

## UCU Policy Summary

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October 2019

## The Augar review

June 2019

The Augar review, commissioned by Theresa May, was published in May 2019. It contains a detailed analysis of the post-18 education sector and the funding issues it faces.

UCU believes that the report fundamentally failed to grapple with the contradictions at the core of our marketised education system. The Augar review represents a wasted opportunity to develop radical changes that could make a real difference for students, staff and institutions.

UCU argues that:

- the government must increase funding for education across the board
- fee cuts would mean universities face real terms cuts of 11% over the next three years
- the proposed new repayment system could become even less progressive than the current system and see those on moderate salaries (especially women) repaying more
- replacing lost fee income for subjects deemed 'high cost' and 'high-value' would be hugely damaging
  - creative subjects could be seriously harmed yet they have a hugely important role to play in responding to global challenges and the emergence of new technologies
  - there is a potential for a negative impact on public services such as teaching if humanities and arts are cut
  - the government should not meddle in subject choice; this sets a dangerous precedent for academic freedom
- cutting funding for foundation year courses which offer a significant route for students from deprived backgrounds to gain access into higher education is insupportable
- embedding loans in further education is a bad idea - they have already been shown not to work well
- rationalisation of colleges is not helpful. Collaboration can be achieved through removing the market from education and reform of governance
- we must focus on addressing inequalities in apprenticeships and ensuring that education is high quality
- a coherent lifelong learning strategy for all levels of learning is urgently needed.

**Submission to  
UNESCO/ILO**

**January 2019**

UCU believes that the freedoms to conduct research, teach, speak, and publish without interference or penalty, are increasingly under threat in UK universities and colleges.

A report commissioned by UCU revealed that UK academics believe that have worse levels of protection of academic freedom compared to colleagues in other EU countries. UCU has submitted an allegation to the UNESCO/ILO committee that the UK government is failing to meet its obligations in respect to the 1997 UNESCO *recommendation concerning the status of higher-education teaching personnel*, of which the UK is a signatory state.

- UNESCO/ILO CEART should provide definitive guidance to ensure that academic freedom in the UK is afford protection as good as, if not better than, that which exists in other states of the EU.
- UCU will keep members informed of developments with the allegations process

**Local  
accountability  
in the National  
Education  
Service**

**July 2019**

In implementing the NES, the autonomy of the devolved nations and regions must be respected and there has to be scope for governments and authorities to flex their offer to benefit their residents.

However national government must work to eradicate inequalities between regions and nations of the UK so that learners are not disadvantaged on the basis of where they live.

In order to meet this challenge, UCU recommends:

- a fully integrated national education service:  
including all parts of the post-16 education sector – FE, HE, community learning, ESOL, and offender learning
- an end to compulsion in post-16 learning:  
young people need to be inspired, not forced, to learn with an exciting, vibrant and innovative curriculum
- a genuinely inclusive education system:  
accessible, flexible and properly funded
- collaboration, not competition:  
remove marketisation from education
- an end to incorporation:  
bring back democratic accountability in education
- scrap high stakes accountability regimes:  
fair, proportionate accountability that reflects local context and involves trade unions
- representative governing bodies:  
required to elect staff and student governors
- greater transparency on senior pay:  
representation for staff and students on remuneration committees with leaders not able to sit on the committee
- establish local/regional cross-sector education forums:  
to map the education and training needs of the community
- tackle the use of exploitative employment models:  
so that staff are securely employed and empowered to hold management to account.

**Evidence to the  
skills  
commission  
inquiry**

**July 2019**

**Fair funding**

The principle of fair funding is central to a successful education system. Under the current system the burden of cost for higher education falls heavily on the student while taxpayers and employers pay comparatively little.

UCU is arguing for:

- abolition of further education loans
- funding parity with schools achieved for further education
- greater support for part time and mature students in higher education
- fee forgiveness for students in key public services
- respect for the independent nature of education provision in the devolved nations and appropriate autonomy in devolved regions.

Funding change must be supported with structural reform by linking it with good employment practices. This should include action to:

- tackle endemic casualisation in the post-compulsory education workforce
- address significant deterioration in the pay and working conditions of staff across the education sector
- improve representation of staff and students on both regulatory bodies and in institutional governance.

