

Part of Education and childcare during coronavirus



Policy paper Package of support for students who have to defer their studies Published 11 September 2020

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The government has been working closely with the higher education sector to ensure that the vast majority of students who have achieved the necessary grades to go to university this year are able to do so.

In August the government convened a Higher Education Taskforce, led by the Universities Minister, which continues to work with the sector on the challenges universities, colleges and their students are facing due to the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and to build capacity for extra students this year and next year.

The higher education sector has agreed that all offers to students who meet their conditions should be honoured this coming year wherever possible or, if maximum capacity is reached, to offer an alternative course that the student is happy with or a deferred place as a last resort.

To help universities build capacity for additional students, the government is providing up to £10 million for which universities can bid to support their capital plans to increase intakes in the coming academic year. This follows the government's announcements that it intends to remove student number controls across all courses, subject to parliamentary approval, and that it has removed caps on medical, dentistry veterinary and teaching courses. We have also provided additional teaching grant funding for high cost subjects for this year.

For the very small percentage of students who had planned to study this year but are offered a deferred place, the government has put together a package of support that will provide them with opportunities to gain new skills, undertake work placements in the public, private and voluntary sectors, undertake additional learning and support their career development. This includes support that the higher education sector will offer those students during the year ahead, including free courses and access to careers advice.

Whilst this package is targeted at those who had not planned to defer, some of the options, such as the skills toolbox, will be open to those who had planned to defer. In addition, where there is space on any of the other initiatives all students deferring will be eligible.

The government intends to add to these opportunities over time, and would welcome contact from any organisations that may be able to offer placements or employment over the coming year to this group of students. Please email: support.deferringstudents@education.gov.uk.

Government support

For students who are in the unexpected position of deferring their place this year without having plans in place, the following opportunities may be of interest.

Healthcare support workers

The NHS is actively recruiting Healthcare support workers, and the Department for Health and Social Care will be encouraging students who need to defer their studies to consider applying for these roles. This opportunity will also be opened up to non-medical students, so a wide range of students could benefit.

These roles are paid and will provide valuable transferable skills for students. They include healthcare assistants, and clinical support staff who would work with nurses and midwives to look after the well-being and comfort of patients.

Paid tutoring roles

Deferring students, like undergraduates, graduates and other individuals with prior experience of working in school, may be eligible to apply for paid tutoring roles with some National Tutoring Programme Partners. The National Tutoring Programme aims to increase the availability of high-quality tutoring for disadvantaged children across England. As a flagship government programme, competition for roles is likely to be considerable, however talented school leavers, particularly with prior experience of tutoring would be welcome to apply. National Tutoring Programme partners will be recruiting tutors from November.

The National Career Service

The National Careers Service has also just introduced a range of new initiatives, designed to offer accessible careers guidance and activities for students and anyone else whose career path has been impacted by coronavirus (COVID-19). To keep up with growing demand, the government has invested an extra £32 million into the platform which will help us provide careers advice for up to 270,000 more people.

The Skills Toolkit

The Department for Education (DfE) is promoting The Skills Toolkit, which will enable deferring students to access free courses to build practical skills which will help them develop a well-rounded CV and prepare for university and their future careers. These courses have been chosen with help from external experts to ensure that they help students develop the skills employers value including Learning to Code for Data Analysis and Thriving in a Digital Workplace. We will continue to expand the offer of courses available.

University Officer Cadets

The Ministry of Defence is making available up to 1,000 additional places as University Officer Cadets as part of either a University Royal Navy Unit, a University Officer Training Corps, or a University Air Squadron, for those who have had to defer their university place. University Officer Cadets participate in a wide range of military and leadership training and are paid for the activity they undertake.

Network Rail work experience

Network Rail will be offering work experience placements in engineering or operations management. The placements will offer a unique opportunity for deferring students to experience what it is like to work in the transport industry. Details of the programme will be shared in due course. The Department for Transport is continuing to engage with industry representatives to identify other suitable work placements for university students who are deferring their places. Transport for London is working with major infrastructure and construction partners to offer placements on a rotational basis, and also their development engineering team will support a co-ordinated placement scheme across their engineering consultancies.

Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS)

The Ministry of Justice is keen to explore the potential to expand the current offer of placements in Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) and would be looking for opportunities that extend beyond 3 months to enable students to acquire the necessary skills and support the recovery plan.

Civil Service Fast Stream and Early Talent

The Fast Stream and Early Talent Schools Team are able to offer a one week virtual work experience opportunity, based around a fictional scenario that provides participants with an insight into what goes on in government and the Civil Service, and in the process develop skills in analysis, prioritisation, debating and negotiation, risk management, reporting, and potentially virtual team working. In the first instance around 100 opportunities will be available. Please contact schoolsoutreach.diversity@cabinetoffice.gov.uk for more information.

