



CES Newsletter: Issue 21

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This newsletter should be of interest to all teachers, Because of the crisis it will be issued on a weekly basis from now on. This will hopefully mean I can pass on whatever useful information I find and, to be honest, because I am time rich, if income poorer. It will of course be shorter than the usual fortnightly edition.

Coronaquiz 2 has been issued. If you want to form a team and have not already registered with me please send me your email. Gordon.ceslondon@gmail.com.

[DATE]

[COMPANY NAME]

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SCHOOLS

MAY NOT BE THE OPTION OF AUTUMN RESITS

TES has said that Ofqual is leaving it up to exam boards to "decide which exams to make available to students in the autumn". This may cause Ofqual to backtrack on the pledge it made, when it said that: "Students who do not feel their calculated grade reflects their performance will also have the opportunity to sit an exam in the autumn." The ASCL has said that it would 'favour' seeing exam boards only being compelled to offer autumn exams for A levels and English and maths GCSEs. The Runnymede Trust has written to Gavin Williamson warning that teacher-assessed grades could exhibit bias against disadvantaged young people and those from BAME backgrounds. It said that the only option for redress for candidates who felt they had been unfairly graded would be an autumn exam.

Ofqual has warned of "a number of risks associated with compelling exam boards to make qualifications available in all subjects." It is concerned about "the costs for exam boards of providing exams for which there are very small numbers of entries". It warned of a detrimental effect "on teachers who are assessors, students taught by teachers who are assessors and centres [schools] who will need to release teachers to be assessors". It said, "We are mindful that the autumn series will likely take place during the first term for a new cohort of students, who might have been away from school for a prolonged period, when teaching resources will be stretched. In these circumstances, it might be beneficial to the system as a whole to allow exam boards to reduce the number of exams taking place, and the consequent impact on teachers who are also assessors, even if this does detrimentally affect some students."

However, Ofqual acknowledged that allowing exam boards not to offer autumn exams in all their GCSEs and A levels would "undermine the value of the autumn series in mitigating any unfairness which students and centres might consider arises from our proposals in respect of calculated grades and appeals". Ofqual intend to conduct further consultation on the issue, but said, "Unless we decide otherwise, the default position will be that exam boards will decide which exams to make available to students in the autumn series."

AQA confirmed they would be looking at the consultation and responding to Ofqual, Pearson Edexcel made no comment and OCR said: "We want to help our students to progress with grades they can be proud of. We are giving careful consideration to all aspects of our response to the cancellation of this summer's exams, including the composition of the autumn series. Ofqual intends to consult on proposals relating to the autumn series in due course, and we will provide our schools and colleges with more information as soon as we are able."

Geoff Barton, ASCL general secretary, said: "We would favour a requirement that exam boards hold an autumn series in GCSE English and maths, and in A-level subjects. Other GCSEs are very important for progression, but they are superseded by other qualifications taken later down the line, while GCSE English and maths, and A levels, have an enduring significance for the individual. It would, therefore, seem reasonable that in the current circumstances an opportunity is provided to sit these exams in the event that a student is unhappy with the grade awarded in the summer. However, we would emphasise that this is a back-up and that we are confident the system of centre-assessed grades will be fair, accurate and consistent."

Mary Bousted, joint head of the NEU, said the anxieties around awarding grades stemmed from "putting all our eggs in the exams basket". She said, "I don't see how any firm promises from Ofqual could be made on that. We don't know how the pandemic will play out; we don't know whether schools and colleges will be open as centres in the autumn term. They may only be open on a partial basis, so I don't see how you could then say you could get 300 students in a room to sit an exam with social distancing. I can't see that those social distancing rules are going to be relaxed any time soon and that will be a major constraint on shovelling young people into exam halls. There will be students unhappy with their grade, the rank order, the calculated grade from teacher assessment, and it's some justice they could resit them, but there's a higher issue here, which is the safety of these pupils and whether schools could manage it. I don't think Ofqual is in a position to give clear answers about this, it's something bigger."

MAKING IT HARDER FOR SUPPLY TEACHERS TO GET PAID

The government has been accused of making it harder for supply teachers to get paid by "changing the boundaries" on who is responsible for paying them during school closures. Guidance last month stated that supply teachers working for agencies and umbrella companies could be paid through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. However, new guidance states that schools may still pay agencies for supply teachers on 'live assignments'. It states: "Where schools have agency workers on live assignments who can continue to work, they may continue to make previously agreed payments for the supply of workers."

Supply teacher Tim Holden, who runs a Facebook support group for supply teachers, said, "Part of the confusion is down to the language the DfE uses, like the word 'may', which seems to make it optional for schools to pay or not. But what's needed is 100 % black-and-white guidance so that people can't draw their own conclusions about what it means." He said, "The government is changing the boundaries as to who is responsible for the whole process. It is likely to cause even more delays to supply teachers yet to receive any financial support and raises questions over those who have already been furloughed."

