

# Correspondence

## ESFA Update further education: 31 March 2021

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### 1. Latest information on coronavirus (COVID-19)

The Department for Education has [published guidance about COVID-19 in educational settings for staff, parents and carers, pupils and students on GOV.UK](#).

Please check [GOV.UK](#) regularly for updates.

### 2. Reminder: Provider Relief Scheme (July to October 2020) – reconciliation returns

Training providers who received funding via our post-16 Provider Relief Schemes are required to submit a reconciled summary of costs used. As the second scheme (July to October 2020) has now ended, training providers are required to submit this by 30 April 2021.

If you are in scope to submit a reconciliation return you will have received an email including a template, which should be sent to [esfa.ppn220queries@education.gov.uk](mailto:esfa.ppn220queries@education.gov.uk) by the closing date.

In the template, you will need to evidence that each of the activities described in your application for support have been delivered. You will also need to evidence that each of your eligible costs as described in your application has been spent accordingly. Please note that we will recover funds which were not used for their intended purpose or where the funds were not required.

Submission of the reconciliation template is a condition of funding, and failure to return the template within the specified timescale may lead to the recovery of funds paid under the scheme.

If you believe you should have received a template, please email [esfa.ppn220queries@education.gov.uk](mailto:esfa.ppn220queries@education.gov.uk). You should also use this email if you have any questions about the process or the template.

### 3. Information: post-16 audit code of practice for 2020 to 2021

ESFA has published the [post-16 audit code of practice](#) for the year 2020 to 2021. This provides details of the audit and assurance framework for post-16 providers, including college corporations and independent training providers, and their auditors. The Code is reviewed and updated annually to reflected latest sector developments and best practice.

One of the more significant amendments is the clarification that, whilst ESFA will continue to provide both corporations and their auditors with a statement of grant payments made in respect of the funding year, the statement does not constitute assurance over the funds earned by the college. ESFA will be engaging with college corporations and sector auditors to work through any the implications of this clarification.

Other changes this year include:

- a requirement to include the date of appointment of the external auditor and the remaining term of the engagement in the audit committee’s annual report
- an expectation that the audit committee should meet at least three times a year, or else include an explanation in their report
- an update to the requirements to notify the ESFA of the resignation or removal of auditors, and confirmation that this is not required on expiry of their agreed term of office
- a requirement for corporations to have a policy in place for regular re-tendering of external auditors, which should happen at least every five years
- in accordance with a recommendation of the [Ney Review](#), clarification that external auditors will present their findings annually at a meeting of the board of governors (which may be a joint meeting with the audit committee)
- an expectation that departing accounting officers provide a statement on regularity, propriety and compliance covering the reporting period up to the date of departure where possible
- a requirement for independent assurance reports on subcontracting arrangements to be considered by audit committees

### 4. Information: updated college accounts direction

ESFA has published the [college accounts direction](#) for college corporations. This provides the framework for college corporations to complete and submit their financial statements for the year to 31 July 2021 to ESFA. The college accounts direction is refreshed on an annual basis. The most significant changes this year are:

- inclusion of key points which should be included in the financial review of the corporation as best practice
- highlighting the defined benefit pension plan disclosures required by FRS102
- a requirement for the statement of corporate governance and internal control to include the number of audit committee meetings which took place in the year, and attendance records for each committee member

### 5. Information: 16 to 19 funding allocation statements for 2021 to 2022

We have now sent out all 16 to 19 allocation statements for 2021 to 2022 with the exception of a small number of institutions that are closing or have not provided the necessary data. We have communicated separately with those institutions.

We have also sent to local authorities a summary of 16 to 19 funding for maintained schools and of 16 to 19 students funded in all the institutions in their area.

The statements can be found in the revenue funding’ folder (2021/22) in the Document Exchange section of Information Exchange.

