

**Covid 19: Written Answer Reports
Week beginning 8th March 2021**

8/3/2021

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government whether early years officers working in early years centres, who have regular contact with children, will be offered twice-weekly access to lateral flow COVID-19 testing, and what the reasons are for its position on this matter. **(S5W-35400)**

Maree Todd: I refer the member to the answer to question S5W-35218 on 1 March 2021. All answers to written Parliamentary Questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>

Jamie Greene (West Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether it will make routine asymptomatic COVID-19 testing available in all stand-alone nursery settings. **(S5W-35420)**

Maree Todd: I refer the member to the answer to question S5W-35275 on 3 March 2021. All answers to written Parliamentary Questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>

Oliver Mundell (Dumfriesshire) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party): To ask the Scottish Government whether twice-weekly COVID-19 testing will be available for nursery staff in the private, voluntary and independent sector. **(S5W-35453)**

Maree Todd: I refer the member to the answer to question S5W-35275 on 3 March 2021. All answers to written Parliamentary Questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>

11/3/2021

Willie Coffey (Kilmarnock and Irvine Valley) (Scottish National Party): To ask the Scottish Government when COVID-19 testing kits will be supplied to standalone nurseries. **(S5W-35560)**

Maree Todd: We are currently gathering and verifying data for settings, in conjunction with local authority partners, to enable delivery of testing kits to standalone Early Learning and Childcare and School-aged Childcare settings as quickly as possible. We will confirm a delivery schedule with settings following this data collection process and receipt of a schedule from our operational partners.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government when vocational and practical classes and training such as cooking classes will be able to restart under its revised COVID-19 Strategic Framework. **(S5W-35618)**

John Swinney: The challenges around completion of coursework and assessment for practical subjects are recognised, which is why a limited return of senior phase

learners and students to progress practical work that cannot be undertaken remotely, and which is critical to qualification completion was prioritised.

Under the revised Strategic Framework, universities and colleges can continue to bring back a small number of students where face-to-face teaching is critical. The vast majority of learning will continue to be online, with the number of students on campus to be kept as low as possible and no more than 5% at any one time for in-person teaching. Any further return to face-to-face teaching in colleges and universities will be kept under regular review, with decisions informed by the data on virus prevalence.

The First Minister has confirmed that a phased return to secondary school will begin from 15 March. Colleges will be able to prioritise the return of further senior phase school pupils studying at college who require in-person provision now in order to complete their course.

The Scottish Government remains committed to supporting pupils and students to complete their learner journeys and is working closely with all relevant partners to provide solutions to challenges in delivering practical learning as a matter of priority.

12/3/2021

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that students can access the Higher Education (HE) Coronavirus Discretionary Fund, and whether it will continue payments after 31 March 2020. **(S5W-35540)**

Richard Lochhead: The £22 million HE Coronavirus Discretionary Fund was issued to colleges and universities in February 2021. These funds are available to all students studying a course of Higher Education who are facing financial hardship including EU/ international students and nursing and midwifery students.

Colleges and universities can continue to use up to £5.9 million of these funds through to the end of the 2020-21 Academic Year, being 31 July 2021.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government what action it is taking to ensure that the money allocated to the Higher Education (HE) Coronavirus Discretionary Fund is used to support students experiencing hardship. **(S5W-35541)**

Richard Lochhead: Guidance has been issued to colleges and universities to support the administration of the £22 million HE Coronavirus Discretionary Fund. This document complements the main Discretionary Fund guidance which is produced and provided each year by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS). A copy of the Coronavirus Discretionary Fund guidance can be found at: <https://www.saas.gov.uk/files/499/saas-coronavirus-discretionary-fund.pdf>

In addition, information on Discretionary Funds is available through the Student Information Scotland (www.studentinformation.gov.scot) and SAAS (www.saas.gov.uk) websites respectively.

Ross Greer (West Scotland) (Scottish Green Party): To ask the Scottish Government what its position is on working with the higher and further education sectors to establish a “no detriment” policy for students whose studies have been disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. **(S5W-35542)**

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government are in discussion with students, universities and colleges on approaches to minimise the impact of COVID-19. An immediate priority is to enable students to continue and complete their learner journeys and move into employment or further study.

To support this priority, a short life Ministerial Task force has been established chaired by the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science.

This group will be tasked with moving in a rapid and agile manner to collectively provide solutions to address issues now facing learners as a result of the extended disruption to learning and teaching caused by COVID-19 restrictions.

We fully expect institutions to adopt a fair approach to assessments, which supports students in attaining the qualifications they deserve despite the challenges faced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Universities are, however, autonomous bodies and do not all follow the same pattern for exams, they are responsible for their own policies and procedures.

There are some courses where evidence is required in order to demonstrate a certain level of proficiency, to allow for transitions into the workplace of specific work disciplines. Therefore, it is difficult to adopt a blanket approach to this.

We are absolutely clear that learners should have their achievements recognised and awarded, as in any other academic year, such that they can continue with their chosen pathways.

We are working with universities, colleges and others to consider the challenges in delivering practical learning and our immediate priority is to help students complete their courses.

Alex Cole-Hamilton (Edinburgh Western) (Scottish Liberal Democrats): To ask the Scottish Government how it plans to mitigate the impact of managed isolation on international students. **(S5W-35575)**

Richard Lochhead: The Scottish Government is working with the sector to explore what measures can be put in place to support the physical and mental wellbeing of international students who are subject to managed isolation arrangements.

In relation to their financial wellbeing, international and EU students can now apply for financial hardship support from the £22m HE Coronavirus Discretionary Fund and £3m FE Coronavirus Discretionary Fund, which were allocated to the universities and colleges in February. Institutions' assessments and awards are based on the individual circumstances involved, however the eligible scenarios can include costs associated with travel to / from Scotland if a) their travel is essential and in line with current travel restrictions/ exemptions; and b) they are in financial hardship and can demonstrate this through the institution's hardship assessment process.