The new guidance states that "agencies who receive money for workers on live assignments in line with this guidance should not furlough these workers". However, some agencies have already furloughed workers. Lorin Clough, from Just Education Ltd, said they had already been paying a furlough wage to its supply teachers for the past three weeks and that the new guidance "complicated things". He said: "We now need to go back to schools and say to them that for those longer-term assignments that were uninterrupted they need to still be paying." Sophie Wingfield, from the Recruitment and Employment Confederation, said the DfE had "missed an opportunity" by not making the guidance clear earlier. She said: "There now needs to be clear and quick communications between schools, the agencies they work with, and supply agency workers so that as many workers as possible receive payments at this difficult time."

Kevin Courtney, joint head of the NEU, said: "Supply staff have been knocked from pillar to post throughout the government's response to Covid-19. Gavin Williamson must now take a firm grip to ensure that schools that are receiving public funding for supply cover continue to pay those workers in accordance with the Cabinet Office guidance and that agencies comply with their moral obligation to furlough supply staff who are eligible." Patrick Roach, head of the NASUWT, said: "The government's belated publication of guidance regarding contingent workers seeks to clarify a number of matters that the NASUWT has been pressing for, including that supply teachers who were already undertaking long-term assignments in schools, or who were booked in for future long-term assignments, should still be paid by schools for that work. Where schools choose not to follow the government's guidance on this, supply teachers working through an agency can still seek to be furloughed through the government's Job Retention Scheme."

The new guidance states that supply teachers working through supply agencies and umbrella companies who have no work this term can still be paid through the furlough scheme. Supply teachers employed directly by schools (around 16%) should continue to be paid directly by the school. The DfE said that the new guidance should not contradict the original but was designed to add 'further clarity' to cover the range of possible circumstances.

NHS CALL ON SCHOOLS TO REMAIN CLOSED

An open letter to hapless Hancock by NHS nurse Iain Wilson, signed by thousands of NHS workers with children currently attending school, says that they are worried about recent speculation that schools could be wholly reopened soon. The letter states: "There is no cure for coronavirus and there is no vaccine. It is not fair to increase teachers' risks while not knowing how many people are losing their lives because of work, because a teacher's work means sharing rooms and equipment with many people, from many households, again and again. Some teachers have already tragically died from the virus, and we do not want to risk any more".

The letter says: "As NHS workers with children currently attending school, we are worried about recent speculation that schools could be wholly reopened soon. The conditions of strict widespread testing for suspected Covid-19, rigorous contact tracing and scrupulous adherence to quarantining must be met before a return to schools, for the enduring safety of teachers and the wider community." The letter argues that schools should remain closed "Until we know more about the transmission of this virus and the risk factors for severe illness. Until we know that staff can access PPE, virus tests and accommodation if they live with vulnerable people. Until we know that children will not learn that their teacher has died because of an infection caught in their class, we should remain sensible and wait. The economic harm of keeping schools closed is significant but is known. This means the government can act and intervene to mitigate this harm. We do not know about the harms of reopening schools yet."

A DfE spokesperson said: "Education secretary Gavin Williamson has not set a date for schools reopening. They will remain closed, except for children of critical workers and the most vulnerable children, until the scientific advice changes and we have met the five tests set out by government to beat this virus. We will work in close consultation with the sector to consider how best to reopen schools, nurseries and colleges when the time is right so that parents, teachers and children have sufficient notice to plan and prepare."

ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORMS ARE TAKING OFF

Over 250,000 lessons have been accessed from the Oak National Academy, the new government backed virtual school, in its first day of operation. Matt Hood, principal, said it was "making good quality resources available to any

teachers who need it, who can then, in turn, make them available to their pupils. We want to make sure that every pupil, regardless of their background, has the best possible education experience at home." He added, "One of the things that is really helpful whilst you are social distancing and staying in your home is trying to create a really good quality structure of the day, where that is possible. We hope this structure we are providing, these lessons, three a day for our primary school pupils and four a day for our secondary school pupils, helps parents, in whatever way works for them, to create a rhythm and structure that makes it manageable for them to do difficult work."

The most popular subjects so far have been English, and maths and the most watched lesson has been 'Counting up to 10' for Reception pupils. The academy is looking to expand the range of subjects on offer, such as music, drama, and DT. The BBC's new virtual learning programme was launched on Monday with a host of famous faces leading lessons to help educate the nation's children. Among those taking part are Manchester City star Sergio Aguero, who will help youngsters learn to count in Spanish, and Brian Cox, who is due to teach science topics.

