

# Expression of interest

# Title: Research to understand progress during the 2020/21 academic year

**Project reference: DFERPPU 20-21/016**

**Deadline for Expressions of Interest: 23:59 Wednesday 29th July 2020**

## Summary

Expressions of Interest (EOI) are sought for research to understand the impact which COVID-19 disruption has had on the academic development of children and young people, as well as to understand how pupils are progressing over the course of the 2020/21 academic year.

The Expression of Interest was posted **Wednesday 22nd July 2020**.

## Background

COVID-19 has caused disruption to the education of school children in England. DfE (the Department) is seeking to better understand, quantitatively, the impact of this disruption on attainment and progress across the next academic year.

School is the best place for children and young people to learn, and disruption to schooling is likely to have led to missed learning, especially for those who face additional barriers or disadvantages. Understanding the scale of missed learning, its drivers, and how it is recovered over the next academic year, is a key research priority for the Department to help development of strategic policy for supporting the school system.

To support all children and young people to catch up, the government has announced a £1 billion catch-up package for the academic year 2020/21. This includes a one-off universal £650 million catch-up premium for the 2020/21 academic year to ensure that schools have the support they need to help all pupils make up for lost teaching time. This funding will be allocated to all schools on a per pupil or per place basis, and school leaders will have discretion over how to use this funding to best support the needs of their students. The government’s plan is for all pupils, in all year groups, to return to school full-time from the beginning of the autumn term.

*Defining and measuring the impact of lost time in education*

The Department is interested in research to help understand the quantitative impact of lost time in education on educational development, as well as how learning is recovering in the next academic year.

The Department believe that commercially available baseline and progress tests are the most appropriate source of additional data on this topic. These assessments often provide a baseline at the beginning of the academic year, often have multiple testing points (e.g. termly) throughout the academic year, and would enable comparisons to be made to previous cohorts. Ideally, such data would be shared with the Department to link at pupil-level to the Department’s rich datasets including the [national pupil database](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-pupil-database) (NPD) for further in-depth analysis and breakdowns by various characteristics.

As such, the Department is seeking Expressions of Interest to establish suitable data-sharing or research arrangements to allow the analysis of such commercial assessment data in 2020/21.

It is important to note that the Department’s interest in this data is purely for research purposes – any data collected from a sample of schools would definitively not be used for accountability purposes, but used exclusively for research and evaluation purposes to inform how best the Department supports the sector to recover from disruption caused by COVID-19.

## Research aims

The aim of this research is to answer two important questions:

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| 1. **What is the quantitative scale of the impact of COVID-19 on the educational progress of children and young people?** 2. **To what extent are pupils making progress over the course of the 2020/21 academic year to recover lost learning?** |

Across both of these two main research questions, the Department would be interested to understand:

* How any lost progress can be expressed in a ‘common currency’ such as GCSE grades or months of progress
* how any lost progress varies across different subjects and skills (possibly including maths, English and measures of general aptitude or cognitive skill)
* how any lost progress, and progress across the next school year, differs across groups of children (including key disadvantage characteristics such as FSM-eligibility, SEND and CiN status; geographic location; school-type; school phase; cohort/year groups)
* the main pupil-level and school-level factors driving any lost progress, and its recovery, following disruption to education because of COVID-19

## Methodology

The Department is open to consider a range of methodologies to address the key research questions above, and would be interested to hear from organisations or consortia who would be able to address some or all of the Department’s research priorities.

In an invitation to tender (ITT) the Department will ask bidders to set out a proposed methodology, along with a rationale for a recommended approach. The Department is also willing to adjust an approach to align with, or supplement, any existing complementary research that interested parties are currently planning to answer the Department’s key research questions.

The Department anticipates that there may be several ways to answer the key research questions – possibly under two broad approaches:

1. Using existing data from assessments that schools will be completing in September and across the year, and supplementing this with additional assessments across the year to ensure a balanced sample.
2. Conducting a bespoke research programme in a representative sample of schools, using commercially available assessments, to understand progress across the school year.

The Department **does *not* expect EOIs to contain a specification or methodology for research**. This EOI is looking to establish if interested parties are able to meet the following basic criteria, in order to then make appropriate invitations to tender.

## Criteria for expressions of interest

#### Quantitative assessment

Interested parties must be able to make use of high quality, standardised assessment of pupils in the 2020/21 academic year to make quantitative estimates of the impacts of time out of school due to COVID-19 on academic progress. Ideally, interested parties **should be able to analyse assessment data collected at more than one point in the 2020/21 academic year in order to estimate the academic progress that children are making.**

#### Comparability

Interested parties must have access to comparable historical assessment results from previous years, in order to compare cohorts affected by COVID-19 to cohorts from previous years. Ideally, this historical data should be from multiple points (e.g. termly) during the school year, to provide a benchmark estimate of the amount of progress previous cohorts made across the school year.

#### Sample size and representativeness

Interested parties must be able to ensure that assessments are taken by a sufficiently large and representative sample of children in 2020/21 to make meaningful inferences about the impact of COVID-19 in the population, as well as for specific subgroups of interest.

#### Deliverability in autumn term 2020

Interested parties should be able to collect a first round of assessment data in a sample of schools in the autumn term of 2020/21 academic year, with a strong preference for assessment in the first half-term. Interested Parties will need to demonstrate that they can work constructively with the sector, avoiding any unnecessary burdens on schools as they welcome back all pupils from September, as well as finding ways to benefit schools who take part in any research to encourage participation.

#### Test quality

Interested parties should expect to be asked to provide technical information on quality of the assessments they propose for use in research ifthey are invited to tender.

#### Reporting

Interested parties should be able to report their initial findings promptly after each test point.

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| **Expressions of Interest should succinctly confirm the ability of an interested party to meet the above set of criteria, rather than present a methodology for research.** |

## Assessing Expressions of Interest

Expressions of interest will be assessed against the following criteria:

* Evidence of an ability to meet the criteria set out in the criteria for research section.
* Evidence of an understanding of the Department’s requirements, and demonstration of knowledge of the issues surrounding monitoring and measuring the impact of COVID-19 disruption on educational progress.
* Evidence of organisational capacity and project management skills to deliver the project in the specified timescales, particularly given the challenging operational context within which schools are operating.

The following scoring will apply for Expressions of Interest:

1. No evidence/very poor
2. Poor evidence
3. Some evidence
4. Good evidence
5. Excellent evidence

**Expressions of Interests submitted must be no more than 1500 words overall**; this includes any website links. Anything longer will be disregarded.

## Timing

* Deadline for EOIs – 23.59 Wednesday 29th July 2020
* Review EOIs – Thursday 30th July 2020
* Invitations to Tender (ITT) issued – Monday 3rd August 2020
* Deadline for ITT – Friday 14th August 2020

## How to submit an Expression of Interest

You must submit an EOI in order to be considered to be invited to tender. To do so, please complete the NEW EOI Form which can be found under attachments. A submission of an EOI does not guarantee an invitation to tender and the Department does not routinely advise organisations that they have not been successful in being invited to tender. Feedback is however available on request.

By submitting an Expression of Interest the Department is not bound in any way and does not have to accept any submission that does not meet the requirements set out within this document, or where a decision is taken to not continue the with procurement exercise.

| **Closing date for EOIs: 23:59 Wednesday 29th July 2020**  **Send your EOI form to: yasmin.plummer@education.gov.uk** |
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