



Senate

Paper Title	President and Principal's Report to Senate
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to consider the attached report.
Points for Senate members to note and further information	<p>The President and Principal provides a written report to each meeting of Senate. This provides an opportunity to highlight key issues and developments to Senate members, for information and also discussion at the meeting as appropriate.</p> <p>This report covers the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pensions.• Bursaries.• Post-18 Funding Review.• International update.• Development of new University strategy.• Financial position.• Updates on senior personnel.
Questions for Senate to consider	N/A
Regulatory/statutory reference points	N/A
Strategy and risk	Relates to all aspects of QMUL strategy and all sections of the Risk Register.
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	For Senate only
Authors	Professor Colin Bailey, President and Principal
Sponsor	Professor Colin Bailey, President and Principal

President and Principal's Report

Meeting of Senate – 7 June 2018

1 Pensions

Senate will be aware that UCU members agreed in a national ballot to the proposal (developed through informal Acas talks between UUK and UCU negotiators) to establish a Joint Expert Panel to examine the USS 2017 pension valuation. As a result of the ballot, UCU have suspended the industrial action that was anticipated to take place during the exam period.

UUK and UCU are currently working to establish the Panel, which is due to hold its first meeting shortly. This Panel will comprise three members nominated by UCU, three by UUK and an independent chair. The terms of reference for the Panel have been agreed. The chair (who will not have voting rights) will be Joanne Segars, currently chair of LGPS Central (which pools the investments of nine large Midlands-based local authority pension funds) and has previously held a number of high-profile pensions roles, including as head of pensions at the Trades Union Congress.

Alongside these developments, UCU and UUK have agreed to withdraw the proposal for benefits reform that was passed through the Joint Negotiating Committee in January 2018. No other proposals have been put forward, as both parties are committed to the establishment of the Joint Expert Panel.

While work on the Panel continues, USS has stated that it needs to be able to demonstrate to the Pension Regulator that the scheme is sustainable. In the absence of another proposal being put forward at this point, USS has indicated that it will invoke the 'cost-sharing' rule, whereby the increase to contributions required to maintain existing benefits based on the current valuation will be split 35:65 between members and employers respectively. Based on current estimates this would mean that from April 2019, contributions from universities could increase from 18% to 25%, while member contributions could increase from 8% to 11.7%.

For Queen Mary, this would equate to an annual additional cost of £9.6m. This will represent a significant challenge to this University, as it will to all institutions that are part of the USS scheme. QMSE has begun to undertake planning work to address such a cost increase, which will include consideration of ways to increase our income and looking closely at our entire cost base.

The Joint Expert Panel is due to report in September/October 2018, and their work may mean that a new proposal is put forward and the increases noted above may only need to be in place for a short time, if at all. However, it would be prudent to assume that the increase in contributions will be put in place from April 2019 to April 2020. I have heard from the Pensions Regulator, who appreciates the reasons why UCU and UUK may want to set up a Joint Expert Panel as a way to help resolve the issues. Importantly, they have confirmed that they are receptive to any new evidence brought to their attention by the Trustee or any other stakeholder.

I will continue to engage directly with USS, and other key stakeholders, to discuss these possible increases and their implementation, and other aspects of the scheme, in order to try to secure the best outcome for our staff and the University. I am also talking to USS about the way they communicate with pension members across the sector, to ensure that they address all the concerns that have been raised and to fully understand the anxiety, upset and frustration of staff members. In the meantime we will need to plan for the likely increase in contributions coming into force in April 2019.

Of course many of our students have been affected by the action that took place in February and March and we are working to minimise the impact of this on their studies. This involves taking steps to ensure that students are not disadvantaged in relation to their assessment, as well as covering essential material where there have been changes to scheduled contact time. I appreciate the hard work that staff in Schools, Institutes and our Academic Registry are undertaking to inform and support students.