<p><b>Health and safety in prisons</b></p> <p><b>July 2019</b></p>	<p>A survey of membership among prison workers in the JUPA organisations was undertaken to explore experiences of verbal and physical abuse, and exposure to 'spice' and other psychoactive substances. Its aim was to gain a better understanding of working conditions in prisons and call for the necessary improvements to enable prison to be an effective environment to support rehabilitation and wellbeing.</p> <p>The report found a picture of a prison system that is failing to meet the basic health and safety needs of the prison workforce with staff who felt routinely unsafe.</p> <p>Recommendations called for by the Joint Unions in Prison Alliance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ tougher responses to violent incidents</li><li>■ better health and safety reporting, including a single reporting system</li><li>■ action to prevent exposure to psychoactive substances</li><li>■ joint work to examine the causes and effects of violence against staff</li><li>■ more prison officers to ensure safe staffing levels.</li></ul>
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## Staying power

February 2019

Nicola Rollock's research into the career experiences and strategies of UK black female professors is the first of its kind in the UK. It examines, through one-to-one interviews, the experiences of 20 of the 25 UK black female professors. black in this context refers to those of African, Caribbean and other black background.

There are 85 UK black professors, making them the smallest proportion of the UK professoriate. Just 25 of these are women. Black and minority ethnic faculty report being undermined, marginalized and their knowledge and experience frequently called into question

### Findings:

- black female professors in the UK are a new and emerging group
- a culture of explicit and passive bullying exists across HE, along with racial stereotyping and microaggressions.
- the road to professorships for black women is characterised by a lack of transparency and fairness
- some white female academics contribute to the exclusion of black female academics despite an expressed commitment to feminism
- respondents have developed a range of responses to cope with and navigate HE; they note that maintaining this hyper level of vigilance and analysis was exhausting and stressful
- advice to future generations included being prepared to move to different types of institutions as well as take up roles across the UK in order to progress

### Recommendations:

Rollock argues that HEIs currently operate from a false position of assumed fairness regarding race and racism. In order to transform the experiences of black female academics, their under-representation in higher education must instead be understood as a failure of the system to support them.

In addition, recommendations focus on:

- dissemination:  
the need for UCU to disseminate the findings of the report



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ recruitment: ways in which to more actively recruit black female academics, and make that process more transparent</li><li>■ progression: making progression criteria clear and transparent; developing alternatives to the role of heads of departments in approving Professorial applications; clear guidance about feedback during the recruitment process</li><li>■ bullying and harassment: challenging the pervasive culture of passive bullying found by the report to undermine and pathologies respondents</li><li>■ cultural norms and research knowledge: fostering a more culturally inclusive definition of academic knowledge; recognising black British academics who have excelled in their respective areas; encouraging awareness that the workplace is not safe or comfortable for every academic.</li></ul>
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**Report on the Teaching Excellent Framework**

**February 2019**

'Understanding, recognising and rewarding teaching quality in higher education: an exploration of the impact and implications of the Teaching Excellence Framework' is a report commissioned by UCU on the impact and implications of the TEF on staff working in HE.

The report argues that under the current framework, the TEF fails to address how teaching might actually be supported and developed in any meaningful way. Furthermore, it highlights the alienation of staff from institutional TEF planning and implementation, leaving them passive recipients of the strategies imposed on them.

**Key findings:**

Overall, the TEF was found to be a deeply flawed policy.

- TEF is highly unpopular with participants
- HE institutions and the government have failed to engage staff working in HE with the TEF
- majority of participants have not been consulted about or involved in TEF activities/submissions at all
- participants reported mixed levels of awareness of changes in policies and/or procedures since 2016
- TEF has had a negative impact on the workloads of academic and support staff
- TEF has had a bigger impact on institutional policies on teaching and learning than the actual teaching of staff
- participants repeatedly called into question the legitimacy and credibility of the TEF as a measurement of teacher excellence.

