



Department of Health & Social Care

Will Quince MP

Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care
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The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP

Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education

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01 October 2023

Dear Lord Wharton,

The NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (LTWP) was published on 30 June 2023. This historic plan sets out how the NHS will address existing vacancies and meet the challenges of a growing and aging population, by recruiting and retaining hundreds of thousands more staff over the next 15 years and reforming the way the NHS works. We would like to thank you for the OfS's support in the development of the plan, and the constructive and pragmatic way in which the OfS has supported the planning and implementation work since publication.

The plan will require a significant expansion of medical school places to achieve its strategic objectives, and it includes a commitment to double the number of medical school places, taking the number of total places up to 15,000 a year by 2031/32. Delivering this commitment will require significant cooperation and coordination among the OfS, DfE, DHSC and NHS England to ensure that the new places are delivered where they are most needed and in the most efficient way, alongside delivering other reforms to medical education and training set out in the plan. In order to grow healthcare education capacity and meet the strategic aims of the plan, it is vital that we start educating more doctors as quickly as possible.

In the immediate term, in academic year (AY) 2024/25, we want to focus expansion on (i) new medical schools approved by the General Medical Council (GMC) but which are currently without maximum fundable limits (i.e., do not currently receive Government funding for places) and on (ii) those with the smallest existing limits, specifically those with limits of fewer than 50 places. We are asking the OfS to facilitate this so that more schools can offer more places for home students, building

capacity in the sector both now and for the future – and supporting the wider expansion of places in future years. This means that we do not expect the OfS to use the additional funding Government is providing to increase maximum fundable limits for all medical schools in AY 2024/25.

We are providing sufficient additional funding to enable the OfS to increase the maximum fundable limit for home students by 205 places in AY2024/25, bringing forward some of the expansion set out in the LTWP. This will be a significant early boost towards the longer-term increases to come. While our advice above will mean that a small number of medical schools receive the 205 additional places in AY2024/25, this is in advance of the far greater expansion starting in AY2025/26 to fully deliver the LTWP commitments.

The additional funding needed to cover the full costs to the OfS for funding these additional medical students will be reflected within the Strategic Priorities Grant (SPG) allocations for AY2024/25 and future years. The fuller expansion of medical school places for AY2025/26 onwards, and the funding allocations to support them, will be confirmed in due course, but we would expect the allocation of the additional 205 places AY2024/25 to be carried over into the intakes of the schools in question for subsequent years. We also welcome the strong commitment to apprenticeships within LTWP, including for medics, nurses and other healthcare professionals, and it is critical that we continue to work closely with you, the HE sector and NHS England to make a reality of these plans.

We expect the OfS to engage with the DfE and DHSC as well as NHS England and the General Medical Council as it makes decisions about how to use this funding. Given that the medical school admissions cycle for AY 2024/25 is already open for applications, we request the OfS to act quickly to allocate the additional places and thus give medical schools and students the maximum possible time to manage their admissions processes. Our officials stand ready to engage with medical schools who will be receiving additional places and NHS providers to support them to achieve this growth.

The operation of maximum fundable limits for medical courses should continue to be managed closely by the OfS in future years, so that medical school places remain within their fundable limits.

This letter provides further guidance to the Office for Students under section 2(3) of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 and this guidance does not supersede steers in any previous guidance.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Robert Halfon', written in a cursive style.

The Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Will Quince', written in a cursive style.

Will Quince MP
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