While we are all committed to the current process with establishing the Panel, we must be aware of the difficulties that lie ahead in terms of bringing the dispute to a resolution that satisfies all parties. As a result, we must be realistic about the prospect of further industrial action next Academic Year, even though we will do all we can to avoid this and to identify a good outcome for our staff. Senate should also be aware that negotiations have been taking place regarding the national pay award for staff (on Grades 1-7), which involve UCEA for employers and UCU for all staff. There has been a sizeable gap between the positions of the negotiating parties and this issue could place further strain on industrial relations at campuses across the UK. The final pay offer tabled by UCEA would equate to 2% base increase, with a 2.8% increase for staff on lower grades. Once standard pay increments are included, which are received by the majority of staff, the average pay uplift is 3.5%.

In my recent meetings with colleagues I have heard and discussed the concerns of many staff about the USS scheme, pay and cost of living pressures (alongside a range of other issues, which I will expand upon later in the report). Mindful of this, and as part of the support we provide to colleagues, I announced last month that we will reimburse (from May 2018) standard visa fees and immigration health surcharges for staff who are Tier 2 visa holders and working in the UK. This is particularly important as it looks like health surcharges are increasing, which will be a significant additional financial burden to international staff. Queen Mary has put itself forward to take part in a pilot run by the Home Office for the new registration system for EU27 nationals. This will be purely voluntary scheme for our staff and students, but being involved in the pilot will mean that our EU27 nationals will be able to register at an earlier stage, if they would like to, and will also give us an opportunity to feedback on and help shape the process, before it is rolled out across the UK. Our participation will be confirmed when we have reviewed all the details associated with the scheme and can be reassured that it will provide the expected benefits.

2 Bursaries

I have provided updates to Council on changes to our bursary scheme, which involve an increase in the bursaries to students from families with incomes of under £15k (representing over 30% of our home undergraduate students) and a reduction in allocations to students on higher income brackets. The net decrease in overall spend on bursaries that these changes produce would be offset by more funds being allocated to activities designed to support students in terms of retention and attainment. As noted previously, the changes were based on OFFA guidance, which recommends that universities place more funding into retention, student success and widening participation.

Although the changes were well intended and had input from the Students' Union, it became clear that there was opposition from some staff and students to the plans. Following discussions with the Students' Union, we committed to setting up an additional financial assistance fund in 2018/19 and 2019/20 of £260k to support any students who are adversely affected by the changes. We agreed to monitor closely the impact of the changes and, jointly with the Students' Union, to commission a piece of research to review the evidence about the impact of bursaries across a range of comparable institutions, as well as looking further at evidence of the local impact here at Queen Mary.

I was not fully aware of the proposed changes (which were put in place over 18 months ago) until they were brought to my attention by staff and students in March. After having had a chance to reflect, and also to discuss at length with QMSE, we decided at the end of April to increase our currently advertised bursary provision, such that any new home undergraduate student starting in 2018 or 2019 from a household with an income of less than £20k per annum will receive £1,700 each year, and any student from a family with an income of between £20k and £35k will receive £1,000 per annum. This commitment will be underwritten by the University, but I have asked the Development and Alumni Engagement team to lead on fundraising to support student bursaries and I hope that all staff and students will engage with and promote that effort. This enhancement will be in addition to the transitional fund noted above.

I think that in their totality, these changes better reflect our values and allow us to properly support our students to succeed, recognising the importance of direct financial support for those students from financially-disadvantaged backgrounds.

Council will be aware that a group of students occupied the Octagon, to protest about the bursary changes. Their views were included in the discussions with the Students' Union. I hope that in future, any issues such as these that are of concern to our students can be the subject of discussion first, so that we can try and identify an agreed approach. To support this, I'm working with the Students' Union to consider ways to strengthen communications between our students and senior colleagues at the University.

3 External Environment

I provided a detailed update on developments in the external environment in my last report. A key focus since then has been on engaging with the Government's Post-18 funding review. An independent panel, chaired by Philip Augar and supported by experts from across the tertiary education sector, will provide input in to the review. The panel has invited interested parties to submit evidence to inform its work and Queen Mary's response is attached as Appendix A.

