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Deputy Catherine Curtis
Chair – Children, Education and Home Affairs Scrutiny Panel

Sent by email only

18 June 2025

Dear Chair,

Switch Project and Distance Learning

Thank you for your letter of 4th June requesting further details on the Switch Project and the significant enhancements to our distance learning offer. Please see the below answers to your questions and do not hesitate to contact me again if you require further information.

Switch Project

What are the core aims of the Switch Project, and how does it align with the Department's wider strategy for supporting students with social, emotional, and mental health (SEMH) needs?

The aim of the Switch Project is to improve attendance and ascertain the barriers for children and young people that may cause persistent school refusal. The Virtual School had previously visited several schools who had developed their own projects, which supported the discussions and planning, the aim to re-engage children and young people, listening to the child and including parents and carers in the planning.

How was the La Passerelle site selected for the pilot, and how does the Switch provision offer from or complement other existing educational interventions?

The site was identified due to the building being vacant. The Switch project offers a short-term intervention whilst young people remain on the roll of their home school. It facilitates co-working between both the school, family, other agencies and the Switch staff.

What referral criteria are used to identify students for the Switch Project, and how is consistency ensured across school in the applications of these criteria?

Schools refer only after all service support has been explored by the home school and recommendations implemented, this includes SEMIT, ASCIT, CAMHS, EWO, ARPs, OT, EP and adjustments to learning needs if they had been identified on a RON, have been implemented and a chronology of evidence provided. The home school shares evidence of strategies that have been provided and implemented to manage anxieties.

In the cases where this has still resulted in disengagement, school will involve parents and carers to explore the Switch Project as a collaborative, mutually agreed referral. Without this agreement the placement will not be continued.

How does the programme adapt for children with conditions such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), who may not always be able to modify certain behaviours?

As outlined in the initial referral process, home schools must ensure that they have included specialist reports and advice from those professionals they have referred to, and those within their specific field provide strategies which will be adopted by all agencies who work with the pupils.

The recommendations are transferable, and all agencies should refer to recommendations to ensure a consistent approach.

Switch Project will therefore not duplicate work but rather acknowledge the stress levels and anxiety that a broken school placement can have on all children, and the sense of rejection and management of the current presentation of the student and determine what are the root causes.

Switch requires homeschools to be actively involved in the restorative work as well as supporting the home school transfer on transition.

To what extent are conditions within a pupil's home school (e.g. environment, staffing or policies) assessed to determine whether they contribute to the behaviours prompting referral?

This would be something that the homeschool would determine and which they would reference on the referral form with the consent of the family and pupil. The initial meeting with the family is the key meeting where all the considerations are discussed and agreed.

What support is provided to home schools during a pupil's placement at Switch, and how is reintegration planned and managed?

Following the initial referral, it is agreed between the home school and Switch who the key contact would be to ensure that daily / weekly communication is consistent. For example, the school Special education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) or Additional Resource Provision (ARP) Manager. The school provide a member of staff to spend time with Switch and the pupil and maintain strong links. These steps for reintegration are therefore carefully planned and include families and children.

How are parents and carers involved in the Switch process, and how is the pupil voice incorporated into placement planning and review?

The purpose of Switch is to ensure that parents and carers are fully informed from the very beginning and that the home school involves the families and children throughout the referral process.

The referral form is completed together in a TAF (Team Around the Family meeting) and the initial meeting with Switch is for family and pupils only. The bespoke offer is agreed, and families are encouraged to attend sessions, if possible, to feel fully included in the process.

Child voice is important in establishing and formulating a workable plan and Children and families must want to work with Switch in order for it to be successful

What specific training is delivered to school-based staff through the Switch programme, and what feedback has been received on its effectiveness?

Currently there has been no request from schools for additional training and any training would be specific to the pupil's case

What evidence-based approaches underpin the Switch curriculum, including the use of skateboarding as a learning tool, and how is trauma informed practice embedded in the delivery?

The curriculum is in line with the La Passerelle School curriculum and follows the same pathways academic, vocational, nurture, innovative. These lessons are delivered by school subject specialists and adapted in accordance with RON recommendations or alternatively as most pupils do not have a RON, the baseline data is provided by the home school to inform this area. Skate School is part of a research project which is linked to a school in Canada. It is a structured, trauma informed skateboarding programme which combines physical activity, brain education and social connection.

How is pupil progress measured during the placement, and what outcomes are being used to evaluate the success of the pilot?

The SWITCH project is currently in its first Pilot phase, a full evaluation of the first cohort will be taking place at the end of July. This will include feedback from the young people, parents & carers, schools and broader professionals. A key focus will be on student well-being, attendance and re-integration. The long-term sustainability will be built into the broader focus on the requirements for SEMH support on island.

How does the Switch Project coordinate with other services to ensure joined-up support for participating students?

It is important to reach out to alternative providers and services to explore emerging needs which will build on what has already been accessed. Information of all agencies is shared by the school at referral.