**Recommendations:**

- hold a national debate on teaching excellence
- fundamentally review the aims and methodology of the TEF
- increase staff awareness and involvement in TEF planning and implementation
- dedicated teaching and learning development time
- situate TEF in the wider HE policy environment alongside research

<p><b>Post qualifications admissions</b></p> <p><b>January 2019</b></p>	<p>UCU has supported moving to a post-qualification application system (in which students apply to university after they have received their Level 3 qualifications) since 2015.</p> <p><b>What is wrong with the current admissions system?</b></p> <p>UCU research suggests that the current admissions process is not fit for purpose. It concludes that it is deeply flawed due to the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ poor accuracy of predicted grades</li> <li>■ poor student understanding of how to make the best application decisions</li> <li>■ the increase in unconditional offers: their use favours students with higher predicted and does not challenge unconscious bias towards students in selective schools which generally predict more a grades.</li> <li>■ poor reliability and validity of the personal statement when accompanied by predicted grades</li> <li>■ complex and hectic clearing period.</li> </ul> <p><b>What would a PQA system look like?</b></p> <p>In 'Post-qualification application: a student-centred model for higher education admissions in England, Northern Ireland and Wales', UCU put forward a model for what such a system could look like. The key features of a PQA system would be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ better information, advice and guidance for students</li> <li>■ a national student futures weeks for the consideration of future education</li> <li>■ help to match courses to students</li> <li>■ an 'expression of interest' phase to build the choice process</li> <li>■ a streamlined application process in which students can apply to any eight choices of higher education course</li> <li>■ a stronger entry phase to improve retention and success including a later start date for first year students.</li> </ul> <p>We call on the government to commission of a review of the HE admissions system which can advance the ideas put forward by UCU.</p>
<p><b>Brexit</b></p>	<p>UCU members have voted overwhelmingly in favour of the union supporting a referendum on the final Brexit deal negotiated by the UK government.</p>

## **Apprenticeships charter**

**November 2018**

UCU wants an expansion of high-quality apprenticeships. These must have education at their heart, and relate to real job opportunities, and get to the root of tackling inequality in access to education and the labour market

### **High quality education and clear progression routes**

Apprenticeships must:

- offer a clear programme of education and training which links occupational identity with a broad-based underlying curriculum.
- include off-site learning throughout the programme; UCU believes that colleges are ideal places to foster this type of learning
- be produced through a partnership between industry, teachers and trade unions
- have clear transition points between different levels
- finish with the award of a certified professional title
- come with clear lines of responsibility to prevent the approval of narrow standards and low-quality education

### **Fairness and access:**

- ensure apprenticeships have parity of terms and conditions with all other employees, being paid a fair rate that abolishes the gap between the national minimum wage and the apprenticeship minimum wage.
- make sure that positions are not just awarded to existing employees
- offer equal access for marginalised and disadvantaged groups at all levels.
- employers should reflect the communities in which they work
- employers must give employees statutory rights to paid educational leave and workplace training committees; trade unions must have negotiating rights for education and training
- scope for part time and flexible apprenticeships must be developed
- develop a high quality, face-to-face, impartial information and guidance service to address inequalities

### **Climate jobs:**

- colleges must be at the centre of training and educating a new workforce prepared for climate jobs
- education for sustainable Development must be embedded across the curriculum
- short-course sustainability skills programmes must be introduced to train the existing workforce
- expand quality apprenticeships through a coherent system of addressing the representation of underrepresented groups
- promote community engagement with further and adult education to support the supply and demand of skills and jobs

**Funding:**

- teachers must be well paid and well supported
- funding bands for apprenticeships must reflect adequately the cost of training and education
- additional support funding must be increased and linked to ensuring equal access to apprenticeships
- the apprenticeship levy needs to be broadened out so that employers can spend the money on the most appropriate type of training for their workforce
- the FE sector must be allowed to properly plan how they are going to be able to educate and train the future workforce; its funding allocation must be, at least, on a three-yearly basis.

**National  
Education  
Service**

**March 2018**

UCU has welcomed the Labour Party's focus on education, its commitment to eliminate fees at all levels and its move towards a National Education Service.