The review covers both HE and FE provision, and it is clear that one of its recommendations will be a (welcome) call for the two sectors to work much more closely together. Queen Mary is already active in this area, for example we have partnered with Newham College in submitting a bid to develop a new Institute of Technology, focussed on transportation, in Docklands. There is also a view that FE is under-resourced, and while we would be supportive in principle of a call for better funding of colleges, we are concerned that this might be addressed by transferring resources from HE. Other potential areas of concern include a potential reduction in the fee cap for Home undergraduate degrees (without any increase in grant funding) and also the potential implementation of differential fees, with caps varied across different discipline areas. I have also been informed that the ONS are examining the treatment of student loans in the public accounts. Any change to the Government accounting rules could present a significant challenge to the sector (with potential impacts on higher education budgets) if in future the expected losses on loans are counted in the national accounts as soon as the loans are issued. We will continue to watch this carefully.

Clearly any reduction in funding for universities through the review would be of major concern, particularly when set alongside some of the issues outlined in Section 1. We will continue to push the importance of an adequately funded sector, with the review needing to consider the full financial model for universities, covering not just fees but also research and engagement activities, and levels of capital funding. We will also continue to make the strongest possible case in support of the arts and humanities subjects and their importance to the functioning of a high quality research university, as well as their broader contributions

to society and the economy. We are being visited by two members of the panel (Professor Alison Wolf and Sir Ivor Martin Crewe) and this will provide an opportunity for me and other members of QMSE to raise these points directly and to hear more about the Review's direction of travel. I have also met the Chair of the review, Philip Augar.

In addition to the above, we also had a visit in April from Mark Walport, who is Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation. Mark is a hugely influential figure in research policy and funding, and has overall responsibility for a combined budget of £6bn. His visit was a great opportunity for us to make him aware of the very high quality of our research work and to discuss key issues such as the status of QR funding. Mark has written to me since the visit, noting that he was highly impressed by what he had heard about research and innovation at Queen Mary. He has offered to make a follow-up visit and we are making arrangements for this to take place.

4 International

4.1 Malta

On 18 April, we hosted a visit by the Maltese Prime Minister, Joseph Muscat. There were productive discussions about our MBBS programme in Malta, now in its first year of delivery. We affirmed our commitment to this initiative, and the Maltese delegation responded positively on our requests for support to address some of the issues that have arisen, particularly in connection with the delivery of facilities (which are the responsibility of the Maltese Government). We also talked about Queen Mary's broader involvement in shaping and delivering the Government's strategy for healthcare in their country and also the wider Mediterranean and North African region, which is an important component of our activity and presence there. The Maltese Government has agreed to provide additional funding of £1m over the next two years to support our wider involvement.

These positive discussions were reinforced by a visit to Malta, which I undertook earlier this month, along with Steve Thornton and Anthony Warrens. We had a further meeting with the Prime Minister, as well as meetings with the Health Minister, representatives of the healthcare and Life Sciences sectors, and also with the organisation that is delivering the new facilities that our programme will be using. Very importantly, we also met with students studying on the MBBS, to hear their thoughts about the programme. They expressed understandable frustrations about delays concerning the handover of facilities, which we share, but were very positive about the quality of education they are receiving.

4.2 VP International Trip to Singapore and Malaysia

In support of our emerging ASEAN sub-strategy, Professor Colin Grant visited Singapore and attended and presented at the British Council flagship conference 'Going Global' in KL, Malaysia. During the visit meetings were held with key partners in the region including University of Malaya (UM), University of Science, Malaysia (USM), National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and A*STAR (Singapore Agency for Science, Technology and Research).

Major MoUs resulting from the visit include a signing with NUS (ranked 15th and 22nd in the world in the QS and THE World University rankings respectively) in support of research in dentistry and a new agreement with A*STAR. This latter agreement sets out a commitment to develop joint research activity with both SMD and S&E, including funded joint supervision and the attachment of PhD students for up to two years at A*Star laboratories, collaborative applications for research funding calls and staff/student mobility, including research experience for undergraduates. This is a very positive development for the University.