What plans are in place to evaluate, report on, and potentially expand the Switch Project, and how is its long-term sustainability being assessed?

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Distance Learning

What was the rationale for equalising the maintenance grant levels for distance learning students and who studying off-island, given the differences in living costs and potential income opportunities?

Distance learning offers flexible access to education, this is particularly beneficial for individuals who need to balance study with work, family or other commitments. While there are options to study locally, the range of subjects are limited. Expanding access to distance learning through increased financial support increases choice and opportunity for those who do not wish to or are unable to leave Jersey for an extended period to undertake study.

This fits firmly within the broader ambition to support lifelong learning by enabling people to upskill throughout their lives regardless of location or circumstance.

The maintenance grant for distance learning students is now equal to that of students studying in-person at a Jersey-based education provider.

For campus-based students there are 3 classifications of student which determine the grant awarded. This differentiates between a dependent student undertaking a course in Jersey and a dependent student undertaking a course elsewhere.

To be eligible for a distance learning grant, a student must be a resident of Jersey. Further, the definition of a distance learning course is one where the institution does not require a student to attend a particular place for its provision. Therefore, the classification of 'Dependent student undertaking a course elsewhere than in Jersey' does not apply in the case of a distance learning course.

The below tables show the types of student description that apply and the corresponding maximum maintenance grant available for comparison.

Campus-based (in-person) study	
Student Description	Maximum Maintenance Grant
Dependent student undertaking a course elsewhere than in Jersey	£9,138
Dependent student undertaking a course in Jersey	£8,540
Independent student undertaking a course in Jersey or elsewhere	£9,138

Distance Learning	
Student Description	Maximum Maintenance Grant
Dependent student undertaking a distance learning course	£8,540
Independent student undertaking a distance learning course	£9,138

What evidence or research informed the decision to amend the grant structure for distance learning students?

A commitment to explore funding options for distance learning arose from the adoption of Proposition P.12/2024 as amended.¹ The original proposition highlighted the considerable inequities in the financial support available to distance learning students compared to those who study in person at a university.²

The following aspects were considered in development of the new policy:

The unfairness of continuing to provide less financial support to distance learning students studying an equivalent course at the same intensity as those studying on a campus.

Acknowledgement that time spent studying is time that cannot be spent in paid employment. For example, part-time study at 50% intensity could require up to 18 hours per week devoted to study over 6 years.³ This considerably limits capacity to engage in paid employment and has implications for the affordability of this mode of study.

Cost pressure is an identified risk on the Office for Student's ("OfS") 'Equality of Opportunity Register'.⁴ The OfS, note that course attendance, continuation and attainment rates are negatively impacted where students need to undertake high hours of paid employment to support themselves.

The limited range of subjects available on island restricts choice for those who cannot or do not wish to leave Jersey for an extended period of time. There are around 10 undergraduate degree subjects available to study locally from 3 providers.⁵ By comparison, at the time of writing, around 386 distance learning courses offered by 37 providers are advertised on the Universities and Colleges Administration Service (UCAS).⁶

¹ [P-12-2024-Amd.pdf](#)

² [P-12-2024.pdf](#)

³ 1 credit is deemed the equivalent of 10 notional hours of learning. [Advice on Academic Credit Arrangements](#). A typical academic year attracts 120 credits over a 30.3 week period ([Average duration](#) of an academic year). This equates to 1,200 hours of full-time study or around 32-36 hours per week. [How Long Does it Take to Complete an Online Course?](#)

⁴ [Risk 10: Cost pressures - Office for Students](#)

⁵ Courses in: Business, accounting, childhood studies, civil engineering, construction, psychology, digital, sport, legal, nursing and midwifery through Highlands College, Institute of Law and Jersey General Hospital

⁶ [Search - UCAS](#) Filtered by 'distance learning' for the 2026/7 academic year

Around 50 enquiries related to distance learning are made to student finance each year. However, typically less than half of these individuals fully progress their application. This may indicate that the previous level of financial support was insufficient to enable those exploring distance learning to afford this option.

Direct feedback from applicants stating distance learning was the only suitable option for their circumstances but they were placed at financial disadvantage to others studying an equivalent course. This impacted their ability to afford and therefore access higher education.

Why does the updated policy continue to include the additional London weighting component and how is it justified for students not residing in London?

The London component does not apply to distance learning students.

Under Article 12 of Part 3 of the Education (Grants and Allowances) (Jersey) Order 2018, a “maintenance grant” is defined as a grant awarded under Articles 13B, 13BA, 13C, or 13CA. These articles do not apply to students on distance learning courses.

Article 13D (also in Part 3) applies only if:

- (a) the student is studying at an institution located in London, and
- (b) the student has been awarded a maintenance grant as defined above.

Because students on distance learning courses are not eligible for a maintenance grant under this definition, Article 13D does not apply to them.

Eligibility for maintenance grants for a distance learning course are outlined in the ‘Schedule, Distance Learning Courses’ of the Order.

