

Government announces £50 million to support students impacted by Covid-19

Thousands of students will benefit from an additional £50 million to support them with financial pressures from the pandemic, the Universities Minister has announced today (2 February).

Today's announcement is in addition to the £20 million announced in December, bringing the total to £70 million for this financial year.

The new funding means that universities will be able to help students impacted by the pandemic, for example those facing additional costs for alternative accommodation, loss of employment, or extra costs to access their teaching online. Universities will distribute the funding and will be able to prioritise the funding to those most in need of help.

The increased financial support comes as the majority of students have been asked to continue their studies remotely, as part of measures to reduce the transmission of coronavirus.

This announcement follows the decision from many universities and accommodation providers to offer rent rebates for students who need stay away from their term-time address. The Government has encouraged others to join them and offer students partial refunds.

Universities Minister Michelle Donelan said:

This continues to be an incredibly difficult and challenging time for our students, and I am hugely grateful to all the university staff working hard to prioritise their health, wellbeing and learning during this pandemic.

The additional £50 million that we are announcing today will mean we have distributed £70m for hardship in this financial year alone – on top of the £256m of government-funded student premium which universities can use for student support this academic year.

This additional support will provide real, tangible help for those students struggling financially as a result of the pandemic.

We will continue to prioritise a full return to education as soon possible, in line with public health advice. I am also working with universities and professional bodies to ensure students can graduate as planned.

The Government also welcomes the decision from many universities and accommodation providers to offer rent rebates for students who need stay away from their term-time address, and encourages other to join them and offer

students partial refunds. It asks all providers of student accommodation including universities, to make sure their rental policies have students' best interests at heart and are communicated clearly.

The funding will be distributed by the Office for Students directly to universities, which are best placed to assess student hardship locally. Universities will be able to help students, including international students, impacted by the pandemic, for example those facing additional costs arising from having to maintain accommodation in more than one location, or an inability to maintain employment, such as a job based close to their term-time accommodation for which they cannot access the furlough scheme, or to support students to access teaching remotely.

The Government continues to monitor the situation and the impact of the funding.

Students facing financial hardship are encouraged to contact their university or higher education provider if they find themselves facing financial difficulties related to Covid-19.