Tory MP Robert Halfon, chair of the Education Select Committee, said that online lessons, including the BBC programme and Oak National Academy scheme, should be broadcast on television so more pupils from disadvantaged homes can access the resources. He said. "Given the lack of access to online learning, children may not have computers or enough data on their phones, but they do have televisions. BBC could broadcast online learning resources for two or three hours a day so that most children would then have access to that learning via the red button on the remote control."

ANXIOUS PARENTS ARE BOMBARDING SCHOOLS WITH PLEAS FOR GOOD GRADES

Anxious parents are bombarding schools with pleas to award good grades in the new teacher assessments, forcing schools to advise staff to ignore contact from families who are trying to influence their judgments. Teachers have been told to stop setting work for pupils in a bid to deflect attempts to sway teacher assessments and the final grades they submit to the exam boards.

Teachers are required to score and rank pupils in each subject, based on mock exam results, coursework, marks in assignments and any other evidence. The grades that they issue to exam boards by the end of May are what they believe candidates would have achieved if the school year had operated as normal. Ofqual has instructed schools not to share those grades or discuss them with families. Despite that, parents are contacting teachers to lobby for their children. Some are offering mitigating circumstances for disappointing mock results, for instance, or insisting that as their child has a private tutor, they would have done better than expected in exams.

Tom Middlehurst, director of policy and public affairs at SSAT, a school network with 3,000 members, said: "The difficulty is that the kind of parents who are having those discussions and making that effort are likely to be middle-class parents and what we must really not allow to happen this summer is that educational inequality widens. Already with home schooling and school closures there is likely to be a long-term impact on the more disadvantaged and we have to mitigate this where we can. Of course, parents want to be reassured by what is going on, but they must allow teachers to use their professional judgments to make those decisions."

Teachers report receiving a sudden rush of extra work from pupils who fear they have underperformed in class, in the hope of an 11th hour reprieve. One member of staff at a high-performing sixth form college said he had never received so many emails from parents thanking him for teaching their child. In reality, the grades schools submit are likely to change when the final results are published because a standardisation process will apply statistical adjustments to assessed grades, using data about each school's performance in previous years and the cohort's prior achievement in KS2 tests or GCSEs. Ofqual has said that it will put "more weight on statistical expectations" to even out teacher grading that is too severe or too generous.

Some heads are concerned that if too much weight is given to schools' previous results, it may disadvantage pupils who are on an upward trajectory. Mr Middlehurst said: "While we understand the need for using schools' prior attainment, we are concerned that this will unfairly disadvantage the students at schools that have made concerted efforts to improve in the last 12 months. Many SSAT members have been in touch to say that they are honestly predicting significantly better results in 2020 than in previous years. This is not about league tables as they will not be published this year; it is about the individual pupil getting a fair result." Concerns have also been raised about whether high achieving pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds will receive fair grades. Research shows that these students often are predicted lower grades for UCAS than the ones they actually go on to achieve.

WE WILL GIVE ALL PUPILS ACCESS TO LAPTOPS AND ONLINE CLASSES

The government has said that all pupils across England will be offered access to laptops and online classes. The DfE is to provide computers and 4G routers to disadvantaged children across the country, with care leavers, those who have

an assigned social worker and disadvantaged year 10 pupils due to sit their GCSEs next year prioritised. Gavin Williamson said: “Schools will remain closed until the scientific advice changes, which is why we need to support the incredible work teachers are already doing to ensure children continue to receive the education they deserve and need. By providing young people with these laptops and tablets and enabling schools to access high quality support, we will enable all children to continue learning now, and in the years to come. We hope this support will take some of the pressure off both parents and schools by providing more materials for them to use.”

The move follows on from other nations, such as South Korea, where the state supports distance learning to ensure a generation does not fall behind in its studies. The UK’s major telecoms providers are expected to make access to educational resources free for the public by exempting users from data charges. Alongside funding for online resources, the government announced a £1.6m package of support for the NSPCC to expand its helpline for adults concerned over safeguarding issues both online and in the home. Peter Wanless, CEO of the NSPCC, said: “Unfortunately home is not always the safest place for a child to be. With schools closed and teachers and social workers’ access to vulnerable children more limited, the onus is on all of us to recognise signs of abuse and neglect. The NSPCC helpline is a crucial cog in the child protection system and this funding will enable us to increase awareness of our team of experts across the country and to expand their capability to provide a safe and confidential space for adults concerned about children during the coronavirus crisis.”