5 New Strategy

As noted previously, the current institutional strategy is due to expire at the end of the next Academic Year. Accordingly, we will be looking to develop a new strategy for Queen Mary over the course of this calendar year. This will be a collective strategy for our University and it is therefore vital that as broad a range of colleagues as possible engage with this process. To support this engagement we are organising all-staff events in June, where we will discuss the ambitions and priorities for Queen Mary, and talk about the current landscape for higher education. These discussions will of course address the volatility of the external environment, but they will also be underpinned by a recognition of the uniqueness of the institution and a cause for confidence in our ability to continue to thrive. This will involve building on our current strengths and identifying key areas of focus to ensure that we take advantage of the opportunities that are available to us.

Following these events, we will hold a session in early July with the senior leadership group (Heads, Directors and Faculty Executive members, alongside QMSE), which will review and build upon the discussions with wider staff. Work will then be undertaken over the summer to develop a first draft, which will then be shared and discussed with staff during the autumn. We aim to have our new strategy ready for publication by January 2019.

These discussions will build on the conversations that I've had with many colleagues in recent weeks (20 School, Institute or all-staff/student meetings since February), which have covered the current and future position of the sector, and also issues such as how we take decisions, how we communicate information and how we provide opportunities for colleagues to share their thoughts and ideas.

We are also working with the Students' Union to identify the most effective ways to engage our students in these discussions. In addition, we will look to involve our alumni, particularly those who graduated between 5-10 years ago, who are still relatively close to their time at Queen Mary, but have also had time to reflect on their time studying with us.

I will provide regular updates on this process and ensure that there are opportunities for Senate to contribute to the formulation of the strategy as it goes through its development process.

6 Financial Position

The overall budget for 2018/19 has now been signed-off, following review by QMSE and then FIC and Council. Within this agreed envelope, we are considering how to prioritise our capital and revenue investments for next year, alongside the retention of contingency and funds to address in-year opportunities. An overview of these investment decisions will be provided at the next Senate meeting.

We are also moving forward with plans to secure a £160m private placement (a bond issue made directly to private investors, rather than as part of a public offering), as previously discussed and approved at Council. Of the funding secured through this route, £125m will be used to replace our existing revolving credit facilities, which have to be renewed every three years and therefore represent a risk to the institution, and £35m of the facility will be additional borrowing. This will enable us to re-finance the drawn down element of the current facility (estimated to be £34m at July 2018 year-end), provide £91m for further investment in the Estate and maintain year end cash balances of £50m (previously £15m), which is essential as a buffer in this uncertain funding environment. The top priorities for the Estate are the refurbishment and extension of the John Vane Science Centre (which is in a very poor condition) and the development of a new building at Mile End to provide a home for our growing School of Business and Management (SBM) and also new teaching facilities. SBM

is currently located in the Frances Bancroft building, which is a poor quality building that is unsuitable for the School and cannot support the required expansion.

7 Updates on Senior Personnel

Council are asked to note the following developments relating to senior colleagues:

- Professor Rebecca Lingwood, Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning), will be leaving Queen Mary in June. Rebecca has been with us since 2015, and in that time has been an incredibly valued, hard-working and respected colleague. She has provided leadership on a number of key initiatives, including the development of Queen Mary Digital (delivering postgraduate taught programmes online), our Degree Apprenticeship programmes and the QMUL Model initiative. We all thank Rebecca for her leadership and expertise, and wish her well in her new appointment as Provost at Brunel University. The process for identifying and appointing a permanent replacement for Rebecca is now underway, and options for interim leadership are being investigated.
- Following discussion and agreement at QMSE, Bill Spence has undertaken a process to appoint two Deputy Vice-Principals to support his work. I'm pleased to announce that from June 1st 2018, Professor Kavita Datta will take on the role of DVP Research (Impact) and Professor David Lee will work as DVP Research (Enterprise). Both these appointments are internal (Kavita is based in Geography, while David is based in SEMS and has held the role of Dean for Research in S&E) and will involve allocating 0.5 of their time to these new responsibilities. There are tremendous opportunities in the current period for the university to access significant new funding for research and innovation, from the Impact component of the forthcoming REF, and other impact-related funding schemes, and from the government's commitment to raise R&D spending to 2.4% of GDP, evidenced for example by large-scale investment in the Industrial Strategy and the Global Challenges Research Fund. These two new positions are explicitly designed to enhance our ability to compete for these funds, and their success will be assessed in these terms.
- In HSS Faculty, Spyros Maniatis and Valsamis Mitsilegas are coming to the end of the highly distinguished terms as Heads of CCLS and the Department of Law respectively. From the start of the next Academic Year, Professor Penny Green will take on the role of Head of the Department of Law, while Ian Walden will take on leadership of CCLS. We thank Valsamis and Spyros for their very significant contributions over recent years.
- Also in HSS, Professor Frances Bowen is leaving her role as Dean of SBM to take on a Senior Executive role at the University of East Anglia. Frances has been a fantastic leader of the School and she will be greatly missed by us all at Queen Mary.

I'm sure that Council will join me in wishing colleagues well in their new roles and thanking those who are moving on after making such significant contributions.

8 Events on Campus and Freedom of Speech

There have been no issues since the last Council meeting relating to events on campus and freedom of speech that require flagging with Council.

9 Other Matters

I will report orally to Council on other matters that may have arisen between the preparation of this report and the Meeting.

Colin Bailey, 21 May 2018

Response ID ANON-1Q26-1J6Z-N

Submitted to **Review of Post-18 Education and Funding: Call for Evidence**

Submitted on **2018-04-30 16:48:32**

Introduction

i What is your name?

Name:

Professor Colin Bailey

ii What is your email address?

Email:

principal@qmul.ac.uk

iii I am a:

Representative of my organisation (please complete iv and v below)

Answer:

iv (If applicable) My organisation is a:

Publically funded higher education provider

Other (please state):

v (If applicable) What is your organisation's name?

Organisation:

Queen Mary University of London

vi Would you like us to keep your responses confidential?

No

Priorities

1 This review will look at how Government can ensure that the post-18 education system is joined up and supported by a funding system that works for students and taxpayers. The panel would like to understand your priorities. What, if any, are your principal concerns with the current post-18 education and funding system?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish.:

- 1) To ensure a funding system for higher education which does not put a cap on student numbers, is free at the point of entry and provides equal opportunities to all students irrespective of their social background. The current higher education student funding system does provide this but is misunderstood, which has led to misleading headlines and political statements. Our major concern is that any changes to the current system, which currently works from an access perspective, may stop students from disadvantaged backgrounds going to university, driving inequality of opportunity through UK society. To put this into context, Queen Mary University of London, which is a Russell Group university, has 91% students from state schools, 60% of undergraduate students are BAME, 42% of our students are first in their family to go to university and 27% are from families where the taxable income is less than £10k per year.
- 2) To ensure that a holistic approach to funding of universities is considered, which provides long-term stability and sustainability. Under the current system, for research intensive universities like Queen Mary, publicly funded teaching (through the student loan system and teaching grant) is approximately cost-neutral, overseas students allow a surplus and research activity loses money. The overseas student income therefore cross-subsidises the research activity.
- 3) The funding system also has to ensure that major research intensive universities can sustain a diverse portfolio of subjects in terms of teaching and research. This includes providing an adequate level of funding for high-cost subjects, and also recognising the value (social, cultural, economic) of subjects such as those in the Arts and Humanities where outputs and impact can be less easy to quantify, but is no less important.
- 4) To ensure an education system (primary, secondary, further education and higher education) that is joined up. In terms of further and higher education there needs to be more interchangeable paths across further and higher education and interchangeable paths within different organisations within further and higher education.
- 5) Funding for further education needs to be increased, and there needs to be a closer relationship between further and higher education within local regions. Increased funding for further education must not be at the expense of higher education, if we are to sustain a world-class system.
- 6) The current apprenticeship levy requires review and needs to be more flexible in terms of the way it can be used.
- 7) There is a need for a national student mobility framework building on the successes of Erasmus+, to ensure that our graduates have the required skills and can thrive in a globalised economy.

