

**From:** Scottish Funding Council <Communications@sfc.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 08 April 2020 13:25  
**To:** SAAS Chief Executive  
**Subject:** City Region Deal launches job matching service to help tackle coronavirus

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged



Wednesday 8 April 2020

Dear Subscriber

A Job matching service has launched for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region, in response to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The COVID-19 Jobs Support Portal is aimed at job seekers and businesses looking to recruit urgently to respond to high demands as a result of COVID-19 and who are based in Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, Fife or the Scottish Borders.

For full details on how to register please go to  
<https://c19jobs.org/Default.aspx>.

Kind regards,  
*Scottish Funding Council*

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If you wish to contact a specific member of staff, find their details on our website [sfc.ac.uk/staff.aspx](http://sfc.ac.uk/staff.aspx). Email [webmaster@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:webmaster@sfc.ac.uk) with questions or to [unsubscribe](#).

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**From:** Scottish Funding Council <Communications@sfc.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 08 April 2020 15:34  
**To:** SAAS Chief Executive  
**Subject:** Student Support Funding During Coronavirus Outbreak

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged



Wednesday 8 April 2020

Dear Subscriber

The Scottish Government has today (8 April 2020) announced a £5 million package of emergency financial support to help students facing hardship as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. This package includes £2m of advance funding for FE students at Scotland's colleges.

For further information, please check out the news story on the SFC website at [www.sfc.ac.uk](http://www.sfc.ac.uk).

Kind regards,  
*Scottish Funding Council*

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If you wish to contact a specific member of staff, find their details on our website [sfc.ac.uk/staff.aspx](http://sfc.ac.uk/staff.aspx). Email [webmaster@sfc.ac.uk](mailto:webmaster@sfc.ac.uk) with questions or to [unsubscribe](#).

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**From:** [REDACTED] @sfc.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 27 April 2020 08:49  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] McNamara L (Lauren); [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** covid19; [REDACTED]  
**Attachments:** FW: Covid survey of institutions  
College survey.xlsx; University survey.xlsx

Dear all,

Please note that the two SFC sector surveys (questions as shown in attached) were issued at the end of Friday 24<sup>th</sup>. Responses have been requested by 5pm 30 April.

Best,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Senior Policy Analysis Officer (Student Support/ITE) | Oifigear-Stiùiridh Poileasaidh  
Finance | Ionmhas

T 0131 [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] [sfc.ac.uk](mailto:sfc.ac.uk)

Please note that I work part-time and am currently working remotely from home on a varying working pattern.

**Scottish Funding Council | Comhairle Maoineachaidh na h-Alba**



No.	Issue	Response
1	Institution name	
	<b>Term start dates*</b>	
2	Is your institution doing any contingency planning in case restrictions are still in place and term start dates are delayed?	
	<b>Accommodation and student wellbeing</b>	
3	How many students remain living in college campus accommodation?	
4	Of these, how many (or what percentage) are international students and how many are EU students?	
5	Are you allowing students who have returned home to break their lease on accommodation (Note: if you answered yes to this question in SFC's previous survey, please ignore this question.)	
6	How many of your students do you estimate remain in privately rented term-time accommodation?	
7	Given that international students cannot access student support including hardship funds, are you making any 'in kind' or other support available to international students? Please provide details.	
8	How are you supporting vulnerable students and students that you have corporate parenting or other statutory responsibilities for? Any examples of specific activity to keep these students 'safe' (protected from abuse) and 'healthy' (provided with high standards of physical/mental health) would be welcome.	
9	Has consideration been given to ensuring student safety for students in university/campus accommodation when/if such accommodation is to be opened up to key workers or people experiencing homelessness?	
10	When making decisions on student accommodation, how is your institution involving students? And how are you taking into account equality considerations?	

	<b>Exchange students</b>	
11	How many of your institution's students/staff are currently abroad on placements?	
12	How many incoming exchange students/staff do you currently have at your institution?	
13	Can you give approximate details of the numbers of students/staff you would expect to be undertaking exchanges between September and December 2020? Of these, how many would be undertaking exchanges which form a compulsory start of their course?	
	<b>Student support</b>	
14	Some colleges are setting aside student support funding in case the college re-opens (after lockdown allows) to allow any final aspects of courses / qualifications to be undertaken, possibly extending the term. Is your college considering plans to re-open before the summer break, and if so, how much of your student support budget are you setting aside for this eventuality?	
15	If you want to give any feedback on difficulties around administering student support payments in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak, please give details here. You may wish to note that we are currently working on a clarifications on the policy on payments to childcare providers and we are aware of the issues on this theme.	
	<b>Learning</b>	
16	Has your institution experienced an increase in the numbers of current / prospective students requesting to defer their studies to next academic year? If yes, can you quantify the numbers of current students and prospective students involved?	
17	Is your institution expecting to be able to offer current students the opportunity to re-take or return to complete only the parts of their course which they were unable to complete due to COVID-19? Or will students have to re-take their entire course?	