WE NEED A STRATEGY TO REOPEN SCHOOLS

Geoff Barton, head of the ASCL, has written an article setting out his views on reopening schools. He says that there are ‘hawks’ in government who want the lockdown lifted in a few weeks’ time but “The reopening of schools is not something that can be done by fixing on a date and declaring them to be back in business. Frankly, many parents will be too scared to send their children to school, and a significant number of staff who are in high-risk groups, or live with loved ones in high-risk groups, will feel likewise. Quite right too”.

Mr Barton says that the key to reopening schools is to build confidence among parents, pupils and staff that it is safe to go back but notes that “This will be no easy task. The stark reality is that the coronavirus will not have gone away. It is unlikely that there will be a vaccine for 18 months or more. So, the risk of infection will still be a lurking danger”. He says that a strategy to manage the risk will need to incorporate social distancing measures, such as limiting class sizes, staggering breaktimes, and phasing in certain year groups ahead of others. He also says that it would require resourcing for regular deep cleans of the premises, and consideration of protective equipment such as masks.

Mr Barton says, “The good news is that schools are very good at managing processes. They do it all the time with tricky problems such as safeguarding and behaviour”. However, he notes that “this is obviously a totally unparalleled situation that requires guidance from government about best practice, especially in matters beyond our normal remit, such as clear public health guidance and the actual provision in sufficient quantities of any protective equipment”. He says that “this will help to build confidence that it is possible to reopen schools in a way that manages the risk and ensures the safety of the whole school community”.

Mr Barton says, “Easy comparisons with other nations, the wilful ignoring by some pundits that schools aren’t just full of young people but of all the adults who work there too, all this is unhelpful, and merely fuels anxiety”. But he accepts that we cannot lose schools until a vaccine is produced and that prolonged closure of schools will itself cause real harm to many children, especially disadvantaged. He notes that many are without reliable internet connections and digital platforms that give them access to online resources and says, “The longer this lockdown goes on, the more that these problems will deepen. Truly, in educational terms, as the rich get richer, the poor will get poorer”.

Mr Barton says that we must avoid a top down approach to opening schools, saying we need “wide consensus and deep reassurance among parents and staff for any return to school, whenever that might be possible”. He says that we need to start actively thinking and preparing for how a return to school can be safely achieved, “Otherwise it will be something that is done to us rather than with us”. He says, “Planning for the eventual reopening of schools isn’t scaremongering. It’s the way we begin to pave the way to some kind of normality, to a time when the important social function of education will have never seemed more important or more welcome”.

HIGHER EDUCATION

DURHAM WANTS TO MOVE TOWARDS ONLINE DEGREES

The University and College Union (UCU) has condemned plans by Durham University to provide online-only degrees and significantly reduce face-to-face lecturing in response to the coronavirus pandemic. UCU general secretary, Jo

Grady, condemned the proposals to cut 'live' teaching by 25% as part of a shift towards providing online learning, which she described as "destructive" and "an attack on staff". The student newspaper Palatine said it would "invert Durham's traditional educational model", based on residential study, with one that places "online resources at the core enabling us to provide education at a distance".

The proposals, drawn up by deputy VC Antony Long and vice-provost for education Alan Houston, warned that Durham has been slow to develop online education compared to its competitors, which posed "a very significant financial and reputational risk" to the university. Under the plans some students would only study online, some would be taught on campus, and others would do both. The proposals, drawn up without consulting staff or students, would reduce the number of modules taught in person by a quarter in the next academic year, with the goal of providing at least 500 of them completely online by the summer of 2021. The document, due to be considered by the university's senate later this month, also proposes contracting a private education firm, Cambridge Education Group Digital, to develop a business case to implement the plans.

Jo Grady said universities "should not see the global pandemic as an opportunity to try and drastically alter their different business models. This looks like an attack on the livelihoods and the professional expertise of hard-working staff, all to line the pockets of private providers who don't have the same track record of providing high standards of education. Durham needs to halt these plans. The fact there has been no consultation with staff or students is unacceptable and we will continue to defend the quality of education staff provide and our members' jobs. Changes to our higher education system should be led by staff from the ground up, whether they are necessitated by Covid-19 or not. We will do everything we can to challenge this and any other similarly destructive proposals."

The plans reveal that a third of its undergraduate and half of postgraduate modules currently have no online learning, noting: "In the short-term, we risk being unable to provide even a basic 'minimum viable product' online for our academic year 2020/21 intake." The university aims to provide key postgraduate and first-year undergraduate degrees online by October 2020, with a focus on delivering those with the most "international market potential". Over 300 Durham academics have signed a letter to VC Stuart Corbridge, describing the proposals as "highly concerning, cynical and reckless". Prof Antony Long, deputy VC, said: "None of us yet know what the 2020-21 academic year will look like, but we must plan now so that when we do, we have options properly developed and ready to implement. Anticipating that some and perhaps a significant number of students will not be able to travel to and live in Durham then, we are preparing an online, distance learning programme that is both inclusive and high-quality."

