

Vice-Principal Student Experience, Teaching and Learning's report to Senate

Green Paper - Higher education: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice

The [Government's Green Paper on the future of Higher Education](#) was published on 06 November 2015. The consultation deadline is 15 January 2016, and QMUL will be responding as an institution and will contribute to responses made by UUK, Russell Group and HESA.

There are a number of significant proposals in the paper, not least the proposal to create an Office for Students (OfS), which would replace HEFCE and OFFA. Concentrating on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). The proposal is that institutions will be assessed across four key categories: teaching quality, learning environment, student outcomes and learning gain. The full definitions of these categories and related metrics are not yet clear, and a more expansive set of metrics will be developed in due course, with a technical consultation scheduled for 2016. I would expect some alignment between the metrics and the Competition and Markets Authority's published guidance on how consumer protection law applies to higher education providers. TEF will be phased in, with the first iteration likely to occur in 2016. Institutions with a valid and successful review from the QAA would be allowed to raise their fees for Home UG students in line with inflation for 2017/18. Thereafter, additional TEF "Levels" would be introduced. Institutions applying for them would be assessed according to "a common set of metrics derived from quality assured national datasets and benchmarked in a transparent and fair way across all providers". Those metrics would be supplemented and contextualised by additional information, including a narrative statement, provided by institutions. Each Level would carry additional financial (HEIs could raise fees further) and reputational incentives.

Throughout, the paper refers to a commitment to widening access, and indicates that TEF metrics will be "broken down and reported by disadvantaged backgrounds and under-represented groups". It remains to be seen how and whether the framework will encourage institutions to engage with WP. The paper does note that UCAS is consulting with the sector on the implementation of "name blind" applications to higher education from September 2017.

Review of information about learning and teaching, and the student experience

HEFCE and its equivalent funding bodies in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are conducting a consultation on a proposal to improve information about learning and teaching, and the student experience. They are consulting on:

- Changes to the Unistats website and the Key Information Set for 2017
- Information to be published by institutions about their courses for 2017
- Changes to the National Student Survey for 2017
- Potential changes to information after 2017.

ARCS is coordinating our internal consultation, with a small working group coming together to finalise our response to HEFCE, the deadline for which is 04 December 2015. Further information can be found at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2015/201524/>

Higher and Degree Apprenticeships

QMSE has given its backing to further exploration of the potential to develop Higher and Degree Apprenticeships – programmes that offer an apprentice the opportunity to combine working with studying for a work-based academic and vocational high-level qualifications. Information on the apprenticeships can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sfa-higher-and-degree-apprenticeships>

Grade Point Averages

QMSE has agreed to explore the possibility of moving to a grade point average (GPA) system in the classification of degrees. The GPA would sit alongside the honours classification in the first instance. GPA is being used increasingly across the HE sector to provide greater granularity and improve student engagement but, of course, we need to ensure that we're confident of its merits in our context.

Contextualised Admissions

Following discussion at the OFFA Access Monitoring Group, the group that oversees our commitment to widening participation, work is continuing on a project to develop a contextualised admissions policy for QMUL. A review of current practice across Russell Group institutions is under way to inform our activity. Progress and recommendations will be considered at the Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Group in December.

Student Surveys: QMSS and Action planning

The Queen Mary Student Survey closed on Friday 30 October, with a response rate of 21%. Over 1600 returning undergraduates took part in the survey - almost double the number of respondents in 2014. We are currently working to ensure that messages from QMSS and external surveys are relayed to students more regularly, and we will be launching a campaign to highlight the impact of student feedback in January.

Prevent

Section 26 of the Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015 places a duty on QMUL to give appropriate weight, considered against all other factors in the course of its business, to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The Government issued revised guidance for higher education institutions on the Prevent duty in August 2015 and delegated HEFCE as 'monitoring authority'. HEFCE has consulted with HEIs on the process for monitoring compliance. HEFCE is proposing that during December 2015 and January 2016, all higher education institutions to send a preliminary self-assessment report of their current level of compliance with the Prevent duty guidance, and that, thereafter, institutions will be required to report annually. A Task and Finish Group was set up to prepare QMUL's response to the Prevent duty. That response has now been forwarded to HEFCE, and we now await feedback.

We are keen, while we respond to HEFCE and comply with the Act, to ensure that a balance is struck between fulfilling the responsibility to promote community cohesion and protecting the role of a university as a place for debate and freedom of expression. QMUL has been alert to issues connected to

external speakers for a number of years and has a well-defined policy and process in place to ensure that freedom of speech is exercised in a way that does not contravene existing laws in relation to hate speech or inciting violence.

Further information on Prevent can be found at: <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/prevent/>

Learning Gain

QMUL is part of a Russell Group consortium, led by the University of Warwick, that has secured funding from HEFCE to run a three year pilot project to measure learning gain. In all, HEFCE funded 12 projects, with over 70 institutions taking part. HEFCE defines learning gain as the improvement in knowledge, skills, work-readiness and personal development made by students during their time spent in higher education. The project we are involved in has four distinct work packages:

One relates to curriculum, and asks

- 1) Is it possible to develop a range of generic tools to measure learning gain that apply across a range of subjects?

Three relate to employability, specially, the question “How can validity of learning gain in employability be assessed through alternative measures?” The packages are

- 2) Developing students’ ability to articulate and describe their strengths to graduate recruiters (via the “Realise 2” instrument)
- 3) Career adaptability
- 4) International experience

For more on Learning Gains, see:

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/news/newsarchive/2015/Name,105306,en.html>