	<b>Other</b>	
18	If you have any other information related to your response to the COVID19 outbreak which you wish to bring to our attention, please feel free to do so.	

\*We understand the difficulties regarding not knowing what public health advice will be in Autumn.

No.	Issue	Response
1	Institution name	
	<b>Term start dates*</b>	
2	If you have decided on changes to your arrangements for the autumn term (e.g. start dates), please summarise these changes here. Please detail in this if you are considering different term start arrangements for key groups (eg international or postgraduate students). If you have recently supplied similar information to Universities Scotland, please just copy that information into this response.	
	<b>Accommodation and student wellbeing</b>	
3	How many students remain living in campus accommodation?	
4	Of these, how many (or what percentage) are international students and how many are EU students?	
5	Are you allowing students who have returned home to break their lease on accommodation (Note: if you answered yes to this question in SFC's previous survey, please ignore this question.)	
6	How many of your students do you estimate remain in privately rented term-time accommodation?	
7	Given that international students cannot access student support including hardship funds, are you making any 'in kind' or other support available to international students? Please provide details.	
8	How are you supporting vulnerable students and students that you have corporate parenting or other statutory responsibilities for? Any examples of specific activity to keep these students 'safe' (protected from abuse) and 'healthy' (provided with high standards of physical/mental health) would be welcome.	

	9 Has consideration been given to ensuring student safety for students in university/campus accommodation when/if such accommodation is to be opened up to key workers or people experiencing homelessness?	
10	When making decisions on student accommodation, how is your institution involving students? And how are you taking into account equality considerations?	
<b>Exchange students</b>		
11	How many of your institution's students/staff are currently abroad on placements?	
12	How many incoming exchange students/staff do you currently have at your institution?	
13	Can you give approximate details of the numbers of students/staff you would expect to commence an exchange between September and December 2020? Of these, how many would be undertaking exchanges which form a compulsory part of their course?	
<b>Learning</b>		
14	When we last surveyed institutions, most plans for assessing students were still under development. If there is an update position on your institution's approach to examinations and assessments, please provide details.	
15	Has your institution experienced an increase in the numbers of students requesting to defer their studies to next academic year? If yes, can you quantify the numbers involved?	
<b>Other</b>		
16	If you have any other information related to your response to the COVID19 outbreak which you wish to bring to our attention, please feel free to do so.	

\*We understand the difficulties regarding not knowing what public health advice will be in Autumn.

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**From:** [REDACTED] @sfc.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 15 May 2020 12:12  
**To:** [REDACTED] POLICY GROUP WORKING AGE BENEFITS UC  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] POLICY GROUP WORKING AGE BENEFITS UC; [REDACTED] POLICY GROUP UNIVERSAL CREDIT & EMPLOYMENT POLICY; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Extra hardship payments for students

Hi [REDACTED]

Yes, times have become somewhat different and busier since we met a couple of months ago!

We've been working closely with Scottish Government and SAAS colleagues on emergency funding responses to be able to support students. In many cases, the exact use of the Discretionary funds is up to the institutions themselves. However, SAAS (for HE) and SFC (for FE) have issued guidance in respect of Discretionary funds to institutions. I've copied [REDACTED] from SAAS here to advise you further on the HE side.

On the FE side, the main guidance provided to colleges with regards to Discretionary funding in the current pandemic situation can be found on the SFC Covid-19 webpages: we have a [Student Support FAQ](#) and a separate document requesting colleges to [redirect Travel and/or Childcare funds](#) to supplement existing Discretionary funds where possible (you'll see paragraph 8 in this document requesting colleges to keep potential impacts on benefits in mind).

In the student case referred to, are they an existing UC recipient? Or was this someone who has submitted a first/new application for UC? Is there particular aspects relating to the Discretionary funding they've received that are having an impact on their UC assessment, that we can provide further information/guidance to our institutions about?

Hope you're keeping well,  
[REDACTED]

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 15 May 2020 13:00  
**To:** [REDACTED] POLICY GROUP WORKING AGE BENEFITS UC; [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] POLICY GROUP WORKING AGE BENEFITS UC; [REDACTED] POLICY GROUP UNIVERSAL CREDIT & EMPLOYMENT POLICY; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Extra hardship payments for students

Hi [REDACTED]

If any related HE cases come up, then I'll be happy to assist as best as I can. Thanks for clarification that it was a FE student as I was struggling to understand the mechanism in which a HE student would have been awarded such payment.