THE GRADUATE JOB MARKET

Almost two thirds of final year students have had job applications paused or withdrawn because of Covid 19, according to a YouGov survey of over 5,000 students. The survey found that 80% are worried about how the uncertainty of the situation may impact their grades, and 83% feel under more pressure because of the upheaval. Overall, 49% of would-be graduates were confident of securing the job they wanted before the pandemic struck, but this has fallen to 30%. Latest government data suggest that the UK economy could shrink by as much as 35% in the second quarter of 2020, the largest drop in more than 100 years.

The Bright Network, a careers organisation which commissioned the research, said graduates need support to find jobs and help rebuild the economy. Their CEO, James Uffindell, said: "In these uncertain times, graduates need all the help they can get to understand what the opportunities are, and how best to find them. It's incumbent on universities, employers and services like ours to step up our support to ensure graduates are getting into the right careers, helping to rebuild an economy that will have been severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic."

IMPERIAL TO MAKE MAJOR CUTS

Imperial College, whose research is central to the government's response to the Covid-19 crisis, has warned of widespread cuts to mitigate the damaging impact of the pandemic. Prof Alice Gast, the college president, said she was taking a 20% pay cut as she announced a raft of cost-cutting measures, including the suspension of capital projects, a freeze on recruitment and plans to furlough staff members. The provost, Prof Ian Walmsley, is also taking a 20% cut and the board has volunteered to take a pay reduction of 10% over the next six months. Analysis suggests that universities are likely to be one of the hardest hit sectors, with fears that international students will not return and the possible loss of tens of thousands of Chinese students next year resulting in gaping holes in budgets.

Prof Gast told staff that she was proud of the significant impact of Imperial's research, clinical care and public outreach on the pandemic, but warned: "The immediate need, as we face threats to enrolments and the financial burden of the shutdown, is to look for ways to conserve cash in the coming year. We have already taken important decisions to suspend starting or approving new capital projects, limiting ongoing staff recruitment and identifying roles eligible for the furloughing scheme. We need to consider further measures." She said, "Our intention is to

share some of the many sacrifices our community is making by volunteering, working on the front line or having their laboratory or workplace closed. This money will be used to help our students and staff in hardship.”

Imperial is the latest university to announce cuts or restructuring. Earlier this month it emerged that hundreds of staff on precarious contracts had been dismissed in order to cut costs. Staff on fixed-term contracts, including visiting lecturers, researchers and student support workers, at Bristol, Newcastle and Sussex universities were made redundant or told their employment would end prematurely. Imperial is particularly exposed as 64% of students came from outside the UK in 2017/18, of which Chinese students were the biggest non-UK nationality. UCU general secretary, Jo Grady, said: “It is extremely concerning that any universities are using the current pandemic to look at changes to jobs and staffing levels. Staff are working extremely hard in difficult circumstances and university job losses will be disastrous for the individuals concerned and their families, as well as for the future of higher education.”

Research by the LSE concluded that UK universities face a black hole of at least £2.5bn in fee and grant income for 2020-21 as students both in the UK and around the world defer or abandon their plans to study here. It suggests that over 230,000 fewer students will enter HE in 2020 as a result of the crisis, over half of which are international students. That fall in student numbers would translate into a drop in income of around £1.51bn from non-EU students, £350 million from EU students and £612 million from UK students opting to stay away.

STUDENT NURSES ARE PAYING TO RISK THEIR LIVES

Over 15,000 second and third-year nursing and midwifery degree students have opted to help fight Covid 19, helping make up for the 40,000 shortfall in nurses in the NHS. All will be graduating with huge debts as the result of the government’s decision to scrap the NHS bursaries. Those graduating this year will have missed out on the £5,500pa grants towards living costs introduced in September to try to boost recruitment. To make ends meet many students have juggled paid shift-work as healthcare assistants alongside unpaid NHS work placements and university study. 80 MPs, including Diane Abbott, Stella Creasy and Jess Phillips, have signed a letter calling on Hapless Hancock, to cancel the debt of students who are working in the NHS. Sarah Owen, who wrote the letter, says cancelling the debt would send an “important signal” to those starting their nursing careers that they are valued by the government.

