, lower wellbeing, and increased mental distress in HE students**

3. Student accommodation issues

This section focuses on accommodation issues linked to the third national lockdown and the return to campus in 2021. The briefing paper [Coronavirus: Student accommodation issues](#) gives further background and looks at this issue during the whole of the pandemic.

3.1 Where did students spend the winter break and where are they living now?

A survey carried out between 8 and 18 January 21 by the Office of National Statistics of 2,700 students found that:⁹

- **33% of respondents travelled to stay with family or friends over the winter break** and 30% were already living at home or with friends. 37% remained at their usual term time address
- 40% of those who moved out to stay with family or friends¹⁰ over the winter break had returned to their term time address by early January.
- In early January 8% were in university/private student halls of residence, 42% were in private rented accommodation and 49% were at home or with friends.

The Save the Student [National Student Accommodation Survey 2021](#) received responses from 1,300 students. It found that **at the start of the spring term 52% of students were living in the same accommodation as before Christmas**. 35% had moved home to live with parents or guardians. Only 42% of students had been able to spend the whole of the 2020/21 in their rented accommodation.

A [survey](#) by Unite, a student accommodation provider, has found that 77% of students have struggled with mental health and wellbeing because of the pandemic and 84% said that engaging in university life had been positive for their mental health. A large majority of the students surveyed (86%) wanted to return to their universities and term-time accommodation:

Demand for returning to university remains overwhelmingly high: 86% students are keen to get onto university campus once it is safe to do so. Meanwhile, 79% of students said they wanted to receive some face-to-face teaching in the third term, if restrictions are eased.

In addition, almost two in three students (62%) are likely to return to their student accommodation for their third term if lockdown restrictions are eased, with (almost half) 47% of those say they're very likely to do so.¹¹

⁹ [Coronavirus and higher education students: England, 8 January to 18 January 2021](#), ONS

¹⁰ Or their usual non-term time address

¹¹ Unite, [Students' mental health hit by Covid-19 - 17 February 2021](#)

3.2 Rent reductions

The Save the Student [National Student Accommodation Survey 2021](#) found that around **40% of students who paid rent had asked for a refund**. Those in university accommodation were much more likely to have asked for a refund. **Overall 32% were offered a rent refund; 9% full and 23% partial**. The average discount was £75 per week.

An earlier survey of accommodation which asked about refunds in summer term 2020 found that:

- 72% of first year students (mostly in student halls) had stopped paying rent and 13% were paying reduced rent.
- 71% of second or later year students (mostly in private rented accommodation) were paying full rent, 11% were paying reduced rent and 19% were not paying any rent.

3.3 Difficulty paying rent and hardship funding

According to the Save the Student [National Student Accommodation Survey 2021](#) 50% of students struggle to keep up with paying their rent and 10% said this was a 'constant struggle'. 60% said that their health had suffered due to rent costs, particularly their mental health, 45% said their academic work had suffered for the same reason. 47% had to borrow money to pay rent, the most common sources were parents and overdrafts/loans. The report estimated that nearly £1 billion across the UK had been spent on student accommodation that has not been used.

The Government has responded to concerns about the financial pressures placed on students by the pandemic by giving universities flexibility about how they spend existing funding for disadvantaged students and with additional hardship funding. **The £256 million of 'student premium' funding** was intended to help disadvantaged and disabled student access and progress through higher education. The flexibility given to universities means they can divert this to other areas such as student hardship funding and mental health services.¹²

In December 2020 the Government [announced £20 million](#) in financial year 2020/21 for students facing financial hardship. On 2 February 2021 the Government [increased this one-off funding](#) with a **further £50 million** for universities to distribute to students facing financial hardship.

The total additional funding of **£70 million** in England has been [compared unfavourably](#) with extra hardship funding announced in Wales and Scotland which are substantially higher on a per student basis. In early February the [Northern Ireland Economy Minister announced](#) a one-off 'Covid disruption payment' of **£500** for every full-time higher education student in Northern Ireland. This was part of a wider package which included additional funding for student hardship

¹² See, for instance, Support for vulnerable students' in the Office for Students [Provider guidance for coronavirus](#)

and to compensate universities who have lost income through rent reductions and early ends to rental contracts.

3.4 Refunds for fees and accommodation

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Students published the report of its [Inquiry into tuition and accommodations costs during Covid-19: The Case for Compensation](#) on 28 January 2021. The inquiry was launched in response to growing demands for rent and fee refunds following the disruption to university education as a result of the national lockdown announced on 4th January 2021.

The report made three recommendations with regard to rent:

- the Government should **substantially increase hardship funding to address rental costs for student properties** they cannot access, **lost income, digital poverty and other unexpected costs**.
- the Government should consider the introduction of **means-tested maintenance grants** to assist the 'Covid cohort' with the costs they face
- the Government should **work with landlords to introduce measures to temporarily increase flexibility for student accommodation to allow students to leave contracts** they aren't using more easily, and to reduce pressure on landlords.