Thanks  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Head of Policy and Engagement



Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) | T: 0131 [REDACTED] | M: [REDACTED]  
U Spur | Saughton House | Broomhouse Drive | Edinburgh | EH11 3UT

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Check out the new Scottish Government resource <https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/>. Everything you need to know about student finance, including help for parents, carers and education professionals.

The information in this e-mail offers general guidance only and is not legally binding, nor does it constitute any right of eligibility for, or entitlement to, funding. SAAS will assess each applicant on their individual circumstances in accordance with the information provided with their completed application.

**From:** [REDACTED] @sfc.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 19 May 2020 08:54  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** covid19; [REDACTED] McNamara L  
 (Lauren); [REDACTED] SG CoronaVirus Advanced Learning & Science; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Ministerial paper - impact Covid-19 - Student poverty/income

Hi [REDACTED] / all,

[REDACTED] and I were working up some information with regards to FE students to feed into this one, but has this request now been effectively superseded by yesterday's 5pm call with the Minister and actions that have come out of that?

**From:** [REDACTED] gov.scot [REDACTED] gov.scot]  
**Sent:** 15 May 2020 13:18  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** covid19; [REDACTED] Lauren.Mcnamara@gov.scot;  
**Subject:** Ministerial paper - Impact Covid-19 - Student poverty/income

Hi [REDACTED]

Following yesterday's Ministerial Leadership Group meeting, the Minister has requested a short paper to provide analysis on the impact of Covid-19 on student poverty and income. This is with the intention of sharing the paper with other Ministers as he recognises that the poverty issues cannot be tackled by his portfolio alone.

My colleagues [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] from our analytical teams are pulling together this analysis which will include providing a summary of what we've been able to do for students so far (£5m action plan). I wanted to check however if any of the SFC surveys had provided information that could be useful for this? We want to ensure this covers both FE and HE students.

[REDACTED] will share the paper with you once ready, this will likely be on Monday as the plan is to send the paper up before a meeting with Mr Lochhead on Tuesday. In the meantime, grateful if there's anything you are able to share.

Thanks  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
**Student Support Review & Higher Education Student Support | Higher Education & Science Division | Directorate for Advanced Learning & Science | The Scottish Government - 5 Atlantic Quay, 150 Broomielaw, Glasgow G2 8LU**  
 0131 24 [REDACTED]

Check out the new Scottish Government resource <https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/>. Everything you need to know about student finance, including help for parents, carers and education professionals.

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 08 June 2020 08:41  
**To:** [REDACTED] McNamara L  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** (Lauren); [REDACTED]  
Student Accommodation update

Colleagues

The Student Information Scotland website was revised on Friday to incorporate the Student Accommodation update.

<https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/coronavirus-student-accommodation>

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Head of Communications



Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) | Tel 0131 [REDACTED] | Saughton House | U Spur |  
Broomhouse Drive | EH11 3UT

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[www.youtube.com/fundingawareness](https://www.youtube.com/fundingawareness) | [LinkedIn](#)

**Check out the new Scottish Government resource <https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/>. Everything you need to know about student finance, including help for parents, carers and education professionals.**

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 14 April 2020 10:14  
**To:** [REDACTED]@sfc.ac.uk); [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Reassurance for students during coronavirus outbreak



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14/04/20 10:08

## Reassurance for students during coronavirus outbreak

Extra time for prospective students to decide.

Prospective university and college students are being reassured that they will receive their results on time, and universities and colleges will assess qualifications as part of the admissions process.

Minister for Further Education and Higher Education Richard Lochhead has written to students emphasising that their educational futures are being protected during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Universities are also being urged to observe a moratorium on changing offers made to undergraduate students.

In a letter to principals, Mr Lochhead underlined the need for a stable Higher Education admissions system while the country collectively responds to the challenges of COVID-19.

Mr Lochhead said:

“I understand that many students who have applied to university or college this year will be anxious that school exams cannot go ahead as a result of the impact of COVID-19.

“The Scottish Government took this action to prioritise the health and wellbeing of our children, young people and staff.

“While the protection of life remains our utmost priority, I am absolutely clear that we must ensure that the interests and life chances of our young people are protected, and that they will be rewarded for their hard work.

“Despite the disruption, students will quite rightly have their achievements recognised, and gain the qualifications and awards that they deserve after so many years of hard work.

“I am also confident that institutions will act responsibly, and recognise that our shared priority now must be to ensure the stabilisation of the Higher Education admissions system, which is in all of our interests, whilst we respond to the unprecedented challenges COVID-19 presents.”