Dedicated industry seminar programme

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) is developing a dedicated seminar programme, enabling industry leaders to share their experiences and insights with students who did not originally plan to defer. Further details will be released shortly. This group of students has much to offer business and industry at this time. BEIS will take steps to encourage sectors of industry to create and promote opportunities for careers – enriching work placements that will be mutually beneficial to students and companies.

Special constables

The Home Office have identified the essential role deferring students could play by volunteering as special constables.

Opportunities in the voluntary sector

There are a number of opportunities in the voluntary sector which could benefit students who have to defer their university place and who have worked with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport to help identify these.

Volunteering opportunities

Volunteering Matters is able to broker volunteering opportunities with the Royal Voluntary Service, enabling students who need to defer their place to volunteer in hospital retail outlets, community services, and the NHS; Coram Beanstalk, which would connect these students to primary school students to support them with reading; and City Year, which will enable students to volunteer as a mentor in a school. Volunteering Matters also has internal volunteering opportunities for young people to get involved in youth social action and community support roles both at home and away from home.

The Prince's Trust team programme

The Prince's Trust is encouraging students who have to defer to apply for a 12-week placement on the Team programme. There will be a chance of opportunities across the year offering young people the chance to gain new skills, take a qualification and meet new people through a series of community projects, residential trips and work experiences.

The National Citizen Service

The National Citizen Service (NCS) will connect these students to the 130 NCS delivery partners across England looking for paid or volunteer staff between September and December. They are also promoting their self-service digital offer to deferring students, which enables students to build skills, connect to other young people and find opportunities to support their local community.

Private sector opportunities

Coronavirus (COVID-19) testing

Supporting the effort against coronavirus (COVID-19): The Lighthouse Laboratories have been established across the UK to create capacity for coronavirus (COVID-19) diagnostic testing. The Lighthouse Laboratories are encouraging students who have had to defer their university place to apply for several hundred opportunities available in coronavirus (COVID-19) testing centres across the county. This will enable students to make a significant contribution to the national effort to combat coronavirus (COVID-19), and will be paid opportunities available to all students, as not all roles will require laboratory experience. They will be 9 to 12 month contracts, so suitable for students wishing to gain work experience and support the national testing effort.

Bombardier Transportation work placements

Bombardier Transportation is pleased to commit to supporting students that have had their university place deferred, by offering a number of work placements at their train manufacturing facility in Derby and at their train service depots across the UK. These placements will be a mix of shorter unpaid placements and longer paid placements, which will offer valuable work experience opportunities in their engineering, operations and commercial teams. The students would be mentored, and provided with opportunities to return to Bombardier for future placements while at university and upon graduation.

Higher Education sector support

Universities UK and all higher education providers have issued a statement on 11 September committing that, where there is no option but for students to defer their places, they will support and engage these students during the year so that they feel ready to start their studies in 2021 to 2022. They have confirmed that:

- providers will maintain regular contact with students who need to defer, and explore a range of means of supporting them over the coming year
providers will offer greater transitional support to these students to support their enrolment in 2021
some online content will be made available to these students, at the appropriate level
where possible and appropriate, they will be offered online mentoring and access to careers guidance
they will receive guidance on what further options for study in preparation for their degree are available, with many providers supplying free online courses and/ or resources

Some providers are extending this support to other groups, and students should contact their institution to see what support is available to them.

How affected deferring students can access these opportunities

In the majority of cases, students will be able to apply directly to the provider, scheme or workplace offering these opportunities. UCAS will be directly communicating to students who have had to defer their place this year to advise them of the range of opportunities available to them, and how to access them. The government is working with universities and UCAS to provide deferring students with confirmation of their deferred status and the reasons for it.

Is this page useful? Yes No Is there anything wrong with this page?

Coronavirus (COVID-19) The UK has left the EU

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance and support Check the new rules for January 2021

Services and information Departments and policy

Table with 3 columns: Benefits, Births, deaths, marriages and care, Business and self-employed, Childcare and parenting, Citizenship and living in the UK, Crime, justice and the law, Disabled people, Driving and transport, Education and learning, Employing people, Environment and countryside, Housing and local services, Money and tax, Passports, travel and living abroad, Visas and immigration, Working, jobs and pensions, How government works, Departments, Worldwide, Services, Guidance and regulation, News and communications, Research and statistics, Policy papers and consultations, Transparency and freedom of information releases

