

News story: Two-year university courses come a step closer

The government has today, Friday 24 February, tabled amendments to the Higher Education and Research Bill to encourage more flexible learning and increased choice for students.

These include a key amendment to enable universities to offer more accelerated courses, including 2-year courses, where content is condensed into a shorter period.

This amendment would enable a higher annual fee limit to be set for accelerated courses, subject to Parliamentary approval. This amendment responds to evidence which shows that inflexible fee structures are seen as a major barrier to the availability of accelerated courses, with many universities unable to deliver their traditional 3-year courses in two years because of the existing limit on annual fees.

This delivers on a manifesto commitment to encourage universities to offer more 2-year courses and extends the opportunity to study at England's world-class universities to even more people.

The government intends to consult on the detail of how to deliver higher annual fee limits for accelerated courses ahead of tabling secondary legislation. The proposals will include clear measures to ensure the limit would only apply to accelerated courses.

Other important amendments to the bill tabled today include:

- an amendment which will help students to store up academic credits and to switch institution more easily
- an amendment which will place a requirement on the new sector regulator – the Office for Students – to have regard to institutional autonomy in everything that it does
- amendments that will guarantee that the standards against which providers are assessed are determined by the higher education sector
- an amendment that enshrines in law for the first time the Haldane Principle, which dictates that decisions on individual proposals should be reviewed and made by experts in their fields; this means with that all governments will, in the future, need to have regard to the Haldane Principle when making a grant or giving directions to UK Research and Innovation – the government's single strategic research and innovation funding body

Speaking at the Universities UK conference in London, Jo Johnson, the Minister for Universities and Science, said:

Change is long overdue and this bill gives us the chance to introduce new ways of learning. Students are crying out for more

flexible courses that enable them to get into and back into work more quickly, and courses that equip them with the skills that the modern workplace needs.

I absolutely recognise that for many students the classic 3-year model will remain the preferred option but that cannot be the only option. That is why we have tabled amendments that give real flexibility in learning.

These changes will not mean any compromise in quality, or an increase in overall degree costs for students. The tuition fees for a student taking an accelerated degree will never be more, in total, than those for the same degree over a longer time period. It is also likely that students will end up paying less overall because they will have fewer years of maintenance costs and a real chance of entering the workforce more quickly.

Read the [entire speech](#).

[News story: Current outage of online applications](#)

We are currently experiencing an outage to a number of our online systems.

This includes the Insolvency Register, ISCIS Online, Find an Insolvency Practitioner, Find an Official Receiver, the Debt Relief Order web app, CHAMP and IP Upload.

Technicians are investigating the issue and are working to resolve the outage as quickly as possible.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused by this temporary disruption to our services.

[Press release: Planned roadworks in Kent and Sussex: weekly summary for](#)

Monday 27 February to Sunday 5 March 2017

The following summary of planned new and ongoing road improvements over the coming week is correct as of 24 February but could be subject to change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances. All our improvement work is carried out with the aim of causing as little disruption as possible.

M2 junctions 2 to 3, Kent: structure inspections

Work to improve safety begin this week on the M2. There will lane closures in both directions between junction 2 and 3 on Monday 27 February for 5 nights between 8pm and 6am. Inspections are expected to be complete by mid March.

M20 junctions 3 to 5, Kent: smart motorway surveys

Work to improve journeys continue this week on the M20 between junctions 3 and 5. There will be various lane closures in both directions on Monday 27 February for 5 nights, between 8pm and 6am. Surveys are scheduled to be complete in April 2017.

M20 junctions 9 to 13, Kent: litter clearance

Work to improve journeys take place this week on the M20 by undertaking litter clearance. There will be various slip road closures each night from Monday 27 February for 5 nights between 8pm and 6am. Traffic will be diverted via the next junction of the motorway.

M23 junctions 8 to 10a, South Nutfield to Crawley: smart motorway surveys

Work to improve journeys continue this week on the M23 between junctions 8 and 10a. There will be various lane closures in place in both directions overnight on Monday 27 February for 5 nights, between 8pm and 6am. Surveys are scheduled to be complete in April 2017.

A2 Darenth to Bean, Kent: carriageway resurfacing

Work to improve journeys continue this week on the A2. There will be a full closure between the Darenth A282 junction and the Bean B255 junction on Monday 27 February for 5 nights between 10pm and 6am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the M25 Junction 1a, A206 and B255. Works are scheduled to be complete in early March 2017.

A2 Canterbury, Kent: resurfacing

Work to improve journeys take place this week on the A2 between Wincheap and Brenley. There will be a full closure in place on the westbound carriageway between Whitfield A256 junction and the Brenley junction A299 on Monday 27 February for 4 nights between 8pm and 6am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the A256, and the A299.

A21 Battle, Sussex: tree works

Work to improve safety commence this week on the A21 between Robertsbridge and Hastings. There will be a full closure in place between Johns Cross and Westfield on Monday 27 February for 4 nights between 8pm and 6am. A clearly signed diversion will be in place via the A2100.