## **Background**

The letter to University and College applicants has been published on the SAAS [Student Information Scotland](#) website.

### **Letter to University Principals**

14 April 2020

You may be aware of a letter issued by Michelle Donelan, the UK Government Universities Minister, on 3 April informing Higher Education providers in England of the moratorium, until 20 April, on changing offers made to undergraduate students, such as converting conditional offers to unconditional offers or changing entry requirements. I know you will understand very well that this practice risks destabilising the admissions system, increasing financial uncertainty and volatility for all institutions at a time when universities are already facing significant pressures.

I firstly want to thank you all for not having changed offers to students, or participated in any activity that has led to the moratorium being necessary. I am, however, writing to you in expectation that Scottish institutions maintain this position and observe the moratorium until 20 April, to ensure consistency with English providers.

I am confident institutions will act responsibly and recognise that our shared priority now must be to ensure the stabilisation of the Higher Education admissions system, which is in all of our interests, whilst we collectively respond to the challenges Covid-19 presents. However, I feel it's important to provide some reassurance to our prospective students about the admissions process at what is an extremely worrying time for them. I will therefore shortly be issuing a message to reassure applicants that they will receive their exam results in good time for universities to assess qualifications in the usual way; and to remind them that the UCAS May deadlines are being extended by two weeks to give students more time to make decisions about their future.

My purpose in writing to you at this time is to seek your support to ensure our sector continues to act in a way which maintains the stability of the university admissions system and ensures students' best interests are safeguarded. I am aware that the sector in Scotland is already working with SQA and my officials to ensure that the admissions process works for this year's applicants. I would like to commend you for that and my hope is that we can continue to work collaboratively on this matter in the coming weeks and months.

I would like to extend my thanks to all universities and colleges in Scotland for their support in dealing with these unprecedented circumstances.

Yours sincerely

RICHARD LOCHHEAD

Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science

## Contact Information

**SG Communications**

[noreplycomms@gov.scot](mailto:noreplycomms@gov.scot)

Between 8am and 8pm please contact 0131 244 0222, or contact 0300 244 4000 if out of hours.

## Notes to editors

### **PRESS QUERIES - UNTIL 14:00 14/4/2020**

Jack Matthews | [jack.matthews@gov.scot](mailto:jack.matthews@gov.scot) | 0131 244 2960

### **AFTER 14:00 UNTIL 20:00 14/4/2020**

Please call 0131 244 0222

### **OUT OF HOURS (20:00 - 08:00)**

Please call 0300 244 4000

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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 28 May 2020 07:55  
**To:** [REDACTED] SG CoronaVirus Advanced Learning & Science  
**Subject:** RE: Tweet as discussed

Many thanks [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Head of Communications



Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS) | Tel 0131 [REDACTED] | Saughton House | U Spur |  
Broomhouse Drive | EH11 3UT

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**From:** [REDACTED] @sfc.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 27 May 2020 18:05  
**To:** [REDACTED] gov.scot>; SG CoronaVirus Advanced Learning & Science  
<SGCoronaVirusALS@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** RE: Tweet as discussed

Dear SG Hub,

As discussed on the daily catch up, [REDACTED]'s email below sets out the tweet which the minister was considering a response to.

[REDACTED] was going to try to make contact with the author of the tweet.

We agreed to contact the institutions tagged in the tweet to ask if they had any comment. Only Glasgow and Strathclyde have responded (you will note the tag of "Caledonian news" is not actually GCU. Neither is aware that [REDACTED] has any direct contact with their institution.

The responses of the 2 institutions were as follows:

#### Glasgow

I have checked with colleagues - I'm afraid we hadn't spotted this tweet and didn't respond to it. My colleagues do not know the person who posted this tweet.

We do provide hardship support to international students and are not aware of any individuals who are in particular hardship. The University doesn't have a specific budget for international students – the hardship support is available to all students. This has been compiled from a number of sources and the University is actively fund-raising within their community to augment funds.

Details of advice being offered to students, including international students and financial support can be found here: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/news/coronavirus/faqs/#adviceandsupportforstudents>

### Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde's Covid 19 Hardship Fund (<https://www.strath.ac.uk/studywithus/scholarships/covid-19hardshipfund/>)

