

**Part of**  
**Education, universities and childcare during coronavirus**



# Guidance

## Coronavirus (COVID-19) National Testing Programme: conditions of grant

Updated 7 May 2021

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### 1. Introduction

Rapid coronavirus (COVID-19) testing of staff, pupils and students in secondary schools and colleges began in January 2021.

The purpose of this is to identify asymptomatic cases of COVID-19.

Further information and guidance have been developed and can be accessed in the COVID-19 National Testing Programme Secondary Schools and Colleges Document Sharing Platform. We've shared a link to the document sharing platform with schools and colleges, if you don't think you've got access then contact the Department for Education (DfE) helpline on 0800 046 8687.

Schools and colleges will receive funding to support them with costs they have incurred to conduct testing.

#### 1.1 Expiry or review date

This guidance will be kept under regular review.

#### 1.2 Who is this publication for?

This guidance is for:

- mainstream academies and maintained schools with secondary age pupils
- 16 to 19 academies and maintained schools
- alternative provision academies with secondary aged pupils, including hospital schools
- pupil referral units with secondary aged pupils
- special academies and special maintained schools with secondary age pupils
- further education colleges and sixth form colleges
- special post-16 institutions
- non-maintained special schools
- independent special schools

### 2. Scope

These grant conditions relate to the allocation schools and colleges will receive to support the costs associated with the following phases of testing activity:

Testing between 4 January 2021 and 5 March 2021 including:

- the rapid one-off testing on return of all vulnerable students or pupils, and children of critical workers, attending educational settings where attending students or pupils received 2 lateral flow device (LFD) tests spaced 3 to 5 days apart
- the weekly testing of staff up to twice a week

Testing between 6 March and 1 April 2021 including:

- the rapid one-off testing on return of all students or pupils attending educational settings, with students or pupils receiving 3 LFD tests, spaced 3 to 5 days apart
- the maintenance of an on-site asymptomatic testing site (ATS) testing offer from the 19 March until the end of the spring term, to enable the twice weekly testing of students or pupils for whom at home testing is not considered suitable or who may need additional assistance.

### 3. Eligibility

The following institution types will be eligible for this funding:

- mainstream academies and maintained schools with secondary age pupils
- 16 to 19 academies and maintained schools
- alternative provision academies with secondary aged pupils, including hospital schools
- pupil referral units with secondary aged pupils
- special academies and special maintained schools with secondary age pupils
- further education colleges and sixth form colleges
- special post-16 institutions
- non-maintained special schools
- independent special schools

The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) will only provide funding to institutions which are on a list of confirmed participants in the rapid testing programme provided by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Each confirmed test site will have an agreed identifier to record test results. This will be used to identify participating institutions.

As set out above, independent institutions (with fee-paying pupils and students) are not eligible for this funding.

At eligible institutions, all pupils aged 11 to 18 are in scope as are any aged 19 plus currently attending college during this period.

We are providing this funding to support schools and colleges with the costs of testing. We expect that this will mainly be workforce costs.

Other costs might include:

- minor incidental expenses, such as printing, paper and stationery, cleaning materials and equipment, tissues and wipes
- additional waste disposal costs incurred given the additional waste volumes likely to be generated from the testing bays and desks, such as LFD kits, disposable PPE, tissues and paper bowls

Institutions will have discretion on how they spend this funding in support of testing.

### 4. Allocations

We have provided a workforce planning tool on the document sharing platform which illustrates workforce requirements and associated funding. This allows institutions to calculate an estimate of funding which they may receive. We've shared a link to the document sharing platform with schools and colleges, if you don't think you've got access then contact the DfE helpline on 0800 046 8687.

Actual allocations will be based on the number of bays and desks calculated as needed to deliver the number of tests completed (measured by the number of test results recorded on the school or college's individual account on the Test & Trace Log Results website).

To calculate funding, we will estimate the number of bays and desks a school or college would have required in order to complete the number of test results recorded based on an average testing volume. We will then apply an average cost per bay.

We expect most of these costs to relate to workforce costs per bay set out in the COVID-19 National Testing Programme Secondary Schools and Colleges Document Sharing Platform but we will also allow for waste disposal and minor incidental costs. We've shared a link to the document sharing platform with schools and colleges, if you don't think you've got access then contact the DfE helpline.

For rapid one-off testing on return of pupils or students who are attending school or college we have calculated:

- 1 role per 10 testing bays and desks for the following roles: COVID-19 co-ordinator, quality lead or team leader, registration assistant, results recorder and cleaner
- 1 processor per bay and desk
- 1 test assistant per bay and desk in special schools, special post-16 institutions, or 1 per 5 bays and desks in mainstream settings

For staff testing and minimal onsite ATS, we have assumed that the following roles are combined:

- The COVID-19 co-ordinator and quality lead or team leader
- The results recorder and the processing operative

We have also assumed that in all settings staff testing will require one testing assistant per 5 bays and desks.

Eligible institutions in London will be paid an additional weighting for workforce costs. This will be calculated in accordance with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's general labour market rates.

For institutions receiving Medacs support for administered swabbing requirements, the cost of this Medacs support will be deducted from that institution's allocation or payment by recalculating the allocation with the Medacs funded post removed.