Already, two healthcare students have died of the virus. One student nurse working in the NHS said, “Due to the immense pressure the NHS is under I, like many others, have often found myself counted as one of the workforce during my placement, rather than as a supernumerary. Essentially we are paying £9,250 a year to work.” The Royal College of Nursing said, “Forcing student nurses to pay tuition fees has been a disaster. Numbers applying fell dramatically at the moment frontline shortages were soaring. These fees are a barrier to safely staffing the NHS and care sector and should be removed.” The VC of Worcester University, Prof David Green, said the removal of the bursary was a “bad and mad policy”, and there is “no doubt” it put thousands of mature students off training to be nurses and midwives. He also said that modern universities, who typically train nurses, could be the ones whose finances are hit hardest by the coronavirus. He said, “Many of the universities who are essential for training nurses around the country are in danger of having a heart attack in the next year. There are about 300,000 health education students in this country and the government has to make sure institutions are able to continue to train them.”

STUDENTS DISRUPTING ONLINE LECTURES

Several universities have taken disciplinary action against students posting abusive images in lectures hosted on Zoom. Professor Aisha Gill from Roehampton University said she knew of incidents at different universities in the past week where students had posted abusive sexual images in live Zoom lectures, saying, “We’re talking really disturbing, violent, pornographic images, action is being taken.” She said, “The lockdown has really brought cyber-bullying into sharp focus, particularly online harassment. I feel it’s spiralling out of control. Universities are not prepared because they’re firefighting with emergency responses to Covid-19.”

Since the lockdown began, several black academics have posted accounts on Twitter of racist ‘zoombombings’, where uninvited guests abuse the service to broadcast offensive content. These incidents have included racial slurs, such as the N-word, by people wearing Ku Klux Klan-style robes. Experts say that universities’ own computer networks were also vulnerable to abuse. They pointed to a leaked report on data security at Warwick University, which found it lacked internet filter software to block students and staff from accessing inappropriate or illegal material. The internal audit also found that IT monitoring at the university, which has been criticised for its handling of a “rape chat” scandal, was “not sufficiently robust to be useful to investigate and treat a cyber security issue”.

Andy Phippen, professor of digital rights at Bournemouth University, said that an FOI investigation he undertook last year revealed that most universities lacked adequate policies or procedures to address online harassment, and added, “I’ve seen no evidence of improvement since then, there’s a significant risk of more incidents as universities switch to online education.” Rachel Watters, NUS women’s officer, said: “The sudden shift to mass online learning on new

platforms has revealed weaknesses in policy and practice in relation to online misconduct and harassment. We urge institutions to safeguard students and staff using video conferencing, and to hold perpetrators accountable through disciplinary procedures.”

A spokeswoman for UUK said online safeguarding has been a key consideration in the shift to delivering more education online. A Warwick University spokesman said it had invested significant time, effort and resources in the past two years . He said: “On online teaching we continue to refine and enhance the security around each initiative that has been developed to introduce more online teaching in these challenging new times.” A Zoom spokesman said, “Zoom strongly condemns such behaviour and is committed to providing educators with the tools and resources they need on a safe and secure platform.”

EMPLOYMENT

THOSE LEFT BEHIND BY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYMENT MEASURES

Employers can now apply for the 80% furlough scheme which allows them to receive up to £2,500 per month for each employee in order to keep jobs open. The self-employed are also eligible to apply for non-repayable grants. A huge number of employers intend to apply, including Newcastle Football Club, owned by the billionaire Michael Ashley. However, many people are ineligible and fall through the cracks. They fall into three broad groups:

Self Employed: those who started businesses in April 2019 or later, as they have not submitted any tax return and those whose average annual profits are above £50k over the last 3 years. This is in contrast to employees who can get £2,500 a month even if they were earning a six figure salary previously.

Employees: Those who started a new job in March and are paid monthly and people employed by an overseas business which does not have a UK bank account. Many overseas businesses are trading without a UK bank account because it can take many months to get one due to bureaucratic hurdles. Employees are often paid via an agent and this system has not been included in the government schemes.

Owner Managers:

Many business owners have been advised by their accountants to take a nominal salary and receive dividends out of their company profits. However, this means that they are not eligible for any government support.

NEED 100% BUSINESS GUARENTEES

The Governor of the Bank of England, Andrew Bailey, has said that an extension of government guarantees to lenders from 80% to 100% could speed up the delivery of financial assistance. He said that currently banks do not feel they can dispense with normal credit checks just because they may ‘only’ lose 20% of the sum advanced. So far, out of a total business support package of £350bn, just over £1bn had been advanced through the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS).

Former Conservative chancellor George Osborne and current shadow business secretary Ed Miliband have both voiced support for the move. Mr Miliband said: "This is an important intervention by Andrew Bailey. He is completely right. The CBILS scheme is not working. The UK still lags far behind other European countries in getting loans to struggling firms. We face a looming insolvency crisis if uptake is not improved dramatically. The Government must go further and urgently reform the scheme to guarantee 100% loans to small businesses."