A21 Tonbridge to Pembury, Kent: major improvement

Work to improve journeys on the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury continues this week. A 40mph speed limit remains in place 24/7 between the Vauxhall interchange and the A228. Two way traffic lights will be in place on the A21 overnight between 8pm and 6am from Monday 27 February for five nights.

Tonbridge Road will remain closed after Pembury Hospital up to and including Longfield Road roundabout until Spring 2017. A clearly signed diversion route will be in place via the A228 and the A21.

The scheme is due to be completed in Summer 2017. For further information, [visit the scheme website](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Highways England awards new South West design contract worth up to £40 million](#)

This is the first of a number of Asset Delivery contracts in the South West

which sees Highways England changing its way of working and delivering the Government's record £15 billion investment to improve and maintain the country's motorways and major A roads.

Highways England will now take direct responsibility for managing both routine maintenance and the delivery of capital renewal and improvement schemes.

The new arrangements will bring a number of key decision-making functions in-house and see Highways England taking greater control over the future of the network, ultimately ensuring the smooth functioning of its South West major roads.

The award of this and future contracts allows Highways England to directly engage with our supply chain, to drive down cost and waste, whilst providing the best possible value for money for tax payers, and service for our customers.

The contract will run for up to five years and focusses on design – it will see Kier taking design briefs and turning them into well-defined packages of work.

Duties will include preparing technical designs and undertaking supporting work for capital renewal projects and improvements to produce a solution that is ready for construction, and to design briefs to repair major roads and get them back running as normal after incidents will also form part of the work.

David Poole, Executive Director for commercial and procurement at Highways England, said:

We are delighted that Kier Highways Limited will be part of our new Asset Delivery supply chain community across the South West.

This contract not only builds on the new way of working already taking place in the East Midlands and North of England but also demonstrates our ongoing commitment to increasing Highways England's capability and control over the whole road network.

Andrew Page-Dove, Regional Director for the South West, said:

Kier Highways currently operates a number of key support contracts and we are confident that this award will build upon our existing successful relationship and deliver a high quality service throughout the South West. We look forward to working with them.

Future awards will include a range of suppliers being appointed in April to the new framework for delivering construction works and a contract will be awarded in March for the maintenance and response contract, both of which will help to deliver the designs provided by Kier Highways.

Highways England will now begin working with Kier Highways to ensure that they are ready to begin delivering key design services from 1 July 2017.

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[Press release: Planned roadworks in the North West: summary for Monday 27 to Sunday 5 March 2017](#)

The following summary of planned new and ongoing road improvements over the coming week is correct as of Friday 24 February and could be subject to change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances.

All our improvement work is carried out with the aim of causing as little disruption as possible. Drivers looking for roadworks information (such as overnight carriageway closures) for individual schemes should now visit [Traffic England](#). Some of our larger schemes have project pages giving other information. These can now be accessed from a [dedicated regional page](#).

M53 junction 1 to junction 2 (Wallasey to Upton)

Work to upgrade the safety barrier in the central reservation between junctions 1 and 2 on the M53 started on Monday 6 February. Lane closures will be in place overnight, with some full carriageway closures later in the project. The scheme is expected to take around a month to complete.

M53 junction 9 to junction 10

Overnight, 10pm to 5am, Monday to Friday work to renew the safety barrier in the central reservation started on Monday 20 February for 5 weeks. This work will require overnight carriageway closures with clearly signed diversion in place.

M56 junction 10 to junction 11 (Stretton to Preston Brook)

Work to upgrade the safety barrier and paint new road markings on the M56 near Warrington started on Monday 30 January. Lane closures will be in place overnight between 8pm and 5am, Monday to Friday. The project is due to be completed by the end of March.

M6 junction 16 to junction 19 (Cheshire smart motorway)

Work is underway to upgrade the M6 to a smart motorway between Crewe and Knutsford, converting the hard shoulder to an extra lane and introducing new variable speed limits. Narrow lanes and a temporary 50mph speed limit are in place for the safety of drivers and workers.

M6 junction 19 (Knutsford) roundabout resurfacing

A £75,000 project to resurface the junction roundabout will be delivered overnight during week nights over the next week. The work started on Monday night 20 February with nightly overnight closures of the roundabout between 10pm and 5am.

M6 Junction 21 and junction 21a (cycle improvements with A574 Birchwood Way)

We're improving pedestrian and cyclist access across the M6 with improvements to the existing overbridge and along the bridge's links with the A574 Birchwood Way. The project will also improve the bridge parapet. Works started Friday 17 February for 2 weeks.

Cycleway improvement work is taking place between 9.30am and 3.30pm Monday to Friday, requiring a 24 hour closure of the footway along the southern side of the A574 Birchwood Way with a localised pedestrian diversion route. A lane closure will also be required on the A574 Birchwood Way westbound carriageway between the same hours.

Bridge improvement works will follow between 10pm and 4am, Monday to Friday. The M6 between junction 21 and junction 21a will be closed overnight Friday 3 March (both northbound only) and Wednesday and Thursday 1 and 2 March (all southbound). Clearly-signed diversions will be in place.

