

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 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).

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

- 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.

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: Services and information, Departments and policy, and a third column with various links like 'How government works', 'Departments', etc.