US lenders have approved over 300x as much lending as in the UK while even Swiss banks have approved 98,000 loans. The latest figure in the UK is just over 6,000. Ed Miliband admitted that a 100% guarantee would mean the taxpayer would be taking all the risk that the loans were not repaid and would create a "moral hazard". However, he said the "economic hazard" of letting thousands of firms to go bust was more important. Some finance experts have warned that continual tweaks to the existing CBILS scheme would risk creating more confusion for banks which are already operationally stretched due to high levels of demand at a time when many of their own staff are working from home. The financial services industry is to submit plans that would see support for smaller firms delivered via immediate and government guaranteed extensions of up to £25,000 to overdrafts on their business current accounts, the most basic and widespread product that businesses use.

SOME ONLINE FASHION SALES ARE BOOMING

Online fashion retailer Boohoo has seen a rise in sales of smart tops, as people working from home want to keep up appearances on camera in front of colleagues. Other sought-after lines included hoodies and jogging wear. It said that trading in March had been mixed, but performance had improved in recent weeks. A Boohoo spokesperson said, "People aren't really buying going-out items, but they are buying homewear, hoodies, joggers, tracksuit bottoms. Sales of tops have gone up in particular, with everyone wanting to look smart on Zoom calls."

The company has apologised after a backlash against its fashion face masks. The £5 masks came with messages such as 'Eat, sleep, isolate, repeat' or 'If you can read this, you are too close'. Boohoo said it was "very sorry for any upset" and removed the masks from sale. It insisted they were not designed for "protection".

BANKS ARE NOT HELPING SMEs ENOUGH

Banks have agreed less than half of applications made under the government's Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme. While £2.8bn of loans have been agreed compared with the £1.1bn up to last week, only 16,624 applications have been approved out of 36,000. Lenders were criticised early in the programme for requesting personal guarantees from small business owners, in spite of the fact that the loans are backed by the state.

The CBI chief economist, Rain Newton-Smith, said, "More loans must get out the door faster for the businesses facing distress, especially smaller businesses. Finding quicker and simpler routes for smaller firms to access cash and extending repayment schedules to encourage more businesses to take them up, are two ways that could make a difference." Mike Cherry, chair of the Federation for Small Businesses, said, "We now need to know how many micro businesses have been helped by the scheme to date. We continue to hear from small firms that made enquiries when this scheme launched but have still been unable to make an application because of unresponsive customer service teams. For those that have made an application, the process is very slow."

Tej Parikh, chief economist at the Institute of Directors, said, "The Government must consider reforms to improve the scheme, from raising its backing of small loans to helping more non-bank lenders play their part. To help those unable to access the scheme, we need to explore how to make the affordability criteria clearer, more consistent and less stringent, while looking at other routes such as overdraft facilities."

MISCELLANEOUS

INCOME FOR SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS HAS RISEN HUGELY

The money made by social-media influencers has risen hugely in the last few years. Marketing firm Izea found the average price of a sponsored photo on Instagram has risen from £104 in 2014 to £1,276 in 2019. It said that influencer-sponsored posts grew by 150% in the last year, with the use of the hashtag #ad more than doubling. It predicts that brands will up their spend on influencer marketing in 2020, making it a \$10bn industry. Their report looked at sponsored content on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and blogs, examining negotiated rates from 2014 to 2019. They found:

- The average cost for a sponsored Instagram photo has risen 44% from 2018 to 2019
- For a sponsored blog post it has soared from \$7.39 in 2006 to \$1,442 in 2019
- YouTube videos command the highest fees, four times that of the next highest-priced form of sponsored content, up from \$420 in 2014 to \$6,700 in 2019
- A Facebook status update has risen from \$8 in 2014 to \$395 in 2019
- A Twitter post has risen from \$29 in 2014 to \$422 in 2019
- Blog posts have risen from \$407 to \$1,442

Given its growth and various controversies the industry has gained more scrutiny from regulators. Last month, three influencers had Instagram posts touting diet products banned by the ASA, which dubbed them 'irresponsible'. At the beginning of the year, the Competition and Markets Authority warned that some influencer posts could break consumer law if they did not make clear when posts endorsing products were ads. Zoe Sugg (Zoella), singer Rita Ora and model Rosie Huntington-Whiteley were among 16 influencers who agreed to change the way they posted content. Instagram is experimenting with hiding 'likes' on posts after huge criticism of their addictive nature.

YOUNG PEOPLE MUST BE TAUGHT TO IDENTIFY FAKE NEWS

American neuroscientist and psychologist Daniel Willingham has called for young people to be taught how to identify fake news online. He said, "There's an argument to be made that maybe kids today, having grown up as digital natives, this spotting fake news is not such a big problem for them; they're used to encountering a sort of Wild West on the internet; they never know what they are going to find; and so they're much more sceptical than I was as a child." However, he said that this was "not really accurate. When kids are asked to learn a new platform or how to use a new app they're actually no faster than adults are, if they seem more adept that's just because they have more access to resources about how to learn new technology."

