

## GUIDANCE

# Higher education and student support: coronavirus

Information about student support during the coronavirus pandemic.

## Contents

[I'm not able to get through to Student Finance Wales to discuss my funding. Are lines closed?](#)

[Will April's student finance payment be in any way disrupted?](#)

[I am experiencing financial problems, what help is available to me?](#)

[I am anxious and finding things very stressful. What support is available to me?](#)

[My University is moving to online learning for my course \(or providing work for me to complete at home\). Will I still receive my student support from Student Finance Wales?](#)

[If my University were to close, would I still receive my student support from Student Finance Wales?](#)

[If I am ill, will I still receive my student support from Student Finance Wales?](#)

[If I have to self-isolate, will I still receive my student support from Student Finance Wales?](#)

[I have moved out of halls of residence/private rented student accommodation. Will I have to pay rent for the summer term?](#)

[I have moved out of halls of residence/private rented student](#)

accommodation and moved back to my parents' home. Will I retain the same level of maintenance support?

Will my university be providing online provision in an accessible format?

How will my learning, examinations and assessments be affected as provision moves from face-to-face teaching?

How are Students' Unions being supported at this time?

My A levels have been cancelled. How does that affect my application to study at university?

Some higher education providers are changing their offers. What should I do?

What is the Welsh Government doing about this?

What resources will be available for learners now face to face teaching has ceased? What approach will institutions take to allowing learners to resume study after the pandemic?

What support will be available for learners who don't have access to computers at home?

Some learners would have been due to start in spring 2020. What will happen with their courses?

Have institutions attempted to identify learners whose own health, or the health of their dependents, may require special consideration when assessing risk and adapting procedures particularly as they will no longer physically attend?

What is being done to support learners' welfare and mental health in post-16 learning? Is there a role for additional government funding/ direction to do this?

There is a need to support healthcare professional learners, what precautions or actions should these learners be taking?

What will happen with graduations?

What additional provision for Tier 4 visa advice is available, and is this provision being made available remotely?

Will PGCE student grants be paid after May?

How will institutions support students who remain in their accommodation? In particular, estranged students, international students, those self-isolating and those in catered accommodation with limited/no kitchen space?

Will students in university owned halls of residence, purpose built and privately owned accommodation and private rented HMO's or tenancies be eligible for refunds should they choose to leave their properties early?

How will placement students be affected in terms of their progression where they are unable to complete practical and/or vocational forms of assessment?

I need to travel to empty my term-time accommodation. Is this allowed?

I want to return to my term-time accommodation from home. Is this allowed?

What is the position on the refund of student fees for those who have already paid college or university fees during the coronavirus outbreak?

Is the Disabled Students' Allowance going to be adapted to the changed circumstance, if so, how?

What protections do I have against being evicted from my accommodation?

How is the health and welfare of international students being cared for?

Will student loan repayments be suspended?

What is being done about the regulation of higher education in Wales?

How are staff at higher education providers being supported?

What is the impact on overseas activity and international students?

---

## **Individuals**

### **I'm not able to get through to Student Finance Wales to discuss my funding. Are lines closed?**

The Student Loans Company, which provides the Student Finance Wales service, has taken steps to change the way they deliver their services to meet the

Government Coronavirus guidance.

SLC has enabled remote working solutions to allow staff to work from home. These staff are supported by a core team of key workers who continue to deliver critical office based functions.

SLC continues to accept and process new and returning student applications, and maintenance and tuition fee payments are being processed as normal.

Contact Centre services are available and in high demand. Students are asked to use their online accounts to contact SfW wherever possible.

**[SLC has published information for customers online](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/student-loans-company)**

[\(https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/student-loans-company\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/student-loans-company) which should be checked before contacting SLC.

## **Will April's student finance payment be in any way disrupted?**

The Student Loans Company, which provides the Student Finance Wales service, are taking steps to change the way they deliver their services to meet Government guidance. Payments for the 2019/20 academic year have continued throughout the period and all scheduled payments are expected to continue.

## **I am experiencing financial problems, what help is available to me?**

Students who are experiencing financial difficulties may wish to contact their student hardship or welfare services at their provider.

The Student Loans Company have temporarily ceased arrears and debt collection activity to alleviate pressure on individuals and not place additional financial hardship on them at this time.

## **I am anxious and finding things very stressful. What support is available to me?**

The Welsh Government is aware that universities in Wales have carried out a range of activities aimed at supporting students' mental health and wellbeing, supported by funding made available by the Welsh Government to HEFCW. Such support should be extended to students who are living off-campus, as well as those in university halls of residence. Students who are experiencing anxiety and stress may wish to contact their student welfare services at their provider. There are also a number of national charities who may be able to help.