### 6. Information: 2021 to 2022 student financial support scheme guides published

We have published the student financial support scheme guides for the 2021 to 2022 academic year for:

- [16 to 19 Bursary Fund](#)
- [Free meals in further education](#)
- [Residential Bursary Fund](#)
- [Residential Support Scheme](#)
- [Care to Learn](#)

You should ensure you review the guides and are clear about the funding rules which apply to each scheme. The 16 to 19 Bursary Fund guide is clear that both types of bursary funding are designed to help students overcome the individual financial barriers to participation they face. Institutions must ensure the funds go to those who genuinely need them and should not award any student a fixed or flat rate of funding without an assessment of the actual needs they have. The guide includes a [checklist](#) for assessing bursary applications and a ‘do’s and don’t’s’ summary of key rules which institutions may find helpful.

### 7. Information: get funding and support to set up a digital education platform

The Department for Education has extended its [digital education platform programme](#) for a further 12-months. This means that state-funded schools and colleges in England will still have the chance to apply for government-funded support to get set up on a digital platform for remote learning and claim your grant until the end of March 2022. With over 7,000 schools and colleges applying to the programme and recognising the long-term benefits having a platform provides, it is important that the programme stays open to give other schools and colleges the opportunity to apply.

[Find out more about the programme](#) and [read how one school is making the most of their remote education platform](#).

### 8. Information: College Collaboration Fund (CCF)

There is a growing bank of useful resources that are being developed through the College Collaboration Fund (CCF).

Greater Manchester Colleges Group have launched their [GMC HQ](#) website. This is a collaborative site for quality learning where colleagues share ideas, resources and their own emergent good practice with a clear focus on improving the quality of education. Content has been created and collated by the Digital and Blended Learning Champions located in each partner college. GMC HQ hosts an online community and provides a range of resources from simple “how to” videos on use of digital tools through to reflective practice blogs and podcasts that highlight emergent good practice models in context. Resources are open access and can be viewed and downloaded to support a range of approaches from remote or hybrid learning to the planning and sequencing of blended learning.

Walsall College and partners launched their [Synchronous Learning Training Package](#) through a high energy event on 25 March (you can watch on YouTube).



This online training is designed to raise the quality of synchronous (real-time) remote teaching and learning, particularly through improving the learner experience and develop teaching skills. The training package covers five themes:

- planning and preparing remote learning sessions
- strategies to engage and motivate learners online
- techniques to assess online learner progress
- supporting students with learning difficulties and disabilities
- setting group tasks and making the most of collaboration methods.

Each theme comprises ten interactive CPD (Continuing Professional Development) resources for teachers using a series of teaching exemplars, guidance and toolkits which have been created jointly by specialists from colleges in the Colleges West Midlands group with digital design by the Blended Learning Consortium.

These resources will soon be signposted to via our [CCF Resource Page on GOV.UK](#).

You can find out more information on each [CCF project on GOV.UK](#).

### 9. Information: lower reconciliation threshold for Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) grant funded providers for 2020 to 2021 academic year

We have published [further information](#) about the lower reconciliation threshold for ESFA grant funded adult education budget and advanced learner loans bursary providers for 2020 to 2021.

If you have any questions, please contact your ESFA territorial colleague or use our [online enquiry form](#).

### 10. Information: ESFA funded adult education budget (AEB), 16 to 18 traineeships (for providers without 16 to 19 funding) and advanced learner loans (ALL) allocations for 2021 to 2022

We will confirm the allocations for ESFA funded AEB, 16 to 18 traineeships (for providers without 16 to 19 funding) and ALL allocations for the 2021 to 2022 funding year on 7 April through [Manage your education and skills funding](#).

For AEB specifically, given the providers’ impact to COVID-19 on skills delivery this year and last, we can confirm that providers’ 2021 to 2022 allocations will stay the same as 2020 to 2021 - with any necessary adjustments for the impact of devolution and to remove allocations that were for one year only. This is the fairest approach to enabling providers to support local economic recovery in the forthcoming year.

### 11. Information: funding rates and formula guidance for 2021 to 2022

We have published the [Funding rates and formula guidance](#) for academic year 2021 to 2022.

We have made the following updates:

- the introduction now includes arrangements related to coronavirus (COVID-19)
- retention: the funding methodology is temporarily using an average retention factor
- Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019: the funding methodology now uses the 2019 Index, rather than the one used in 2015
- exceptional in-year growth: we made minor additions to clarify the providers eligible for growth and to state that we have the power to recover growth awards
- formula protection funding: we no longer pay formula protection funding

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