Part 1: Choice and competition across a joined-up post-18 education and training sector

2 How do people make choices about what to study after 18? What information do they use and how do they choose one route over another: for instance, between academic, technical and vocational routes?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

We need to be very careful with terminology, in that there are academic routes that include technical and vocational programmes.

In terms of how people make choices at 18, this depends on their family input, social circle, school advice, role models, media reports and individual aspiration and confidence. The key age in terms of presenting opportunities to students is between the ages of 9 to 12. It is important that universities work closely with primary and secondary schools, engaging with all years to highlight the different opportunities that are available, raise ambitions, and show that a university education is open to all students who have the academic ability. At Queen Mary University of London we sponsor two local Multi-Academy Trusts, covering reception to the end of the sixth-form, as well as working with other schools both locally and nationally. It is also important to show that there are different paths within education, especially in terms of further and higher education and that it is also possible to go to university, if you wish to do so, later on in your career.

3 How do people make choices later in life about what further study to undertake?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

This will depend on a number of issues including personal circumstances, career aspirations, support from employers, and available choice. It is clear, with an ever-changing employment market driven by the fourth industrial revolution, shifting demographics, and a more mobile workforce, that there is a need for life-long learning supported by opportunities provided by further and higher education institutions.

It is important that any funding scheme should promote flexible ways of learning including part-time, distance learning, blended learning, degree apprenticeships and bespoke CPD courses developed with employers that also attract credit towards a degree.

4 In recent years we have seen continued growth in three-year degrees for 18 year-olds. Does the system offer a comprehensive range of high quality alternative routes for young people who wish to pursue a different path at this age? How can Government encourage provision across a wider range of high quality pathways to advanced academic, technical and vocational qualifications?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

In terms of higher education, the three-year (or 4-year integrated masters) residential degree programme is the best model to allow students to obtain the creativity, problem solving, communication, cultural and social awareness, confidence and academic skills that they require to flourish in an ever-changing global market. The current degree structure, and more importantly the university environment, provides students with wide-ranging opportunities and allows them to broaden their outlook on life and its possibilities.

As a global university, and responding to international competition and student requests, we have introduced more 4 year degrees that include a year abroad. These are proving very attractive to students who can see the long-term career benefit, as well as the opportunities to broaden their outlook, better understand other cultures and improve language skills.

The concern around 2-year degrees, and to some extent degree apprenticeships, is that these can be too narrow and focussed only on the academic content to get the students through the system and into defined areas of the employment market, with students missing out on the wider opportunities a university education can offer.

In terms of further education there is a public perception that following an apprenticeship route is 'second rate'. This needs to change, which can be addressed by further and higher education institutions working together regionally to have a more joined up skills agenda. The use of the 'degree apprenticeships' title and initiative can also help to bring about parity of esteem and should not be undermined.

5 The majority of universities charge the maximum possible fees for most of their courses and three-year courses remain the norm. How can Government create a more dynamic market in price and provision between universities and across the post-18 education landscape?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

University fees for UK/EU students are capped, with the costs of most courses not being covered by the regulated fees. It is also important to note that through the Office for Students teaching grants, Government provides additional funding for Band A (e.g. clinical years of studying medicine), B (e.g. laboratory-based science) and C1 (e.g. archaeology and IT) subjects: currently £10,000, £1,500 and £250 respectively per UK/EU undergraduate student/per year.

Although most courses have a £9.25k fee, data shows that publicly funded teaching at undergraduate level is approximately cost-neutral overall (including the additional funding from the teaching grant) for institutions teaching across the range of disciplines.

