

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SECURITY  
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER  
ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 10th SEPTEMBER 2019**

**Question**

Further to the decision that additional courses will not be added to the Island's Critical Skills list, will the Minister –

- (a) explain what consideration was given, prior to this decision, as to whether maintaining the current list limits the range of students that can access funding through Income Support for courses which would enable them to enter employment requiring a degree and consequently avoid remaining on Income Support or in lower-paid employment for the long term; and
- (b) agree to re-visit this decision, given that the criteria for a course to be put on the list are in guidelines under her control, and lift the restrictions on the courses that may be listed to ensure that low-income mature students are able to meet both their own needs and those of the Island in improving the skills of the resident workforce and thereby reducing any reliance on imported skills?

**Answer**

Income support claimants are free to undertake study at any level and still claim Income Support on condition that they continue to meet any work requirement required under the Income Support legislation.

The Island's Critical Skills list details those courses that award a qualification on completion that is directly linked to specific roles in the island where there is clear evidence of a shortage of local workers. Other courses may be added to the list by the Minister if she considers that the qualification will directly meet a critical need in Jersey's job market. At present, the Highlands courses that are included are

- Access to Science (Nursing) course required for progression to the Nursing degree
- Nursing degree (including mental health nursing)
- Jersey Graduate Teacher Training Programme.
- Social Work degree

Students of any age on these courses are exempt from the work requirement of income support.

Degree level students aged under 22 at the start of their course are exempt from the work requirement of income support as are students undertaking any further or higher education course aged under 25 at the start of their course if the student is a care leaver or has previously had their secondary level education severely disrupted.

Other income support claimants are fully or partly exempt from the work requirement for other reasons and these claimants are also able to enrol on courses. For example, the parent of a child under nursery age is fully exempt from the work condition. The parent of a child of nursery or primary school age has reduced work requirements.

Income support claimants who do not fall into these categories can gain qualifications by studying part-time, undertaking evening courses or distance learning, such as Open University qualifications, alongside fulfilling their work requirements under Income Support.

In addition to the critical skills courses listed above, Highlands College currently offers two year and three year full time courses in business management, financial services, social sciences and childhood studies. Two year courses are also available in IT and sports studies.

In addition to income support, financial support is available to any local resident undertaking degree level studies at Highlands from the Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department. An eligible mature student in a household with a total income below £50,000 would receive a maintenance grant of £7,500 pa.

The Minister reviewed the Critical Skills List on the 14/08/2019. Having taken advice from skills professionals from the Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department and workforce managers from operational departments, and drawing on their knowledge of the local labour market, the Minister confirmed that the list matches current needs.

The Minister has no plans to revisit this decision in the near future but the critical skills list is kept under regular review to respond to changing needs.