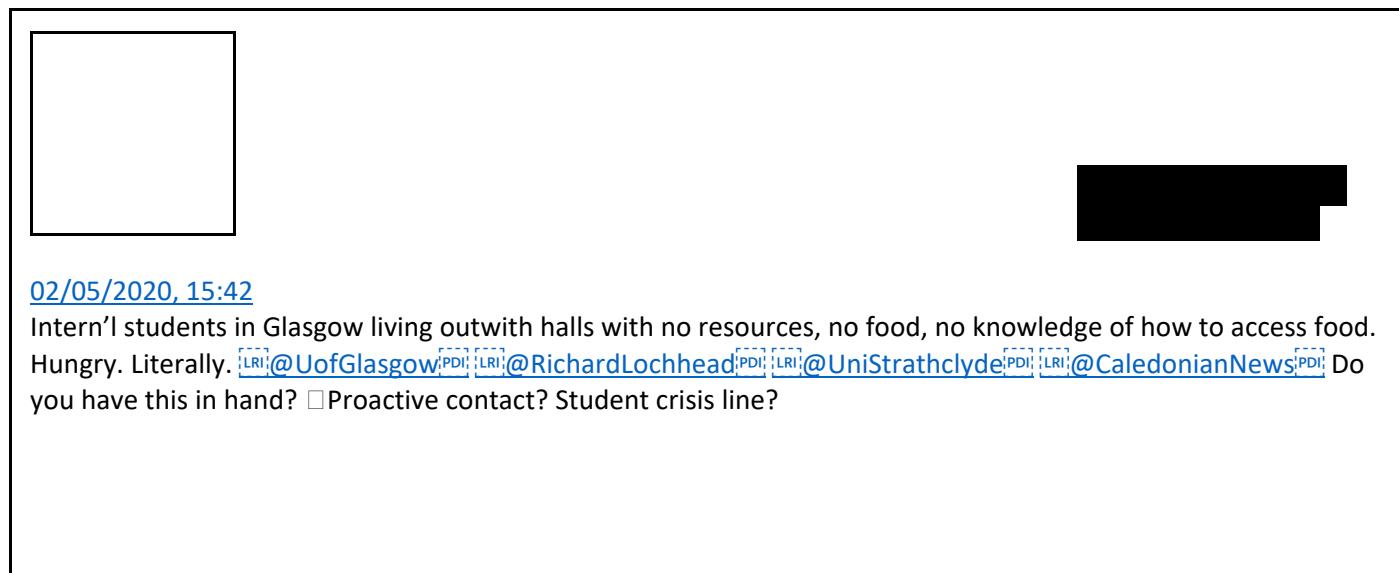
has provided financial support of £150k to students not able to access SAAS funds. So far it has provided support to more than 100 EU and International students since it launched on 25 March. More applicants for help are supported every day to ensure students can meet basic living costs of food, rent and essential bills. Many of the recipients have lost income because family at home are struggling or because their own travel and part time work plans have been disrupted. Other recipients are international students with families. Group video chats for those students who are feeling isolated are taking place and advice and guidance on a wide range of issues continues to be provided through email, phone and videoconference.

Strathclyde was also the first University in Scotland to release students from rental contracts for Halls of Residence and this has helped many of our international students who were unable to make arrangements to return home prior to lockdown.

Hope this helps,

---

**From:** [REDACTED] @gov.scot [REDACTED] @gov.scot  
**Sent:** 13 May 2020 09:25  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Tweet as discussed



Hi [REDACTED]

This is the tweet we discussed yesterday. Apologies, it was buried deep within a long chain of emails.

Regards



[REDACTED]  
Head of Communications



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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 07 May 2020 10:03  
**To:** [REDACTED] McNamara L  
**Cc:** (Lauren) [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Student Information Scotland (SIS): Interim Content Group: Covid-19

Hi All

Please see attached link to today's Ministerial message on Fair Assessment.

<https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/coronavirus-minister-message>

We also updated the site with COVID-19 testing information this week.

<https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/coronavirus> under advice and guidance.

Regards

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Head of Communications



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Check out the new Scottish Government resource <https://www.studentinformation.gov.scot/>. Everything you need to know about student finance, including help for parents, carers and education professionals.

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**From:** [REDACTED] @sfc.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 14 April 2020 16:07  
**To:** SG CoronaVirus Advanced Learning & Science; SAAS Chief Executive [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** [REDACTED] covid19  
**Subject:** Supporting International Students

Dear all

As this issue was raised during our call this afternoon I thought it would be helpful to share with you a tweet we came across in our monitoring today from Napier Uni:

[Napier](#)

It links to a story about fundraising for international students.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Head of External Affairs | Ceannard nan Cùisean Taoibh A-muigh  
Chief Executive's Office | Oifis an Àrd-oifigeir

T 0131 [REDACTED] | M [REDACTED] | E [REDACTED] sfc.ac.uk

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**From:** [REDACTED] @sfc.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 14 April 2020 14:05  
**To:** SG CoronaVirus Advanced Learning & Science; [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Letter from Minister Donelan to International Students 090420.pdf  
**Attachments:** Letter from Minister Donelan to International Students 090420.pdf; ATT00001.htm

