



Michelle Donelan MP,  
Minister of State for Universities,  
Department for Education,  
20 Great Smith St,  
London,  
SW1P 3BT

2 April 2020

Dear Michelle

I am writing as the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary for Students, with colleagues from all parties, to raise the concerns of those studying in our universities about the consequences of the measures taken to contain the spread of COVID-19. Those concerns fall primarily into three areas, on which we would ask you to act:

**Examinations** – We welcome the swift action taken by many universities to minimise the impact on study by switching to online teaching, but it cannot fully compensate for the full learning experience otherwise available and some students may not be in the same position to engage in home study as effectively as others. Students are understandably concerned about the impact on their study and on their examinations, particularly those who will be graduating this summer. We would ask you to work with Universities UK, the OfS and the QAA to secure agreement across the sector that students should be given the choice of either (a) being awarded a final degree based on prior achievement, (b) sitting exams remotely within the normal timescale, (c) postpone exams to the autumn, or (d) resitting the year without further fees and with additional financial support.

**Accommodation costs** – Most students who have been able to do so, have returned to their parental homes and vacated their student accommodation, raising the issue of rent refunds. There seems to have been a range of responses, from both university and private sector providers, to such requests. Some have readily agreed to full or partial refunds, others have offered the option of ending tenancies from specified dates, and others have refused any refund in accordance with contracts. We appreciate that different providers will be in different financial positions, but it is not right that any students should be penalised for complying with public health advice. We would therefore ask you to liaise with universities and private sector providers to ensure that students are fully reimbursed for rent due from the date that they vacated their accommodation, recognising that this may involve financial support from the Government.





**Lost earnings** – The student funding model that has developed in recent years means that part-time jobs provide essential income to support many students through their studies. These jobs are largely in sectors which have ceased to operate as a result of coronavirus measures. While other workers in these sectors will have the opportunity to claim Universal Credit, and the Government action in lifting the income floor will have assisted many in part-time employment, students are not in this position because the UC rules preclude them from making a claim. Whilst this is right in normal times, the current situation is exceptional and we would ask that the Government temporarily suspend this rule so that students can submit claims for UC for the duration of this crisis.

The Government has acted on the concerns of those in work and self-employment; our students deserve no less. Some are facing these problems more acutely than others - those with disabilities and from lower income households, for example – but all students urgently need clarity on all these issues. So we would ask you to acknowledge the concerns and bring forward proposals to address them without delay.

With best wishes,

Paul Blomfield MP, Chair

Alison Thewliss MP, Vice-Chair

Jo Stevens MP, Vice-Chair

Caroline Lucas MP, Vice-Chair

Debbie Abrahams MP

Ben Bradshaw MP

Rosie Cooper MP

Rosena Allin-Khan MP

Lyn Brown MP

Stella Creasy MP

Rushanara Ali MP

Dawn Butler MP

Thangham Debbonaire MP

Mike Amesbury MP

Ian Byrne MP

Marsha de Cordova MP

Fleur Anderson MP

Ruth Cadbury MP

Geraint Davies MP

Paula Barker MP

Lisa Cameron MP

Alex Davies-Jones MP

Apsana Begum MP

Dan Carden MP

Anneliese Dodds MP

Hilary Benn MP

Bambos Charalambous MP

Allan Dorans MP

Olivia Blake MP

Joanne Cherry MP

Jack Dromey MP



**APPG on Students**House of Commons,  
London SW1A 0AA

Rosie Duffield MP

Colum Eastwood MP

Clive Efford MP

Florence Eshalomi MP

Bill Esterson MP

Stephen Farry MP

Stephen Flynn MP

Gill Furniss MP

Preet Gill MP

Kate Green MP

Lilian Greenwood MP

Nia Griffith MP

Andrew Gwynne MP

Fabian Hamilton MP

Claire Hanna MP

Helen Hayes MP

Drew Hendry MP

Mike Hill MP

Wera Hobhouse MP

Sharon Hodgson MP

Rachel Hopkins MP

Imran Hussain MP

Rupa Huq MP

Christine Jardine MP

Dan Jarvis MP

Diana Johnson MP

Darren Jones MP

Ruth Jones MP

Afzal Khan MP

Ben Lake MP

Ian Lavery MP

Clive Lewis MP

Angus MacNeil MP

Seema Malhotra MP

Christian Matheson MP

Steve McCabe MP

Kerry McCarthy MP

John McDonnell MP

Andy McDonald MP

Ian Mearns MP

Carol Monaghan MP

Stephen Morgan MP

Grahame Morris MP

Ian Murray MP

Gavin Newlands MP

Charlotte Nichols MP

Sarah Olney MP

Abena Oppong-Asare MP

Kate Osamor MP

Kate Osborne MP

Matthew Pennycook MP

Lucy Powell MP

Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP

Naz Shah MP

Virendra Sharma MP

Tommy Sheppard MP

Cat Smith MP

Jeff Smith MP

Alex Sobel MP

Chris Stephens MP

Wes Streeting MP

Zarah Sultana MP

Gareth Thomas MP

Owen Thompson MP

Stephen Timms MP

Karl Turner MP

Liz Twist MP

Valerie Vaz MP

Christian Wakeford MP

Claudia Webbe MP

Matt Western MP

Alan Whitehead MP

Mick Whitley MP

Nadia Whittome MP

Sammy Wilson MP

Beth Winter MP

Mohammad Yasin MP

Daniel Zeichner MP

Baroness Lister of  
Burtersett