



Correspondence

ESFA Update further education: 21 April 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. Action: apply for the Skills Accelerator

The new Skills Accelerator programme has launched, with colleges invited to bid for a new £65 million fund. The Skills Accelerator incorporates Local Skills Improvement Plans and the Strategic Development Fund, which were first announced in the Skills for Jobs White Paper.

The fund will provide capital and revenue funding for collaborative projects that build providers' capacity to meet locally agreed skills priorities.

This could be by enhancing higher skills provision for learners; developing strategic employer engagement, including through the establishment of College Business Centres; or repurposing or upgrading facilities, equipment, hardware, or software.

Alongside the fund, new employer-led skills plans will set out the key changes needed to make technical skills provision more responsive to skills needs within a local area.

Funding will be available in 2021 to 2022 in a number of pilot areas. Funding must be spent by 31 March 2022, so projects must be deliverable in this timescale.

[Further information can be found on GOV.UK](#). Register for the [bidders' information event](#) on 27 April on Eventbrite.

3. Action: the College Collaboration Fund (CCF) is now open for applications

The College Collaboration Fund (CCF) is a one-year national program of competitive grant funding open to all statutory further education (FE) colleges. The CCF aims to:

- support colleges to collaboratively address shared quality improvement challenges
- capitalise on good practice and sector expertise including that developed through emerging new ways of working in response to COVID-19
- produce resources and learning to share with the wider FE sector

CCF was launched in February 2020 with a total funding envelope of £5.4m and 20 Projects involving 71 colleges in total were successful in applying for a grant of up to £500k.

The CCF is to be continued for the next year 2021 to 2022 and the total funding envelope remains at £5.4 million. All spend and activity supported by CCF will have to be completed by the 31 of March 2022. The continuation of the CCF builds on the previous round and its predecessor the Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF).

Applications opened on 19 April and close on 21 May 2021. DfE will make applicants aware of the outcome of their application from 22 July.

Further information including [guidance and application form is available on GOV.UK](#). If you have any questions, please contact College.Collaborationfund@education.gov.uk.

4. Reminder: the coronavirus (COVID-19) free school meals additional costs online form for schools and colleges is live

The [coronavirus \(COVID-19\) free school meals additional costs online form](#) went live on 7 April 2021.

You can claim eligible costs related to free school meals and free meal additional costs during the period 4 January up to the start of the Easter holidays (as applicable).

The deadline to submit your claim is 23:59 on 4 May 2021.

We have published [guidance to help you complete the form](#).

5. Reminder: free board reviews for FE colleges

We have extended the Education and Training Foundation's board review service into the summer term, and they have some capacity for more reviews.

If your college would like to take advantage of this offer and is in a position to complete the process before the end of July, please email us as soon as possible at GovernancePilots.FECOLLEGES@education.gov.uk to explain why a review would be of benefit.

Relevant factors might include:

- a recent self-assessment which indicates the need for a thorough review.
- a recent change in leadership.
- a period of structural change.
- or other new challenges which require the college to take stock.

Our Further Education Commissioner team and our ESFA Territorial Teams will assess all nominations and prioritise cases for referral to ETF approval.

6. Information: ESFA adult education budget (AEB) funding and performance management rules 2020 to 2021

We have published version 6 of the [AEB funding rules](#) and these are the changes.

- [as confirmed](#), we have updated the performance management section about the reconciliation threshold for ESFA grant funded AEB adult skills, including non-formula funded community learning and 19 to 24 traineeships
- we have clarified the rules in the learning support section around the use of the individualised learner record and the earning adjustment statement for claiming costs which exceed the fixed monthly rate
- when qualifications are added to the [funding eligibility list](#) for high value courses for school and college leavers and the National Skills Fund level 3 adult offer, they will only become eligible for funding from that publication date. As usual for AEB funding, we will not backdate funding to the start of the academic year or offer, and learners should continue to fund their qualification through their advanced learner loan.

If you have any questions, please contact us using our [enquiry form](#).

7. Information: future development of the T Level Transition Programme

It has been fantastic to see the launch of the first T Level Transition Programmes in 32 providers across the country. Over the next 9 months, we will be determining what the final national programme will look like, drawing on this first year of delivery, wider evidence on good practice and working with education specialists, providers, employers and sector stakeholders.

The programme will retain the flexibility to be able to support each student individually and enable them to progress on to a T Level, whilst introducing a degree of consistency to ensure all students are consistently prepared regardless of where they are studying.

[Further details on our approach to developing the programme](#), for September 2022 implementation, are on GOV.UK.