## **My University is moving to online learning for my course (or providing work for me to complete at home). Will I still receive my student support from Student Finance Wales?**

Events are developing at pace and a number of Universities are moving teaching online, as well as using other methods, to ensure students can continue their studies uninterrupted. Your student support should continue unaffected. We are reviewing all student support policies to ensure that students and Universities are properly supported during this time. The Student Loans Company, which provides the Student Finance Wales service, is working hard to ensure that payments are made on time.

If you have questions or concerns about the delivery of your course, please contact your University.

## **If my University were to close, would I still receive my student support from Student Finance Wales?**

Universities have not closed and are continuing to deliver teaching and student services. The situation continues to evolve at pace, but for now Universities are doing their best to deliver core services to students. We are reviewing all student support policies to ensure that students and Universities are properly supported.

## **If I am ill, will I still receive my student support from Student Finance Wales?**

You should inform your University of any absence from your course due to illness as soon as possible. Short absences from your course should not normally affect your student support. We are reviewing all student support policies to ensure that students and Universities are properly supported during this time.

## **If I have to self-isolate, will I still receive my student support from Student Finance Wales?**

You should inform your University of any absence from your course as soon as possible. Short absences from your course should not normally affect your student support. We are reviewing all student support policies to ensure that students and Universities are properly supported during this time.

## **I have moved out of halls of residence/private rented student accommodation. Will I have to pay rent for the summer term?**

The decision by some institutions to waive some or all accommodation costs is a welcome one.

Students are advised to speak to the accommodation office or private landlord, as applicable, as accommodation rental agreements are between the student and the university/private landlord. Institutions should communicate clearly with residential students on rents and take a fair and transparent approach to the administration of accommodation provision.

## **I have moved out of halls of residence/private rented student accommodation and moved back to my parents' home. Will I retain the same level of maintenance support?**

We are reviewing all student support policies to ensure that students are properly supported during this time. Students who have moved home in the last few weeks should not see their support affected this term.

## **Will my university be providing online provision in an accessible format?**

Universities are responsible for the delivery of their provision, however, we would expect them to consider the needs of students in providing alternative and accessible formats. Universities are moving at pace to ensure students can continue to access provision, however, if you have specific learning needs or require additional support you should contact your University as soon as possible. If you are receiving support via Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs), you should discuss your support arrangements with your University to ensure your support is still meeting your needs and requirements.

## **How will my learning, examinations and assessments be affected as provision moves from face-to-face teaching?**

Higher education providers are responsible for the planning and delivery of their provision. The Welsh Government expects them to consider the needs of students in providing alternative and accessible formats for both teaching and assessment. Students should be able to leave with qualifications that are a fair reflection of their abilities, whilst maintaining quality and standards. No student should be penalised unfairly for being in their final year of study at this difficult time.

## **How are Students' Unions being supported at this time?**

The Welsh Government recognises that Students' Unions across Wales are working incredibly hard alongside our universities to offer support, reassurance and advice for students and staff. Wales is home to a diverse and international student community, and the work that Students' Unions are doing (with NUS Wales) demonstrates that we continue to be a welcoming and supportive home for all students.

## **My A levels have been cancelled. How does that**

# **affect my application to study at university?**

If you have applied via UCAS and there are any significant changes that affect you, or your application, UCAS will email you using the email address on your application. You can update your email with UCAS if you need to.

## **[Qualifications Wales have provided information following the decision not to hold secondary school exams this summer](https://qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/)**

[\(https://qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/\)](https://qualificationswales.org/english/coronavirus---covid-19/).

Learners who were due to sit their A-levels this summer will be awarded a fair grade to recognise their work. We expect higher education providers to take account of this when making offers.

## **Some higher education providers are changing their offers. What should I do?**

There is no reason for the usual admissions cycle to be disrupted. Higher education providers should not begin making unconditional offers, and applicants should not feel pressured to accept such offers.

## **What is the Welsh Government doing about this?**

The Welsh Government is working with UCAS and HEFCW to monitor this situation. Higher education providers have been asked to refrain, until 1 May, from making unconditional offers that are not in line with standard offers for those students who have not already gained the necessary qualifications. This is in the best interests of both students and higher education institutions.