Hi there

As mentioned on the call just now, please find attached a copy of the letter from Michelle Donelan. It would be good to know how / if this might impact on the guidance note that [REDACTED] was talking about last week – on the call with NUS Scotland she referred to a guidance note for international students which we said we would help disseminate but I'm wondering whether this letter will have any impact on that.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Head of External Affairs | Ceannard nan Cùisean Taoibh A-muigh  
Chief Executive's Office | Oifis an Àrd-oifigeir

T 0131 [REDACTED] | M [REDACTED] | E [REDACTED] sfc.ac.uk

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**Michelle Donelan MP**  
Minister of State for Universities

Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, Westminster, London, SW1P 3BT  
tel: 0370 000 2288 [www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus](http://www.education.gov.uk/help/contactus)

Thursday, 9 April 2020

Dear International Students,

As Universities Minister, I wanted to write to you to provide reassurances that we have taken action to keep you safe and to mitigate the worst effects of COVID-19 on you and your education.

The COVID-19 outbreak is an unprecedented situation and poses significant challenges to higher education, its students and staff in virtually every country around the world. Government is adhering closely to the most up-to-date scientific advice, which is available publicly online. As this changes, our advice will change to match the level of the threat. Using this scientific advice, as well as Public Health England guidance, we are working closely with the higher education sector on a wide range of issues and your wellbeing is, and will remain, at the heart of those discussions.

I want to emphasise to you that our Government not only recognises, but also appreciates, the positive contribution that you and all international students provide to the UK – socially, culturally and economically. You enrich the university experience for all students, bringing greater diversity to university and college campuses, as well as fresh ideas and new perspectives. This cultural exchange helps build life-long friendships, as well as laying the foundations for future networks, and important business, political and diplomatic bridges.

We want you to enjoy your time in the UK and to get the most out of studying at our world-class universities. To mitigate the worst effects of the virus on your student experience, we are working closely with universities and I am pleased to see that the sector is making every effort to enable you to continue your studies – including moving learning online either in the UK or in your home country – so that your teaching and assessment can proceed.

Our first priority, however, is your health, safety and wellbeing. I have been discussing with universities the additional support that they can give to both domestic and international students. I wrote to universities in England on 20 and 26 March, urging them to prioritise the needs of all students who remain at their university accommodation. This includes the large number of international students who have decided to stay in the UK or cannot travel home. They have a duty of care to you, which they recognise and will carry out. This includes continuing to provide accommodation if

you cannot travel home or have no alternative residence. 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 me.

Many providers are bolstering their existing mental health services, and adapting delivery to means other than face-to-face. I would encourage you to stay in touch with your provider's student support and welfare teams, as these services are likely to be an important source of support during this period of social distancing. If you are struggling with your mental health at this time, you can also access online resources from Public Health England, along with online support from the NHS and mental health charity Mind [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/about-student-mental-health](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/about-student-mental-health). The Government recently announced a £5m-grant for mental health, to be administered by Mind, to support those people, including students, who require this support.

In addition to support from your university, the UK emergency services are also here for you. They are here for you as much as they are for other UK residents. Our National Health Service can provide you with specific COVID-19 advice through a new COVID-19 online service [www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19](http://www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19) or, if you cannot get online, by calling 111. The police are also here to keep you safe, with new public health regulations that will support officers in enforcing measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

I also want to underline that both the UK Government and the higher education sector are clear that you must feel welcome and safe here – on and off campus. There is no place in our society – including within higher education – for harassment, discrimination or racism. You have a right to access education and be in this country without fear of harassment and discrimination. We want to ensure that everyone with the talent and potential to succeed in higher education has the opportunity to do so, regardless of nationality, or ethnic or national origins, and we will not tolerate xenophobia of any kind.

I recognise that some of you will be concerned about your visa status. That is why the Government will be applying discretion under current circumstances to ensure you are not negatively impacted if you find yourself in a position where you cannot comply with certain visa rules. Full guidance for those affected by changes to UK immigration and borders due to COVID-19 can be found at [www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-immigration-and-borders](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-immigration-and-borders). This guidance includes the latest information for those of you who might have questions around visa expiry, switching visa category within the UK, distance learning and working-hour restrictions for student doctors and nurses. If you have concerns about your visa status you should email the Government's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Immigration Help Centre at [CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk](mailto:CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk).