In terms of unregulated fees (non-UK/EU students at undergraduate, all postgraduate students), universities charge differential fees (in some cases significantly higher than the capped regulated fees) and there is a clear dynamic market and competition in terms of price. If the cap on UK/EU undergraduate fees was removed then there would be a more dynamic market. However, of course, the student loan cannot be uncapped and will therefore not match the fees (if the cap on fees was removed) which will mean that inequalities will be introduced into the system with the less privileged students unable to afford high fees that are not covered by the loan system.

It would be wrong to define the length of the degree (3 year or 4 year integrated degree) by the funding scheme. The question should be 'what is the best structure for degree courses, considering a global market?' and then look how it is funded (from the public purse and other sources).

Finally, fees should be defined as 'university fees' to recognise that the fees reflect the whole university experience and not just the course they are on.

6 What barriers do current and new education and training providers face in developing innovative or diversified provision?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

It can be argued that the barriers are regulatory. However, it is important that controls are in place to ensure quality of education for students, which is crucial to protecting the world-leading position and excellent global reputation of UK Higher Education. There is concern already amongst our international partners who are watching closely the direction of travel of the sector and whether any decisions on funding will affect our global standing.

In terms of degree apprenticeships the funding model needs to be considered carefully. At present the cost of running these programmes within universities can be prohibitive.

7 How can Government further encourage high-quality further education and higher education provision that is more flexible: for example, part-time, distance learning and commuter study options?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

The current funding system needs to be adapted to support part-time and mature learners in higher education. In addition, the Apprenticeship Levy should be reviewed and changed to create a broader and flexible adult skills fund.

The progression pathways between further and higher education need to be improved, with greater flexibility in shifting between part-time and full-time provision, and between institutions.

8 To what extent do funding arrangements for higher education and further education and other post-18 education and training act as incentives or barriers to choice or provision: both at the individual and provider level? How does this impact on the choices made by prospective students and learners? What can Government do to improve incentives and reduce barriers?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

In terms of providers the cost of some subjects (particularly sciences and engineering) exceed the regulated fee income and additional funding through the Office for Students (see answer to question 5). This could have a detrimental effect on the shape of the university in terms of the subjects offered or the number of students allowed on these high cost subjects.

The current funding system, both in terms of fees and maintenance, does not provide a barrier to students if it is properly explained. The biggest barrier at present is the lack of understanding of the loan system and the misleading press and political statements. We need to be clear that the system is such that it is free to go to university and the loan is not a typical commercial loan but is a fixed graduate contribution which is only paid on earnings over a £25,000 threshold and is written off after 30 years.

Part 2: A system that is accessible to all

9 What particular barriers (including financial barriers) do people from disadvantaged backgrounds face in progressing to and succeeding in post-18 education and training?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

The current funding system is working well in terms of allowing students from disadvantage backgrounds to go to university (for example at Queen Mary 42% of our students are first in their family to go to university and 27% are from families where the taxable income is less than £10k per year). Any changes to the current funding system would need to be very carefully analysed to ensure that they will not have a detrimental effect on students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

A more general barrier relates to the quality of primary and secondary education, which is mixed across the country and needs to be addressed. Universities can, in part, help in sponsoring local schools (Queen Mary sponsors two local Multi Academy Trusts); engaging with schools more widely, having a close relationship with further education institutions, and running foundation years. All these activities have a cost, and need to be adequately funded, but are fundamental if we are going to ensure that we provide equality of opportunity through UK society.

It is also important that students are supported, by universities and Government, in terms of understanding and planning for where their degree will take them after university in terms of their future career. A clearer understanding of this path will help retain students on their programmes, and this is particularly important for students from WP backgrounds, where family and network support in this area might not be so evident.

Another potential barrier is linked to the finances of a student while they are studying, which is covered under Q10 below.

10 How should students and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds best receive maintenance support, both from Government and from universities and colleges?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

It is important that students receive adequate financial support during their studies. Ideally, for disadvantaged students this should be in the form of a grant.