## **What resources will be available for learners now face to face teaching has ceased? What approach will institutions take to allowing learners to resume study after the pandemic?**

Welsh Government is aware that while face-to-face teaching has ceased for the



time being, colleges and universities are moving to online delivery wherever this is possible. Welsh Government is working with Jisc to help support the further development of online learning resources where needed.

As the individual approaches taken by learning providers will vary, learners should speak to their provider about their specific course.

## **What support will be available for learners who don't have access to computers at home?**

We understand that each institution is taking action to ensure all learners can access e-learning, for example through loaning laptops to learners who do not have facilities at home. Learners should be able to get further information from their learning provider.

We have asked learning providers to prioritise learner well-being and to provide support and updates remotely, wherever possible, through phone, email and online methods.

## **Some learners would have been due to start in spring 2020. What will happen with their courses?**

Each institution is responsible for making arrangements for those learners who were due to start courses shortly.

## **Have institutions attempted to identify learners whose own health, or the health of their dependents, may require special consideration when assessing risk and adapting procedures particularly as they will no longer physically attend?**

Institutions are aware of their duty of care to, and pastoral support for, learners, and are prioritising support for vulnerable learners. Colleges and universities have

student services teams who are leading on this, and who should be the first port of call for further information.

In addition, the Welsh Government is reviewing its student support policies to ensure that higher education students, particularly international students, are properly supported during this time. The Welsh Government is working with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales and Universities Wales on matters related to student welfare and will review policy accordingly. We recognise how difficult a time this is for students and that they face unique issues.

## **What is being done to support learners' welfare and mental health in post-16 learning? Is there a role for additional government funding/ direction to do this?**

Please see above. Institutions have effective process and procedures to care for the wellbeing of learners, and are providing online support wherever possible. We have also asked them to ensure that 'keeping in touch' arrangements are in place to help learners through periods of isolation and social distancing, including for work-based learners whose employers have shut down.

Both the further and higher education sectors have funding to support mental health in 2020-21, and this can be used to help support learner resilience and well-being during the current period of remote learning and social isolation.

## **There is a need to support healthcare professional learners, what precautions or actions should these learners be taking?**

Each institution is responsible for arranging placements and the welfare of staff and student is their key priority. The Welsh Government is reviewing its learner support policies to ensure that learners are properly supported during this time.

## **What will happen with graduations?**

This is for individual institutions to determine on the basis of government advice at the time.

## **What additional provision for Tier 4 visa advice is available, and is this provision being made available remotely?**

This is not devolved to the Welsh Government. [Information and advice can be found from the UK Council for International Student Affairs \(UKCISA\)](https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students) (<https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students>).

## **Will PGCE student grants be paid after May?**

No changes have been made to statutory student support. The Welsh Government is reviewing all its student support policies to ensure that students are properly supported during this time.

## **How will institutions support students who remain in their accommodation? In particular, estranged students, international students, those self-isolating and those in catered accommodation with limited/no kitchen space?**

Institutions are aware of their duty of care to, and pastoral support for, learners, and are prioritising support for vulnerable learners. They are monitoring the number of students who are staying in or around university and have put in place additional support measures for students for whom the university is their primary residence or who are self-isolating. Colleges and universities have student services teams who are leading on this, and who should be the first port of call for further information. The Welsh Government is reviewing its policies in respect of vulnerable children and young people.

Students who remain at university should observe Government restrictions on

travel and outdoor activity. They should be encouraged to [follow the advice that has been issued by Public Health Wales](https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/) (<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>).

## **Will students in university owned halls of residence, purpose built and privately owned accommodation and private rented HMO's or tenancies be eligible for refunds should they choose to leave their properties early?**

The decision by some institutions to waive some or all accommodation costs is a welcome one. Students are advised to speak to the accommodation office or private landlord, as applicable, as accommodation rental agreements are between the student and the university/private landlord. Institutions should communicate clearly with residential students on rents and take a fair and transparent approach to the administration of accommodation provision.

## **How will placement students be affected in terms of their progression where they are unable to complete practical and/or vocational forms of assessment?**

The Welsh Government understand that placements, field research, vocational assessments and so on are essential parts of many courses. Providers will prioritise the welfare of staff and students. Higher education providers are responsible for the planning and delivery of their provision.

## **I need to travel to empty my term-time accommodation. Is this allowed?**

Whilst many students will already have travelled home, others will still be in term-time accommodation. Students who remain in term time accommodation should observe current Government [advice on social distancing from Public Health Wales](https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/self-) (<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/self->

[isolation-advice/](#)) and the guidance issued by [Welsh Government](#) (<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance#section-39259>). Students should contact their accommodation provider to discuss and resolve any issues. Institutions are aware of their duty of care to their students.