The latest Government advice is that you should only leave your home or accommodation in the UK for very limited purposes:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance). If you live in university-owned, or privately-owned, university accommodation, universities will do all they can to ensure that you have access to support, food and other provisions. To protect yourself and others you should adhere to Government advice while in the UK. However, if you are considering returning to your home country, please seek advice from your country's embassy or consulate in the UK. You should not travel if you have

symptoms of COVID-19 yourself, or if you are self-isolating for 14 days because someone else in your household / shared accommodation has had COVID-19 symptoms. Symptoms of COVID-19 include a high temperature or a new, continuous cough.

Whether you have already travelled home, have decided to remain in the UK, or cannot travel home, I understand that you will be concerned about what you should do now. I have therefore included as an annex to this letter all the Government's latest guidance, as well as a list of resources and contacts available should you have questions or concerns.

Our world-leading universities, which thrive on being global institutions, will always be open to international students. Both Government and the higher education sector are working together to ensure existing rules and processes are as flexible as possible under the current unprecedented circumstances to ensure that those of you planning to study in the UK from Autumn 2020 can do so.

We will continue to work with the sector and with student representatives and do all we can to keep you safe.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michelle Donelan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Michelle" on the left and "Donelan" on the right, connected by a flourish.

**Michelle Donelan MP**  
**Minister of State for Universities**

## ANNEX A: INFORMATION AND GUIDANCE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

### COVID-19 – UK Government Response

The national and global response to the spread of COVID-19 continues to develop quickly and our collective knowledge of the virus is growing. Government is adhering closely to scientific advice and guidance, which is available publicly online here: [www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-scientific-evidence-supporting-the-uk-government-response](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/coronavirus-covid-19-scientific-evidence-supporting-the-uk-government-response).

As this changes, our advice will change to match the level of the threat. In doing so our immediate priority remains the health and safety of all UK nationals and overseas nationals in the UK, including you (international higher education students).

#### What this means for you

Current health advice for both international and British students in the UK is the same. You should comply with the latest guidance on staying at home (or in student accommodation) and avoiding contact with others – see the following guidance for details: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others/full-guidance-on-staying-at-home-and-away-from-others)

If you are displaying COVID-19 symptoms, you should follow Public Health England advice and isolate in your current accommodation for 7 days. You may need to isolate for longer if you live in shared accommodation – see the following guidance for details: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance/stay-at-home-guidance-for-households-with-possible-coronavirus-covid-19-infection))

If you do not have symptoms, you should only leave your home for one of four reasons:

- shopping for basic necessities, for example food and medicine, which must be as infrequent as possible;
- one form of exercise a day, for example a run, walk, or cycle - alone or with members of your household;
- any medical need, or to provide care or to help a vulnerable person;
- travelling to and from work, but only where this absolutely cannot be done from home.

Full guidance and frequently asked questions (FAQs) detailing what you can and cannot do is available online here: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do/coronavirus-outbreak-faqs-what-you-can-and-cant-do).

#### Contacting 999 and the National Health Service NHS111 service

The National Health Service (NHS) website has information on the process to follow if you are showing symptoms: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/).

A new online COVID-19 service [www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19](https://www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19) went live on 26 February 2020 in order to reduce the number of COVID-19 related calls to the UK emergency number 999, the core NHS111 service, and the COVID-19 Response Service, with plans in place to increase this number over the coming weeks. As we have now transitioned to the delay phase, we are advising people to use the online coronavirus COVID-19

service if they feel that they cannot manage at home or if their symptoms are worsening, and to call NHS111 only if they are unable to get online.

NHS111 is increasing its call handling and clinical capability to respond to COVID-19. There are currently over 4,500 call handlers working across the country in the COVID-19 Response Service, with plans in place to increase this number over the coming weeks.

## **Overseas travel**

The latest Government advice is that you should only leave your home in the UK for very limited purposes [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-stay-at-home-guidance).

If you live in university-owned, or privately-owned, university accommodation, universities will do all they can to ensure that you have access to support, food and other provisions, and that critical services – like heating, water, electricity and security – are maintained. You should contact your university to understand the support available to you. You will not be penalised by the Home Office if you need to stay in the UK and end up overstaying your visas – please see below for further visa-related information.

Please seek advice from your country's embassy or consulate in the UK if you are considering returning to your home country. You may currently find that means of travel are limited. If you are planning to travel you should first advise your higher education provider. You should also adhere to Government advice while in the UK to ensure you are travelling safely. You should not travel if you have symptoms of COVID-19 yourself, or if you live in shared accommodation with individuals who are self-isolating. Symptoms of COVID-19 include a high temperature or a new, continuous cough.

## **Accommodation and other services**

Universities have an obligation to ensure that students in the UK who are unable to travel at present have continued accommodation and access to essential services in the UK for the duration of their stay.