With regard to tuition fee refunds the report recommended

- Government should establish a '**Covid Student Learning Remediation Fund**', to allow lost learning to be addressed through provision of educational opportunities not available through the pandemic.
- The Government should work with Universities to ensure that there is a **national 'safety net' to maintain academic integrity across institutions** and ensure that students can progress in a way that takes account of the practical, social and emotional challenges they have had to face as a result of the pandemic.

The Prime Minister referred to **compensation** for students during the road map debate on 22 February 2021:

Cat Smith

University students, many of whom were not eligible for furlough for their part-time jobs, were already struggling financially. Today's road map suggests that the vast majority of those students will not be able to return to their university accommodation until after Easter at best. They are legally being prevented from returning to accommodation for which they are obliged to pay. Does the Prime Minister think that that is fair? If he does not think that it is fair, what will he do about it?

The Prime Minister

I sympathise deeply with students who have had a time at university that no other generation has put up with. I sympathise deeply with their sense of unfairness, with the experiences they have had. They have been heroic, by the way, in the way in which they have been able to bring the disease down in some universities

towns by obeying the guidance. We will do whatever we can to support them, working with the university sector, to make up for the experiences they have been through and to make sure, insofar as we can, that we help them to get compensation.¹³

4. Other student issues

4.1 Fines for house parties

The DfE guidance [Students returning to, and starting higher education in Spring Term 2021](#), February 2021 introduced **fines of up to £800** for students holding house parties:

House parties

The government has now introduced a new £800 fine for those attending house parties, including in halls of residence, which will double for each repeat offence to a maximum level of £6,400. These fines will apply to those who attend illegal gatherings of more than 15 people from outside their household. Providers should ensure that students are aware of their designated 'household', particularly if they live within large scale student accommodation. (p5)

4.2 Maintenance loans for students still at home

Student maintenance loans vary depending on where a student is living and students living away from home are eligible for higher loans than those living at home. Under normal circumstances students should inform Student Finance England if their living arrangements change and their loan may be re-assessed and possibly reduced as a consequence. The lockdown has prevented many students from returning to their term time accommodation and has forced them to stay at home - the guidance states that **student support does not need to be re-assessed if students are still "incurring accommodation costs away from home"**:

Because of the changing position relating to face to face teaching and occupation of accommodation, students' loan entitlements for the current term will not be reassessed if they are still incurring accommodation costs away from home, meaning that students in receipt of the 'living away from home' loan will retain the maintenance loans paid at the start of term, which will be repaid in the usual way. This should help to ensure students have the financial support they need during these exceptional circumstances. Students who are no longer incurring accommodation costs away from home (e.g. because they have exited their contracts, or moved home permanently), or who no longer wish to receive the higher rate of loan, should continue to request reassessment.

This policy was criticised on the Wonkhe website for reducing student's loan funding at a time when students faced a loss of income from reduced work opportunities:

So the official position is that all students need to keep SLC up to date with where they're living – that's a legal and contractual obligation and means students who were planning on spending the term away from home now must tell SLC that they're not. But it's OK – they then tick a box to say "I'm still paying rent out there" and they keep the higher rate.

As part of that process, students who have somehow managed to escape their ongoing rental contract have to tell SLC where they are and fess up that they're out of contract – so their loan gets reassessed down. That's a harsh blow to students who will already be facing down the barrel of lost part time work and increased costs, but in some sort of way makes sense.

The question comes – what if you don't know whether you'll be facing any costs this term because your university has been rebating the rent, but might stop doing so on or after March 8th but before the end of term? And this is the actual, unbelievable, rub-your-eyes in disbelief answer:

A student who studies away from home who right now has followed the guidance on staying away and for the time being is getting full rent relief from their university should tell SLC, who will then reassess the student's loan down. If their university then reopens campus the week before Easter and they have to pay rent for that week, the student has to get in touch and SLC will reassess their loan back up to the higher rate"

The Student Loans Company has produced a FAQs document for students, [Guidance for students who have moved back home in the January term](#), 11 February 2021, to help with student support questions. The guidance states that any student who is assessed as being overpaid will have the overpayment added to their student loan balance and this **will be repaid after they finish their course**:

Usually, in this situation you would be reassessed for the January term to the lower 'living at home' rate of Maintenance Loan. If you've already been paid for that term at the higher 'living away from home' rate, it would mean you'd have been overpaid for that term. We would normally then reduce your future Maintenance Loan payments to recover the money that was overpaid.

However, the UK Government has decided that in this situation the overpayment will just be added to your overall loan balance. This will be repaid as normal once you have finished or left your course.

5. Further education

In January 2021 the DfE issued guidance for FE providers on the lockdown rules for colleges, [Further education guidance for operation during the national lockdown, January 2021](#). The guidance updated previous guidance and it set out which students were allowed to attend on site and gave information on exams:

During the period of national lockdown further education providers will remain open to vulnerable students and the children of critical workers.

All other students will continue to learn remotely until 8 March at the earliest.