M6 junction 21a and /M62 junction 10 (Croft Interchange)

Construction work on a major project to tackle congestion and improve the flow of traffic between the M6 and M62 at Croft Interchange has now started. While the work is taking place, a 50 mph speed limit, backed by average speed

cameras, will be in place along main carriageways of both the M6 and M62 and interchange link roads. Some overnight slip road closures will also take place.

M6 junction 26 to junction 27 (Orrell to Wigan)

We're renewing the boundary fence and carrying out drainage repairs in the verge alongside the northbound M6 between Junctions 26 and junction 27 in a 2 week project that starts on Monday (20 February). The work is taking place between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

M6 junction 33 to junction 32 (Lancaster to M55 interchange)

Resurfacing work on the southbound carriageway started on Monday 6 February. 2 lanes will remain open during the day and 1 lane will remain open overnight. The scheme is due to be completed by early March.

M6 junction 33 to 34 Lancaster

Lancashire County Council's new link road between junction 34 of the M6 and Heysham has now opened but finishing work will require lane and hard shoulder closures along the M6 through junction 34 to continue for the time being.

The following closures will take place:

- Northbound from junction 33 to 34 Thursday 2 March 2017 from 10pm to 6am.
- Southbound from junction 35 to 34 Friday 3 March 2017 from 10pm to 6am.

M6 junction 39 to junction 38, north of Tebay Services

Resurfacing is taking place north of Tebay Services with 1 lane closed during the day and 2 lanes closed overnight on the southbound carriageway. The work is due to be completed by March and a temporary 50mph speed limit in place. Tebay services entry slip Southbound road will be closed on the 28 Feb for 1 night 10pm to 6am.

M60 junction 8 to M62 junction 20 (Sale to Rochdale)

A major smart motorway scheme is taking place to cut congestion and improve journey times on parts of the M60 and the M62 in Greater Manchester. The scheme involves overnight slip road and carriageway closures, with narrow lanes and a temporary 50mph speed limit in place for the safety of drivers and road workers.

M66 junction 1 to junction 4 (Ramsbottom to Simister Island)

Resurfacing work is continuing and 4 nights of closures of the southbound carriageway between junction 1 and junction 2 are scheduled to take place before Friday (24 February) between 9pm and 5am – with clearly signed diversions in place. The scheme is due to be completed by March.

A5103 Princess Parkway

Drainage repairs along the northbound exit slip road from the A5103 onto the M60 will start on Monday (20 February) with one lane of the slip road closed and re-positioning of the bus stop. Work will take place in several phases between 8am and 6pm and midnight and 5am.

A556 Knutsford to Bowdon

Construction work to provide a £192 million dual carriageway linking junction 19 of the M6 at Knutsford and junction 7 of the M56 at Bowdon, has entered its final phase. It is due to open on 6 March. On the existing A556, another full 56 hour weekend closure will run from 9pm next Friday night (3 March) and 5am on the following Monday morning (6 March).

Other work relating to the scheme:

Monday to Friday commencing 27 February:

- A556 northbound will be closed from Mere to Bowdon roundabout overnight (9pm to 5am)
- A556 southbound will be closed from Bowdon roundabout to Bucklow Hill overnight (9pm to 5am) as above
- M56 junction 7 eastbound and westbound exit slip roads will be closed
- M56 junction 8 will be closed. Junction 7 eastbound access slip will be closed
- A56 Lymm Road to Dunham Road will be controlled by traffic signals allowing access from Lymm to Altrincham and vice versa over the same periods as above

A585 West Drive to Fleetwood Cycleway

Work is taking place on a new shared footpath and cycleway between West Drive and Fleetwood. Narrow lanes and a temporary 30mph speed limit are being used along the route to help provide a safe space for workers constructing the new shared paths. Work will take place between 7am and 7pm each day with occasional overnight work. The project is due to be completed by the end of March.

A590 Lindal in Furness

Work is being carried out to tackle flooding between Pennington Lane and Bank End Cottages. 24hr temporary traffic lights are now in place until late March.

A595 Egremont

Repairs are taking place to the safety barriers adjacent to Wyndham Place on the A595 and are due to be completed by the end of February. A contraflow system is in place on the southern approach to the Main Street/East Road roundabout.

A66 Bassenthwaite Lake

A contraflow system is in place while work is carried out on the embankment in the central reservation next to Bass Lake. The scheme is due to be completed in the spring.

A66 Thornthwaite (Osprey Site)

Flood resilience work is continuing. Full overnight – 8pm to 6am – closures of the carriageway nightly until the end of March started on Monday 6 February. Clearly-signed diversions are in place. During the day, Temporary traffic lights are in place along with a 40mph speed limit.

A66 Marron Bridge

Maintenance is underway on Marron Bridge, between Broughton Cross and Bridgefoot. Nightly overnight – 9pm to 5am – closures, with a clearly-signed diversion are in place. Due to the temporary bridging plates, a 30mph speed limit backed by speed cameras is required during the day. The project is due to be completed by March.

A66 Brough

Resurfacing and drainage work is taking place on the eastbound carriageway at Brough. Overnight lane closures will be in place, between 8pm and 6am, with traffic led through the roadworks by a contractor's vehicle. There will also be some lane closures in place during the day.

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