We have accounted for different staffing levels needed for rapid one-off testing on return of pupils or students in special schools, special post-16 institutions, alternative provision academies and pupil referral units. We have assumed that:

- these settings will need a higher number of test assistants to support pupils who cannot self-administer tests
- test assistants will be paid at a higher hourly rate to reflect the likelihood of additional qualifications or experience

While the assumptions above will be used to determine funding allocations, decisions on specific requirements for staffing are for individual institutions to make.

As part of these allocations, we will also provide funding to those schools and colleges involved in Phase 1 of the Daily Contact Testing (DCT) trial. Those participating in Phase 1 of the DCT trial will be paid a participation fee of £1000 per week pro rata, in accordance with the funding agreement agreed by DHSC and participating institutions, and subject to the exceptions set out in that agreement. Funding will be paid to participating schools and colleges for Phase 2 of the DCT trial once the trial has been concluded and in accordance with the Phase 2 schools funding agreement.

### 5. Exceptional funding for additional premises and reasonable costs

In exceptional circumstances we will consider claims for additional funding over a minimum level of £250 to cover other additional costs incurred by schools and colleges. This includes:

- schools and colleges that have had to hire additional premises or make significant alterations to their existing premises to conduct testing from 4 January to 19 March 2021
  - this will only be available in exceptional circumstances where the funding allocation is not sufficient and after every other alternative option has been exhausted
  - claims will need to be supported by an invoice or other documentary evidence of the costs incurred.
- reimbursement of excess costs incurred by schools or colleges acting on advice issued by DfE before the announcement on Monday 4 January that schools would only be open to vulnerable pupils and the children of critical workers attending school or college during this period
  - exceptional funding will only be agreed where schools or colleges committed to expenditure, in excess of their funding allocations, to prepare for a level of testing activity that was no longer required as a result of the announcement to close schools on 4 January
  - we would expect schools or colleges to first re-use any resources they had already paid for to support the revised testing requirements
- where additional resources have been purchased that could not be re-used, in excess of allocations, we will consider claims to reimburse schools/colleges for reasonable costs
- claims will also need to be supported by an invoice or other documentary evidence of the costs incurred

Further details on how to claim for exceptional costs will be made available shortly.

### 6. Payments

A series of payments will be made to schools and colleges, with payments being made retrospectively and based on information reported through Test and Trace.

For testing conducted in the period from 4 January up to 5 March 2021, we will make payments in April 2021 to colleges, non-maintained special schools, and local authorities and in May 2021 to academies. See [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) mass testing funding for schools and colleges](#) for more information about how much each institution has been allocated for this period of testing.

For testing conducted in the period from 6 March to 1 April, we will make payments to colleges, non-maintained special schools, local authorities, and to academies at the end of May 2021.

Payments will be made directly to colleges, academies, local authorities, and non-maintained special schools. Local authorities must pass payments on to maintained schools. The ESFA will make these payments automatically. There will be no requirement to make a claim to receive the funding for Test and Trace reported testing.

Information on how to claim additional exceptional funding has been published. We have asked institutions to make the necessary payments to carry out testing from their existing budgets and record these in line with local finance policies. Schools that are academies on 1 April 2021 will receive payment directly from ESFA. Local authorities should pass on funding to schools due to convert to academies after this date. Payment arrangements for testing carried out after 1 April 2021 will be confirmed in due course.

Independent special schools (ISSs) included in these allocations will be paid later. To receive payment for this grant, ISSs will need to ensure they have registered their bank details with the department. This can be done by completing the [online form](#), following the route as a 'provider' organisation type.

### 7. Variation

These conditions of grant may be altered at any time. Participating institutions will be notified of this through existing channels.

### 8. Recovery of funding

This funding is being provided under section 14 to 16 of the Education Act 2002 and we reserve the right to audit the expenditure. We will seek to recover funding that has been paid in error.

This includes overpayment where an institution is also receiving Medacs support.

Recoveries will be made by invoice or by offsetting the amount against subsequent payments due from DfE.

The recipient must notify DfE immediately through the [ESFA enquiry form](#) where it becomes aware of any instance of error, suspected fraud or financial irregularity in the use of the funds.

### 9. Monitoring, assurance and data requirements

We have a responsibility to make sure that public funds are properly managed in line with these grant conditions.

We reserve the right to check each institution's Test and Trace data. We may adjust an institution's allocation if the recorded number of tests exceeds the department's guidance on testing activity to be carried out this half term.

We reserve the right to request assurance of this grant funding and will provide further details as necessary.

### 10. Further information

Books, other documents and records relating to the recipient's accounts shall be open to inspection by the Secretary of State and by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

The Comptroller and Auditor General may, under Section 6 of the National Audit Act 1983, carry out examinations into the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the recipient has used its resources in discharging its grant-aided activities.

Schools, colleges, and local authorities shall provide information as may be required by the Secretary of State to determine whether it has complied with these conditions.

### 11. Short-term support with costs

We recognise that a very small number of academies and colleges may be unable to make up-front payments to cover the additional costs due to COVID-19 because of cash flow issues. In these circumstances, academies and colleges should follow the normal process for seeking short-term advances to support their cash flow by contacting ESFA.

Any maintained schools in similar circumstances should contact their local authority for support.

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