

17 April 2020

Dear accountable officer

Further extension to moratorium on unconditional offer-making

Two weeks ago, I wrote to you regarding the extension of the moratorium on unconditional offers and other changes to existing offers. It has been reassuring that universities and colleges have adhered to the extended moratorium, and we are grateful to the sector for responding so constructively.

The Universities Minister has today announced a further extension to the moratorium on unconditional offers for undergraduate study in the 2020-21 academic year. This extension will continue until Monday 4 May 2020. There are no changes to the types of offer that can be made during this extension; the only types of unconditional offer that can be made are where students have already achieved their level-3 qualifications.

Unconditional offer-making or the revision of offers outside this exception are still covered by the moratorium. It is not in the interests of students for conditional offers to be changed to unconditional offers before they have received their A-level, BTEC or equivalent results.

As before, higher education providers should not place any pressure on applicants through time-limited offers or other inducements at any time, but this is particularly important at this time of increased anxiety. Universities and colleges will also need to ensure that any new conditional offers made to applicants that are below the normal range of offers for the course do not in effect amount to an unconditional offer.

We do not expect to see changes to offers already made to applicants for 2020-21.

These are difficult times and we do recognise that universities and colleges will be concerned about the next academic year and the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on recruitment. However, this extension will allow the Government, providers and their representative organisations, UCAS and others, to discuss further how to ensure the continued stability and integrity of the higher education sector. The moratorium is intended explicitly to support students, and ensure that they can take decisions on where, what and how to study free from any undue pressure. It is critical that the interests of prospective and current students lead our thinking in the coming weeks and months.

Next steps

We will monitor the response of universities and colleges to the extended moratorium and will communicate before 4 May 2020 about the additional regulatory steps we are taking to protect the interests of students and support the stability and integrity of the higher education sector.

If you have any questions about the issues raised in this letter, or other regulatory matters, please email us at regulation@officeforstudents.org.uk. You can also call the regulation helpline on 0117 931 7305 (0900 to 1700 Monday to Friday).

Yours sincerely

Nicola Dandridge
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