

IMPORTANT: i) FEBRUARY 2015 WINDOW - SPECIFIC DESIGNATION APPLICATIONS FOR HND AND HNC COURSES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2015/16; ii) CONFIRMATION OF POSITION ON ANNUAL REDESIGNATIONS; iii) CHANGE OF POLICY REGARDING CHANGES OF DESIGNATED DELIVERY LOCATION

This e-mail contains important information for new or existing providers who may have been considering submitting applications for specific designation of new HND and/or HNC courses in the February 2015 window. It also provides details of a change of policy that applies when providers wish to change their designated delivery location; and provides information about annual re-designations.

Improving Delivery of Alternative Provider Higher Education

The National Audit Office investigation into financial support for students at alternative providers (2 December 2014) flagged particular concerns with alternative higher education provision. We have already taken action to tighten controls within the system but we need to go further.

On the 29th January, Greg Clark, the Minister of State for Universities, Science and Cities, announced a number of improvements to strengthen the specific course designation process. These include a number of important changes – the majority of which are highlighted in the **Written Ministerial Statement** that is attached to this document.

i) HND and HNC applications

In addition, this note is to notify providers that until such time as the Department has sufficient time to assess the impact of the changes that have been announced, and those already implemented, the Department has decided not to accept any applications to designate Higher National Diploma / Higher National Certificate courses - until such time as we can fully assess the overall impact of the changes we are making. There has already been a significant expansion of HND/C courses. In the meantime, any HND/C courses designated for 2014/15 under the new specific designation process will continue to attract HE student support subject to providers complying with the conditions of designation. However, the Department retains the right to review specific designation at any time in order to protect the student or public interest.

February Application Window

The application window that opens on 2nd February for academic year 2015/16 will therefore not be open for Higher National Diploma of Higher National Certificate courses. Further information on the application window is available on the Higher Education Council for England (HEFCE) website at:

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/reg/desig/>

ii) ANNUAL REDESIGNATIONS

Regarding the first bullet in the WMS regarding on annual re-designation, designations will be confirmed, if appropriate, following successful completion of the Annual Monitoring process. You will shortly be notified as to whether you continue to meet the range of ongoing conditions as specified in the Departmental Guidance, which will entitle you to continue with specific course designation for the remainder of the 2014/15 academic year, and the 2015/16 academic year. Decisions for future years will be dependent upon satisfaction of the requirements and standards of the annual monitoring process that will follow again next year, and in the years that follow. Different arrangements will apply to those providers that hold degree awarding powers.

iii) Change of Location:

This email is to also notify you of a change of policy that applies when providers wish to change their designated delivery location or campus. This change takes effect immediately.

Providers that wish to change the location of an already designated course must apply to the Department, through a change of circumstances form (available on the HEFCE website) that must be sent to and received by HEFCE at least 3 months in advance of the proposed change of location taking place.

Apart from exceptional circumstances beyond a Provider's control e.g. a building becoming unsafe necessitating urgent action, in the event that a provider fails to give the Department the required 3 months' notice, not only will the new location not be designated for new students, the Secretary of State will also reserve the right to consider withdrawing student support from students that started to study at the previous location.

The Department does not want providers to be discouraged, or prevented from, moving courses that are already designated to new locations, but this must be done in a controlled and well managed way – with providers giving the Department sufficient notice of an impending move. This allows the Department to check with the validating organisation or awarding body that the new premises have been approved.