

Covid 19: Written Answer Reports
Week beginning 1st February 2021

4/2/2021

Liam McArthur (Orkney Islands) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what consideration it has given to the need to extend some university courses to allow practical work to be undertaken, and what provision can be made to ensure that any additional costs incurred do not fall on the students. **(S5W-34725)**

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government is engaged in regular discussions with students, universities and colleges to address issues facing learners as a result of disruption to learning and teaching caused by COVID-19 restrictions. A Ministerial Task force has been established to rapidly and collectively provide solutions to address these issues. The Scottish Government is committed to taking effective action to enable students to continue and complete their learner journeys and move into employment or further study.

Students studying a course of Higher Education (HE) who require to repeat a full year of study are able to access an additional year of funding known as a '+1'. Care Experienced students studying in HE are able to access two additional years of funding. HE students who have exhausted their funding options and require to repeat a year of studies due to COVID-19 will have their requests considered under compassionate grounds by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS).

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government what financial support it is making available to supply teachers during the current COVID-19 lockdown. **(S5W-34827)**

John Swinney: The Scottish Government has provided local authorities with £80 million of additional investment in education staff, sufficient for the recruitment of around 1,400 additional teachers, including supply teachers, and 200 support staff this year.

In addition, a package of £45 million of new funding was announced on 13 January to support the delivery of remote learning. This new funding can be used to recruit additional teachers and may offer further employment opportunities for supply teachers.

5/2/2021

Elaine Smith (Central Scotland) (Scottish Labour): To ask the Scottish Government what monitoring is in place to ensure that any reduction in Modern Apprenticeships during the COVID-19 pandemic has not disproportionately affected young disabled people. **(S5W-34757)**

Jamie Hepburn: Skills Development Scotland (SDS) records and publishes Official Statistics on Modern Apprenticeship uptake across a wide range of protected characteristics, including disability, on a quarterly basis. The

published statistics for Quarter 2 of 2020-21 showed that 11.5% of MA starts self-identified as having an impairment, health condition or learning difficulty, which is a decrease compared with Quarter 2 in 2019-20 where 14.7% of MA starts self-identified as having an impairment, health condition or learning difficulty. SDS will monitor uptake and will continue to work with stakeholders to improve equality of access to apprenticeships for young disabled people.

As a result of the impact of the pandemic on MA numbers, we have introduced the Apprenticeship Employer Grant (AEG), which is administered by SDS. The AEG is a financial incentive to encourage employers to take on more apprentices during the pandemic. A payment of £5,000 is available to businesses to employ apprentices aged 16 to 24-year old, and those aged up to 29 years who have a disability, are care experienced or are from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background.

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist

Party): To ask the Scottish Government what support is being given to those undergoing teacher training who have not been able to complete their placements in (a) Dumfries and Galloway and (b) the rest of Scotland. **(S5W-34826)**

John Swinney: The national COVID-19 Education Recovery Group is overseeing work being led by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) and supported by the Scottish Government, the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland and the Scottish Council of Deans of Education, to consider how we can best continue to ensure that opportunities for face to face learning and teaching are maximised for all student teachers over the remainder of this academic year. This work will also help to ensure students across Scotland are provided with additional support, where needed, to meet the registration requirements set by the GTCS by the end of the current academic year.