A small number of FE students and apprentices who would otherwise be completing their courses or apprenticeships in January, February or March are able to attend where it is not possible for their training or assessment to be completed remotely. This includes:

- those who are due to do a licence to practise, or other occupational competence assessment, including end point assessments in January, February or March.
- those training for some critical worker roles, for example: engineering, health & social care, manufacturing technologies, nursing & subjects & vocations allied to medicine, transportation operations & maintenance, agriculture, education and training and building & construction (where this is connected to utilities and communications) that are due to complete in the next 3 months.

We know that receiving face-to-face education is best for young people's mental health and for their educational achievement. The earliest that further students will return to face to face education is 8 March. We will set out more detail and ensure we give at least 2 weeks' notice to allow students, staff and parents to prepare.

5.1 Covid: Road Map guidance for colleges February 22 2021

On February 22 2021 the Government published new guidance for colleges on the road map implications - [Further education coronavirus \(COVID-19\) operational guidance February 2021](#). The main changes to guidance are set out on page 5:

From 8 March all students will be able to return to on-site education.

During the period of national lockdown further education providers have remained open to vulnerable students and the children of critical workers.

Continuing to attend are a small number of students who would otherwise be completing their courses or apprenticeships in February or March and who cannot complete them remotely. This includes those due to complete:

- a licence to practise or other occupational competence assessment, including end point assessments
- training for some critical worker roles, for example
 - o engineering
 - o health and social care
 - o manufacturing technologies
 - o nursing & subjects & vocations allied to medicine
 - o transportation operations and maintenance
 - o agriculture
 - o education and training
 - o building and construction, where this is connected to utilities and communications

All other students will continue to learn remotely until 8 March.

From 8 March we expect that every 16 to 19 student (or 19 to 25 with an EHCP) will attend their FE provider in person, and will undertake the majority of their planned hours on site.

Adult learners may also return on site. As was the case prior to coronavirus (COVID-19), you should continue to judge the right balance between on-site and remote delivery for adult students in order to provide high quality education and training.

Special post-16 institutions should continue to allow students to attend as per their usual timetable.

Colleges and special post-16 institutions will be able to test students on return, initially on site and then moving towards home testing. For Independent Training Providers (ITPs) and Adult Community Learning providers (ACLPs) home testing will be available for staff and students from the end of March.

We will keep this guidance under review and update as necessary.

Under the road map provisions there will also be **twice-weekly testing** of secondary school and college pupils, initially with on-site testing and then home testing.

The Association of Colleges made the following comment on the road map changes which flagged up the “**logistical challenge**” of the mass testing of students:

Disruption to learning due to lockdowns has been challenging for students’ education and wellbeing, so it’s good to hear the Prime Minister announce that many college students will be returning to face to face learning from next month. Colleges typically have thousands of students across varying ages, and they face a complex task now to prioritise who starts back first and how that will best meet the needs of students.

We look forward to seeing the scientific evidence which sits behind the announcement. That will be important in reassuring staff and students of the low risks involved, with the right controls in place. The requirement for mass testing will be a logistical challenge, but colleges have used lockdown to prepare their sites and it will be a crucial element of keeping students and staff safe, alongside face coverings, social distancing, ventilation, phasing and rotas.

Colleges can be trusted to make the best decisions for their students, staff and communities, as they have done since the start of the pandemic. Their focus will be on safely supporting every student to succeed at the end of their year, whether they want to progress into work, an apprenticeship, further learning in college or higher education. This roadmap gives a glimpse of the new normal, but we look forward to a long-term plan for overcoming lost learning which will be a major concern for the whole education system for the next couple of years. The return of students to colleges is positive, but it is not enough to avert a lost generation.”¹⁴

The Association of Colleges have published a [briefing paper](#)¹⁵ on the changes for a parliamentary debate on the road map arrangements on Thursday 25 February. The briefing highlights the importance of “addressing the issue of lost learning and ensuring there is adequate **catch-up support** in place is of critical importance and must be prioritised by the Government as we return to full attendance in the months ahead”.

¹⁴ Association of Colleges, [Government publishes roadmap out of lockdown - AoC responds](#), 22 February 2021

¹⁵ Association of Colleges, [Backbench Business Debate briefing Proposal for a national education route map for schools and colleges in response to the COVID-19 outbreak](#) Thursday 25 February

About the Library

The House of Commons Library research service provides MPs and their staff with the impartial briefing and evidence base they need to do their work in scrutinising Government, proposing legislation, and supporting constituents.

As well as providing MPs with a confidential service we publish open briefing papers, which are available on the Parliament website.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in these publicly available research briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

If you have any comments on our briefings please email papers@parliament.uk. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing only with Members and their staff.

If you have any general questions about the work of the House of Commons you can email hcenquiries@parliament.uk.

Disclaimer

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties. It is a general briefing only and should not be relied on as a substitute for specific advice. The House of Commons or the author(s) shall not be liable for any errors or omissions, or for any loss or damage of any kind arising from its use, and may remove, vary or amend any information at any time without prior notice.

The House of Commons accepts no responsibility for any references or links to, or the content of, information maintained by third parties. This information is provided subject to the [conditions of the Open Parliament Licence](#).