Government has been working closely with the higher education sector to ensure it provides the additional support needed for those students who remain in the UK. In addition to continuing to provide accommodation for those who cannot travel home or have no alternative residence, providers will also offer a range of other services to students, including support for catering and cleaning, and support for mental health.

## **Mental Health**

We understand that this is a time when many students will be feeling uncertain and anxious and it is vital that students can still access the mental health support that they need. Students who are struggling with their mental health at this time can access online resources from Public Health England, along with online support from the NHS and mental health charity Mind:

- [www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-public-on-mental-health-and-wellbeing)
- [www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health](https://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health)
- [www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/about-student-mental-health/](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/student-life/about-student-mental-health/)

Higher Education providers are also bolstering their existing mental health services, and adapting delivery to means other than face-to-face, and these services are likely to be an important source of support for you during this period of isolation. My department is also talking with the HE sector to consider how we can offer additional mental health support.

The Government has also announced a £5 million grant for mental health. The fund, which will be administered by Mind, will be used by the charity sector to support people struggling with their mental health, including telephone and online support services.

### **Harassment and discrimination**

There is absolutely no place for racism off or on campus. Government is working with universities to ensure they are doing all they can to stamp out racism, harassment and hatred. If you have experienced, or are currently experiencing, issues with xenophobia, discrimination or harassment on or off campus, we urge you to speak to your university. Reporting any incidents to them, and, where appropriate, to the police. Universities should ensure they support students reporting discrimination or harassment because of a protected characteristic such as race, whether the perpetrator is a student or staff member.

### **Other university- or course-related issues**

The Office for Students (OfS) has committed to protecting students, by working with providers to develop practical ways to maintain teaching quality and standards throughout this difficult time and enable adequate exams and assessment.

The clear expectation is that providers should make all reasonable efforts to enable students to complete their studies, for achievement to be reliably assessed, for qualifications to be awarded securely, and to enable a fair and robust admissions process for 2020/21 entrants. Providers should inform students about how any changes to teaching and learning assessment processes are likely to impact on their study plans. Please contact your provider if you have any concerns.

We expect student complaints and appeals processes to be operated flexibly, accessibly, and sympathetically to resolve any concerns. If you are not satisfied with your provider's final response, you can ask the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) to consider your complaint.

### **Prospective international students**

We are proud that so many international students choose to study here, but understand that the COVID-19 outbreak will have a significant impact on the sector as a whole.

Our world-leading universities, which thrive on being global institutions, will always be open to international students. Both Government and the higher education sector are working together to ensure existing rules and processes are as flexible as possible under the current unprecedented circumstances to ensure that those planning to study in the UK from Autumn 2020 can do so.

## ANNEX B: USEFUL RESOURCES

<b><u>Gov.uk - The best place to find government services and information</u></b>		
<b>UK Government</b>	Latest Public Health England advice relating to COVID-19	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus">www.gov.uk/coronavirus</a>
	National Health Service (NHS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice for everyone</li> <li>• Advice for people at higher risk</li> <li>• Symptoms and what to do</li> <li>• Self-isolation if you or someone you live with has symptoms</li> <li>• More information relating to health and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a>  Online Covid-19 service <a href="http://www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19">www.111.nhs.uk/covid-19</a>
	Visa and immigration advice	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-immigration-and-borders">www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-immigration-and-borders</a> .  If you have concerns about your visa status you should email the Government's Coronavirus (COVID-19) Immigration Help Centre at <a href="mailto:CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk">CIH@homeoffice.gov.uk</a>
	Coronavirus Information Service on WhatsApp	<a href="http://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-coronavirus-information-service-on-whatsapp">www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-coronavirus-information-service-on-whatsapp</a>
<b>Other resources for international students</b>		
British Council	COVID-19 information for international students	<a href="http://www.study-uk.britishcouncil.org/moving-uk/coronavirus">www.study-uk.britishcouncil.org/moving-uk/coronavirus</a>
UKCISA	COVID-19 information for international students.  Up-to-date information about Brexit, immigration, fees, student support, working and living in the UK for current and prospective international students.	<a href="http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students">www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice/Studying--living-in-the-UK/Coronavirus-Covid-19-info-for-international-students</a> .  <a href="http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice">www.ukcisa.org.uk/Information--Advice</a> Student Advice Line: +4420 7788 9214  (Opening times available online here: <a href="http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/About-UKCISA/Contact-us">www.ukcisa.org.uk/About-UKCISA/Contact-us</a> )
Universities UK	COVID-19 information for universities	<a href="http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk">www.universitiesuk.ac.uk</a>
Universities UK International	COVID-19 information on the international work of UK universities, their current international students, staff and prospective international students	<a href="http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/international">www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/international</a>