Are clinical placement costs and associated travel expenses included or supported within the revised grant framework, and if so, under what conditions?

The clinical component grant does not apply to distance learning courses.

The definition of a distance learning course is outlined in Article 11(3) of the Education (Grants and Allowances) (Jersey) Order 2018, ‘A “distance learning course” is a course in respect of which an institution does not require a student to attend a particular place for its provision.’⁷

A mandatory clinical placement would require a student to attend a particular place for their course provision and as such, would not meet the definition of a distance learning course.

Under the new arrangements, are distance learning students required to remain resident in Jersey for the duration of their course to remain eligible for funding?

Yes. To be eligible for a grant a student must be ordinarily resident in Jersey.

What consideration has been given to the impact of these changes on students from income support households, particularly those whose study patterns may differ?

Increasing the grant available for distance learning does not change the way student grants interact with income support assessments.

Where students from an income support household receive a grant from student finance (regardless of study mode) they are required to submit a change of circumstances form. Benefit entitlement will continue to be adjusted based on the amount of grant they receive during term times.

⁷ [Education \(Grants and Allowances\) \(Jersey\) Order 2018](#)

The requirement to work will continue to be tailored to the students' circumstances. The number of hours they are required to work (if they continue to be included in the income support household calculation) will be adjusted according to their study commitments.

What is the Department's assessment of the potential effect these changes may have on applications to University College Jersey (UCJ) and local higher education uptake?

Enhanced funding could encourage more students to consider distance learning. This may create an opportunity for the college and other local providers to explore additional ways to deliver their education provision to reach a broader student population.

A student's decision of where and how to study is highly individual and influenced by a range of personal factors. These may include a preference for a specific institution, the need to remain on-island, the desire to experience life elsewhere, or the requirement for flexible study options to accommodate other commitments, something often facilitated by distance learning.

Some students already choose to study off-island, even when the same subject is available locally. This suggests that factors such as course content, institutional reputation, or location play a significant role in their decision-making. Increased funding for distance learning is expected to impact local enrolments only where students who would have otherwise studied locally opt for the same course via distance learning instead. Such a shift would indicate a previously unmet need, likely due to disparities in financial support for different modes of study.

Additionally, the use of credit in the distance learning grant calculation along with equitable financial support presents opportunities for students to benefit from credit accumulation and transfer, also known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).⁸ This flexibility could allow students to begin a course via distance learning and, if their circumstances change, potentially transfer to a local provider to complete their studies or vice versa, subject to the institution's RPL policies.⁹

What steps are being taken to ensure students and families are fully informed about the updated eligibility criteria and funding structures?

Announcements have been made and shared on the various social media channels of Student Finance, Children Young People Education and Skills, the Department for the Economy and the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning.

A formal [press release](#) has been issued to and reported on by local media and the dedicated Student Finance [website](#) has also been updated to reflect the changes.¹⁰

Will the Department publish a breakdown of how cost-of-living and study-related expenses were factored into the review grant model?

The objective of the review of distance learning grants was to establish parity of funding across the various modes of study available to students. This has been achieved by setting the maximum grants available at the same level for both distance learning and in-person learning.

The use of credit as a measure of study intensity means that the grant awarded for distance learning students will be appropriately tailored to their circumstances. This means they will be no better or worse off financially than a student studying an equivalent course at a university.

Incorporating credit into the grant calculation provides improved flexibility for students who may wish to take breaks or vary their study intensity over time.

⁸ [what-is-credit-guide-for-students.pdf](#) Credit represents a unit of measurement that reflects the amount of learning or workload required for a course or module at a particular level.

⁹ [Making Use of Credit: A Companion to the Higher Education Credit Framework for England](#) and [Higher Education Credit Framework for England: Advice on Academic Credit Arrangements](#)

¹⁰ [Student Finance guidance and application](#)

Previously, the calculation assumed a consistent level of study intensity throughout the entire duration of the degree. As some courses can allow up to 16 years for completion, this approach was overly rigid. Under the former system, students who temporarily paused their studies could, in certain circumstances, be considered to have withdrawn from their course and required to repay part of their grant, even where they had completed the learning associated with that funding.

Cost of living and study related expenses for all modes of study have been considered and responded to in the following ways:

An inflation linked increase of 5.2% to the income thresholds that determine the amount of grant awarded

An inflation linked increase of 2.5% to the maintenance grant and clinical grant

An increase of 3.1% in the maximum tuition fee grant to match the new higher fee cap in England and Wales

All of the above changes apply to courses starting on or after 1st September 2025

How will the impact of the new distance learning funding policy be monitored and evaluated over time?

The following data will be monitored and compared to trends prior to the changes coming into effect.

- The number of enquiries related to distance learning courses made to student finance
- The percentage of these enquiries that progress to a completed application
- The percentage of students that withdraw from or abandon their course¹¹
- Feedback from prospective students either directly or through the appeals process

Yours sincerely,



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¹¹ Abandonment or withdrawal in this context means not fully completing a portion of study such as a module and any associated assessment.