Professor Willingham cited a study from Stanford University by Professor Sam Wineburg, which showed that out of over 3,000 high school students, 96% were unable to identify that a website they were using was a climate change denial site. In a further example, where students were shown a doctored video of voter fraud using footage filmed in

Russia, but with references to Russia replaced so that it seemed to refer to activity by the Democratic Party in the United States, 52% said the video was strong evidence of voter fraud.

Professor Willingham said some thought that if students were effective critical thinkers and possessed 21C skills, they could apply these to identify fake news. However, he compared this to the views of 19C educators who believed that learning Latin would improve logical abilities, later disproved by educational psychologists. He said, "Critical thinking isn't a standalone skill, it's much more accurate to think of critical thinking as intertwined with knowledge." He said students needed to be aware of "peripheral cues" from websites that could mislead them, such as how attractive or professional it appeared to be, or how high up it appeared under the Google search engine. He said, "People rarely get off the first page of hits on Google, instead of evaluating information, what people are doing is sort of leaving that to Google and saying, 'Whatever Google returns as a prominent hit, I figure is probably a valid site.'"

A further study by Professor Wineburg found that professional fact-checkers, if asked to verify a website, would leave the site and look for information elsewhere, whereas students "tend to go deeper and look at more and more details on the website". In one study students were shown a site purportedly about the impact of imposing a minimum wage on businesses and the economy. When asked to evaluate the site, students looked at the 'About Us' section of the page, which described the organisation as a non-profit research group. However, a Google search found a Wikipedia article stating that it is a front created by a public affairs firm lobbying for the hospitality, tobacco and alcohol industries. Prof Wineburg said, "This lateral reading gives you a very different view of what this website is all about, students need to read a range of sources rather than remaining on one page".

Professor Wineburg' said that people tend to click only on higher results on Google because they are more popular with others. He said that this was an example of the peripheral cue of "social proof", whereby we are more likely to believe a widely held opinion. Students should be taught that the first page of hits to appear may not necessarily be reliable. Professor Willingham said students can use Wikipedia as part of online research, but that they should pay attention to references in articles, which link to a wider range of information, and also click on the 'Talk Tab' where you can see online discussion about the article's veracity.

CRIME FIGURES

Knife crime in England and Wales increased last year to a new high, with police recording 45,627 offences in the year to December 2019. That is 7% more than 2018, and the highest since knife crime statistics were first collected in 2010-11. The figures, which do not include Greater Manchester Police because of IT issues, showed a 13% rise in the West Midlands. Robbery offences were also up for the fourth year running, with an annual increase of 12%, to 83,930 offences. There were 670 cases of murder and manslaughter in 2019, excluding Greater Manchester Police, which is up 15 on the year before. This includes the 39 people whose bodies were found in a lorry in Essex.

SNIPPETS

- Father Mark Turner, school chaplain at Birkenhead School, has released a series of videos performing 80's dance workouts in a bid to encourage pupils to stay active.
- Michael Gove, Dominic Raab, Rishi Sunak and Matt (Hapless) Hancock are holding daily meetings chaired by Gove looking at a 'traffic light' system for coming out of lockdown. The system was devised by the economist Gerard Lyon, a former adviser to Boris Johnson.
- Lord Deighton, former head of the London 2012 Olympics, has been appointed PPE czar tasked with 'unleashing the potential' of UK industry to meet the needs for more PPE. Hapless Hancock compared him to Lord Beaverbrook, the press baron who was seconded in to boost production during WW2.
- The AA are offering their rescue service free for NHS staff as well as a priority free service for ambulances.
- SalutetheNHS.org are serving 10,000 meals a day to NHS staff with the support of Tesco and Yodel.
- The last 3 cruise ships still at sea docked this week. The MSC Magnifica has been at sea for 6 weeks without docking causing political storms around the world from countries not wanting to receive it.
- The Chancellor has been urged to make the prompt payment code, which requires businesses to pay 95% of its invoices within 60 days, compulsory for companies with more than 250 employees. This is to help small suppliers survive and stop large businesses hoarding cash.
- The government has announced a £1.25bn package to support innovative new companies that are not eligible for existing coronavirus rescue schemes. It will match up to £250m of private investment and add £550m to an existing loan and grant scheme for smaller firms that focus on research and development.
- DfE figures show that less than 1% of children are attending school during the lockdown, despite the fact that around 20% of pupils are considered eligible for a school place.
- In the University Challenge final (won by Imperial) no one on either team was female.
- The ONS has said that 80% of businesses are interested in the government's Job Retention Scheme.