Students who are considering travelling should be aware that travel is permitted for specific purposes only. Moving house is permitted, where there is a need to do so and the move cannot be postponed. A student may travel for the purpose of moving house from their term-time accommodation to their usual home if they have a reason for doing so, including the ending of face-to-face teaching, or having reached the end of their lease. Students should move all their belongings to minimise the need for additional travel.

## **I want to return to my term-time accommodation from home. Is this allowed?**

Students who are considering travelling should be aware that travel is permitted for specific purposes only. Moving house is permitted, where there is a need to do so and the move cannot be postponed. It should not be necessary to move from your usual home to return to a term-time address for reasons connected with your learning, as face-to-face teaching has largely ended. Any student contemplating travelling for this reason is advised to contact their learning provider to determine whether it is absolutely necessary to return to term time accommodation. There may be other reasons that make a move a necessary.

## **What is the position on the refund of student fees for those who have already paid college or university fees during the coronavirus outbreak?**

Universities and colleges in Wales are continuing to teach students. The situation continues to evolve at pace, and universities are moving quickly to deliver their commitments to students.

Students should not expect a fee refund if they are receiving adequate online learning and support. Students are urged to discuss any issues they may have with their higher education institution.

Fees are a contractual matter between student and provider. However, where institutions may not be able to provide adequate online tuition, the Welsh Government does not expect an institution to charge a student any further tuition fees, as any tuition being offered would be part of the course the student has already paid for.

The Welsh Government is reviewing policy to ensure that students and universities are properly supported.

## **Is the Disabled Students' Allowance going to be adapted to the changed circumstance, if so, how?**

We are reviewing all student support policies to ensure that students and Universities are properly supported during this time. Operational flexibility in the application and administration of DSAs is being introduced by SLC.

## **What protections do I have against being evicted from my accommodation?**

The Coronavirus Act 2020 increased the notice period for all eviction notices to three months. Since then, there has been a 90-day halt in housing possession proceedings in the courts system. This means that nobody can be legally evicted during this time. Please see the latest [Welsh Government guidance Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for tenants in the private rented sector](https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-tenants-private-rented-sector) (<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-tenants-private-rented-sector>).

## **How is the health and welfare of international students being cared for?**

The Welsh Government welcomes and appreciates the exceptional contribution that international students bring to Wales. The Minister for Education wrote to universities in Wales on 27 March asking them to ensure that support is offered to students who remain away from home at this difficult time and who are likely to feel isolated. Support should be extended to students who are living off-campus,

as well as those in university halls of residence. This includes the large number of international students who have decided to stay in the UK or cannot travel home. Universities will also offer a range of support services to students, including support for catering and cleaning, and providing support for mental health which is a key consideration for the Minister. Students should continue to follow public health guidance that has been issued by [Public Health Wales](https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/) (<https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>) and the [Welsh Government](https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance#section-39259) (<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-regulations-guidance#section-39259>).

## **Will student loan repayments be suspended?**

The Student Loans Company have temporarily ceased arrears and debt collection activity to alleviate pressure on individuals and not place additional financial hardship on them at this time. There are no plans to cease repayment collection, which is income contingent – repayments stop if an individual's income drops below the threshold for repayment.

## **Providers**

## **What is being done about the regulation of higher education in Wales?**

The Welsh Government has been in discussion with HEFCW about the regulatory requirements for institutions in Wales in view of the current situation. HEFCW are reviewing these requirements.

## **How are staff at higher education providers being supported?**

The Welsh Government is aware that institutions have been reviewing and implementing working practices for staff that allow them to maintain a duty of care, for example through social distancing, whilst ensuring that essential business continues. We are sure that the sector will continue to provide support to staff that



bolsters their mental health and well-being at this time.

## What is the impact on overseas activity and international students?

The Welsh Government is aware that institutions have paused their overseas travel for staff and students in line with current FCO advice against all non-essential international travel for British nationals. All UK students and staff currently studying on exchanges, including Erasmus+, or working temporarily overseas are also advised to return to the UK now when and while commercial routes are still available, in line with FCO's most recent advice.

---

### First published

3 April 2020

### Last updated

23 April 2020

### Part of

[Education and childcare: coronavirus \(https://gov.wales/education-coronavirus\)](https://gov.wales/education-coronavirus)

[Higher education funding \(https://gov.wales/higher-education-funding\)](https://gov.wales/higher-education-funding)

---