

**STATEMENT TO BE MADE BY THE ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
ON TUESDAY 20th OCTOBER 2020**

Higher Education Students Travel Survey

Members will be aware of the ongoing concerns of families with students studying overseas with regards to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and any future travel plans and associated issues. I wanted to provide a general update to Members and the public today which I hope will provide some reassurance that coordinated work is ongoing to provide the support and information to all concerned.

We have set up a cross-government working which includes officers from Customer and Local Services, CYPES, External Relations, Justice and Home Affairs, Health & Community Services and Policy. The group are meeting weekly and coordinating responses to queries and provide regular updates to the Student Finance Frequently Asked Questions pages on Gov.je.

There has been a growth in demand which of course is pleasing as it shows the current scheme is enabling more students to study a Level 6 qualification.

The processing of Student Finance grants has been impacted this year by multiple factors; including staff shortages.

Student Finance has a bespoke system and the Covid-19 Lockdown has impacted access to the vital IT system used for the processing of grants. Despite all this the very small team have managed to process a similar amount of grants in the same time frame but we are aware this still left many families with delays in receiving information. On behalf of the service I'd like to apologise and thank students and their families for their patience.

Despite this I am pleased to offer my thanks to the student finance team who have worked above and beyond throughout the pandemic and continue to do so. I am also pleased to advise members that the backlog is nearly cleared and the latest estimate to clear it is 15 working days.

Today we are launching an online survey so we can better understand the potential travel plans of the circa 1600 overseas Higher Education students who may return for the festive period. We would like to encourage young people studying off-Island to complete the short survey and provide us with additional information, where appropriate and relevant, to help us understand the impact on travel links. Whilst the majority of Jerseys students study in the UK we do have some that study further abroad and they are not forgotten.

The aim of this survey is to get as much information about the intentions of students with regards to travel during the Christmas period. The survey will enable the Gouvèrnément D'Jèrri to better manage a potentially large influx of students over a relatively short period of time. It will also inform the departments of any potential issues with mandatory self-

isolation for students and their families and allow better informed consideration of any action that may be required.

We are very aware that with the increase of Covid-19 cases overseas, students, their parents and carers may feel anxious and wish to plan ahead regarding the travel arrangements during the festive period. We want to provide as much reassurance as we can, as soon as we can, but the ever-changing impact of Covid-19 will always make it difficult to make longer term predictions for travel.

I would like to remind families that all travellers arriving in Jersey are required to follow the travel advice as outlined on Gov.je.

The link to the survey will be published on Gov.je shortly and communicated to the media through the usual channels.