We are very grateful for all the work that universities have been doing in the fight against Coronavirus. This is happening in so many different ways, and we are very proud to be ministers of the sector at a time when you are pulling together in spite of other challenges you face. Every single day, we are hearing of new great activities in which you are leading the way – you are making a real difference.

Crucially, you are helping to mobilise health students including nursing, allied health and medical students to work in hospitals and core facilities. Many of you have offered vital services such as lab space and accommodation, applying your research expertise to develop the medicine and equipment needed to combat the virus, donating PPE and organising volunteers to help the front-line services. It is not lost on us that this effort is being made while you are working hard to provide continuity and support for students and staff. We would like to take this opportunity to stress that we do not underestimate the huge challenges you are facing.

Many of you are keen to know how you can help with the immediate needs at the front-line. We are pleased that Universities UK (UUK), together with GuildHE, Universities Scotland, Universities Wales and institutions in Northern Ireland are facilitating and coordinating some of the central needs and support.

We know that UUK have asked members in England to provide a central contact point and would encourage any universities that have not yet done this to please provide [Helena.franklin@universitiesuk.ac.uk](mailto:Helena.franklin@universitiesuk.ac.uk) with your contact details. UUK has set up a site at [https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/covid19/supporting-national-effort/Pages/how-universities-can-support-the-national-effort-against-covid-19.aspx](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/covid19/supporting-national-effort/Pages/how-universities-can-support-the-national-effort-against-covid-19.aspx) which will contain information and guidance on some of the ways that universities can continue to help. We wanted to draw your attention to some of the particular areas that currently need your support.
These mainly include:

- **Equipment**, particularly Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) – including the research, manufacturing, sourcing, decontamination, training and delivery to NHS sites - but also more general hand sanitizer, wipes, swabs, etc needed for testing. The NHS is working with UUK, university purchasing consortia and other organisations to highlight and address these requests.

- **Accommodation**, in particular rooms for NHS staff to use or for patients who are eligible for discharge or with non-intensive healthcare needs, and for identified vulnerable groups more generally (eg rough sleepers). Generally, this accommodation would need to be a self-contained block/property without students. The UUK is working with the NHS and other departments to support the identification of relevant accommodation.

- **Workforce**, the NHS has a need for registered and unregistered healthcare workers, as well as a range of key roles in non-clinical areas to help to deliver essential patient care. You can support NHS England in the following ways:
  - Individuals seeking to offer their time for free, should visit: https://www.goodsamapp.org/nhs
  - Clinicians wishing to return to clinical practice or to support the telephone 111 service and who hold a professional registration should contact their regulator: https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/returning-clinicians/
  - Clinicians currently on the register, but not already working in the NHS should visit NHS Professionals: https://www.nhsprofessionals.nhs.uk/rapid-response
  - Individuals interested in supporting the Nightingale Hospitals should visit: https://www.nhsprofessionals.nhs.uk/nightingale

- **Increase testing capacity.** On 2 April 2020, the government announced its new national testing strategy, including a commitment to deliver 100,000 tests a day by the end of the month, and many more beyond that. We want universities to help us in meeting that challenge by helping to:
  - Supply materials and equipment
  - Help supply complete testing methods
  - Provide new testing methods in 4 key areas
  - Provide laboratory capacity.

Further information and an online portal through which universities can offer support can be found here:
We also recognise that universities are focusing research efforts on COVID 19 and there are already a number of great examples which demonstrate the impact of UK science, research and innovation will have on understanding, diagnosing and treating people with the virus. We are grateful for the energy and initiative coming from the UK’s research community and the way in which you are capitalising on collaborations with business. We anticipate that we will continue to call on the community to address specific challenges, as we already have through UKRI, NIHR and others. There is also scope for universities to offer the use of research labs and researchers to support other relevant strands of work.

Thank you again for your rapid and wholehearted support as the nation faces this challenge. We recognise that you are doing this whilst facing your own pressures, and we will continue to work with you to help provide clarity on what support you may be able to apply for.

MICHELLE DONELAN MP
Minister of State for Universities

AMANDA SOLLOWAY MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Minister for Science, Research and Innovation