8. Information: Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers

Following our update in February 2021 informing the sector of the requirement for active providers to reapply to the Register, the [new set of application criteria](#) has now been published on GOV.UK.

More stringent entry criteria for the Register has been introduced to drive up the quality of apprenticeship provision. This is to ensure only high quality, financially stable, skilled and experienced apprenticeship providers are included on the Register.

We will operate a phased reapplication approach throughout 2021 to 2022.

9. Information: consultation launched to create new flexible apprenticeships

Sectors including the creative industries, agriculture and construction, will soon be able to offer more apprenticeship opportunities.

On Tuesday 20 April, a [consultation was launched](#) seeking views on how new flexi-job apprenticeship schemes could be run. Apprenticeships are at least 12 months long, so some sectors with flexible employment patterns and short-term roles, such as agriculture, construction and creative sectors including TV, film and theatre production, have found it challenging to create enough opportunities.

9.1 How you can get involved

Please use Department for Education [e-consultation platform Citizen Space](#) to access the consultation. Please use the online system to provide your feedback.

If you are unable to use the online system, for example if you use specialist accessibility software, please email fundingrules.comments@education.gov.uk and we will provide you with details of how to return your response.

The consultation closes at 23:59 on Tuesday 1 June 2021.

If you have any questions about this consultation please email fundingrules.comments@education.gov.uk.

10. Information: Find a further education service - new calendar feature

In February we added [Find a further education service](#), which is a starting page that links to key ESFA services and the funding rules.

We have now added a calendar that shows you key dates like when to submit your Individualised learner record (ILR).

The page sits on [Get help with Education and Skills Funding Agency services](#) which is a help centre hosted by ESFA. You can search help articles or discussions between training providers about further education and skills topics, for self-serve support.

If you have any further suggested dates for the calendar, please let us know by emailing customerexperience@education.gov.uk.

11. Information: replacement service to conduct barred list status checks

This update is only relevant to further education colleges and sixth-form colleges as established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 and institutions designated as being within the further education sector.

From 1 April the Teaching Regulation Agency is offering an additional function within its existing free [Employer Access facility](#) that allows colleges, in specific circumstances, to conduct standalone Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) barred list status checks. This replaces the service 'TP Online' delivered by Capita Teachers' Pensions until the end of March this year.

This search should only be used for newly appointed staff who are engaging in regulated activity, pending the receipt of an Enhanced Certificate with Barred List information from the DBS or where an individual has worked in a post in a school or college that brought them into regular contact with children or young persons which ended not more than three months prior to that person's appointment to the organisation.

For full details of the checks that must be carried out on school and college staff, please refer to part three of the DfE's statutory guidance '[Keeping children safe in education](#)' (KCSIE).

11.1 Accessing the new service

As a college you should have access to Teacher Services – Employer Access – Schools via DfE Sign-In (DSI). If you are authorised to use the service, you will see the new search functionality upon logging in to Teacher Services – Employer Access – Schools.

Guidance on how to perform a search, and next steps if you identify a possible match, are available within guidance documents at the Teacher Services – Employer Access – Schools service.

If you need help using DSI or you need to register for a DSI account, please [access their help page](#).

This service is not available to supply/recruitment agencies or other organisations that do not meet the requirements in the relevant legislation.

We appreciate that some schools and colleges may use third party agencies e.g. HR services and recruitment agencies to undertake pre-appointment checks as set out in Part three of KCSIE. This arrangement can still happen, but because these third parties will no longer have access to the standalone barred list service as they do not fall within the legal requirement, they will need to apply to the DBS for an Enhanced Certificate with Barred List information to determine whether a person is barred, on your behalf.

Please contact TPonline.REPLACEMENT@education.gov.uk if you think you should have access to this service.

Please contact Employer.Access@education.gov.uk if you have any further questions about accessing this service.

12. Information: Checkyourpay Stakeholder Toolkit

The National Living and Minimum Wage increased on 1 April 2021 for the two million eligible workers, including apprentices, in the UK. These increases are a key part of the government's commitment to level up the UK and provide equal opportunities for all as part of the plan to Build Back Fairer.

To ensure that eligible apprentices receive the correct rates of pay, we would appreciate your support of the campaign to ensure that employers of apprentices are aware of their legal responsibilities and where they can go to for help or advice about pay. As part of this HM Government have developed the [Checkyourpay Stakeholder Toolkit](#). The toolkit contains suggested messaging, tracked links to the campaign website and images and videos to help you and other relevant stakeholders within your networks share on social media, in newsletters, on websites and anywhere else you can help us reach employers and apprentices.

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