The current maintenance loan does work well from an access perspective and provides students with the required funds without affecting how much they pay each year after they graduate up to when they pay off the full amount or 30 years where the loan is written off. However, this approach does mean that students from less wealthy backgrounds graduate with a higher amount of debt compared to their peers.

We should review the level of bursaries from individual institutions, which are linked to the access agreement. Where a university is successful in attracting a large number of students from less privileged backgrounds the amount of funding available to support bursaries is such that individual bursary awards can be of lesser value.

Part 3: Delivering the skills the UK needs

11 What challenges do post-18 education and training providers face in understanding and responding to the skills needs of the economy: at national, regional and local levels? Which skills, in your view, are in shortest supply across the economy? And which, if any, are in oversupply?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

We should not try to predict the required skills for a future job market, since we will get it wrong. All we know is that the job market today will not be the same in 5 years and will continually change. We need to ensure that the education we provide produces graduates who are creative, problem solvers, excellent communicators, have cultural and social awareness, confidence, entrepreneurship, research and innovation skills, academic understanding of their subject and are adaptable. The broader beneficial impacts of a university education must always be retained and promoted in any discussion about the purpose of universities. This is evidenced in the continued desire for many professional bodies (e.g. accountancy) to recruit students who have developed a broad range of critical and flexible skills through their exposure to non-vocational disciplines.

12 How far does the post-18 education system deliver the advanced technical skills the economy needs? How can Government ensure there is world-class provision of technical education across the country?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

It is important that we maintain a world-class higher education system, with research, innovation and teaching going hand-in-hand, otherwise we will fall behind our global competitors. To achieve this universities need a sustainable base of funding. A whole system approach to funding is required, for example recognising the intimate links between research and high-quality teaching and ensuring that both resource and capital funding can be secured to ensure universities can provide the environment required to excel and compete internationally.

Part 4: Value for money for graduates and taxpayers

13 How should students and graduates contribute to the cost of their studies, while maintaining the link that those who benefit from post-18 education contribute to its costs? What represents the right balance between students, graduates, employers and the taxpayer?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

The current balance (based on the threshold of £25,000) of 53% being paid by the individual once they graduate and 47% by government (taxpayer) is a fair balance. The issue is the public perception around student loans, which needs to be explained as a contribution, and also the contribution from the Government needs to be highlighted.

It is important that university education remains free at the point of entry and nothing is paid towards education until the individual is in employment and earning above the threshold of £25,000.

14 What are the most effective ways for the Government and institutions to communicate with students and graduates on the nature and terms of student support?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

We need to ensure that the public fully understands the student support system and address misinformation from press and political statements. Universities are good at explaining the system and we can see that more students from less privileged backgrounds are going to university. A good article, which most people find useful, is written by Martin Lewis (see: <https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/students/student-loans-tuition-fees-changes>).

15 What are the best examples of educational and training providers ensuring efficiency in the method of course provision while maintaining quality? And what are the challenges in doing this?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish. :

There are many examples of ensuring efficiency in course provision, in particular looking at methods of delivery and student analytics. For example, the use of student analytics will allow universities to identify students who may be struggling and focus help and support on these students. The use of virtual learning environments, to support face-to-face teaching, also drives efficiency whilst increasing quality. The main challenge is in terms of funding to ensure that methods of education remain world-leading.

16 What are the ways that Government can increase the value for money of post-18 education?

Please note that you are welcome to respond to as many, or as few, questions from this consultation as you wish.:

We currently have a system that does provide value-for-money. All universities are aware of the obligation to use funding in the most effective way possible, in support of their academic mission and wide ranging obligations to society. However, we must recognise that a world-class sector requires stable and sufficient funding to allow it to deliver the economic, social and cultural benefits that are so important to the UK.

One area where improvement can be achieved is ensuring that there are progression pathways between further and higher education, and flexibility in shifting between part-time and full-time provision, and between institutions.

Attachments

Please upload any further attachments that you wish to be considered with your response.

File Upload:

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