UCU supports the creation of a National Education Service based on the following principles:

- fair funding:  
so cost is never a barrier to participation
- accessibility:  
it must be available to everyone regardless of age, background or circumstances
- expansive:  
with support for a broad curriculum and a range of delivery modes
- flexibility:  
so providers can respond to changing and emerging needs
- coordination:  
there must be clear links and pathways between different parts of the system
- accountability:  
to students, staff and the communities it serves
- high-quality:  
with learning at all levels delivered by highly-trained, well supported professionals.

## **The Taylor review**

May 2018

In July 2017, the Taylor review published a report on modern working practices which recommended that workers should have a right to request more secure contracts from their employers. UCU said that the review had failed to recognise the challenges faced by casualised workers who need “rights, not sympathy”.

### **Employment status**

The government has failed to acknowledge that issues around the complexity of employment status are symptomatic of the deeper problem of outdated employment tiers. UCU argues that the government should:

- establish a commission on employment status tasked with developing a new single employee test
- recognise the important role that trade unions play in the workplace
- recognise the key role of unions and collective bargaining in ensuring decent standards of work and must remove obstacles to union organisation.

UCU firmly opposes the review’s proposals to codify existing status tests

### **Transparency in the labour market**

Overall UCU is deeply disappointed with the lack of ambition in the government’s proposals and in particular the failure to tackle the grotesque imbalance of power in the workplace. Greater ‘awareness’ and the ‘rights to request’ proposed will do nothing substantial to help working people without greater regulation of exploitative contracts and promotion of collective bargaining.

UCU argues that:

- the government should ban zero hours contracts.
- the right to a written statement should be a day one right extended to all workers as well as employees, as argued by the TUC
- the above reform by itself will not tackle the deeper problems of the use of precarious contracts which relate to the extreme imbalance of power they embed in the working relationship
- the current rules on continuous service are not fit for purpose and create significant opportunities and incentives to abusive employment practices

- all workers should have day one rights to maternity leave, the right to request flexible working, statutory redundancy pay and protection from unfair dismissal
- HMRC NMW team should be given responsibility for enforcing both statutory and contractual holiday pay, alongside the employment tribunals.

### **Agency workers**

UCU believes it is shameful for universities and colleges to use subsidiary companies to effectively 'game' the British employment law system. We support:

- proposals to increase the transparency of information provided upfront to people hired as agency workers
- the introduction of wide-ranging reforms to protect precarious staff and agency workers, as called for by the TUC
- the repeal of the Swedish derogation as soon as possible and all agency workers should have rights to equal pay
- hirers should be required to carry out a review after 12 weeks of an agency worker doing the same job to see whether the work will continue longer term and if so should offer staff a permanent contract
- increased penalties for non-compliance with agency workers' rights
- a requirement that umbrella companies and subsidiary companies comply with the same standards which apply to employment businesses and agencies.

### **Enforcement of employment rights**

UCU's policy position is as follows:

- extend the HMRC NMW unit's remit to cover enforcement of contractual and statutory holiday pay and statutory sick pay.
- government must recognise the key role of unions and collective bargaining in ensuring decent standards of work
- government must remove obstacles to union organisation
- development of effective state enforcement of basic workplace rights as called for by the TUC



<b>Review of post-18 education</b>	UCU is concerned by the limited scope of this consultation, in particular the exclusion of prison education and significant parts of the further education sector.
<b>April 2018</b>	

**Response to  
the QTS  
consultation**

**March 2018**

The consultation's focus on strengthening the professional development of teachers throughout their careers is positive.

However, the proposal to decouple QTS from Initial Teacher Training (ITT) has troubling implications for teacher recruitment, teacher education departments in higher education institutions, and QTLS equivalency:

- extending the time it takes to become fully qualified could be off-putting for potential trainee teachers; introducing a longer induction period may also have a damaging impact on teacher recruitment.
- the proposals for QTS reform do not adequately account for the impact of such changes on university providers of ITT
- a strong CPD offer should be in place for new teachers regardless of how and when QTS is awarded
- the best way to determine core competencies, knowledge and skills would be to engage directly both with new teachers and teacher educators
- to ensure quality and fairness, QTS should be assessed externally rather than within the school
- those bodies overseeing the award of QTS should be subject to a rigorous quality assurance process in order to ensure consistency of standards
- HEIs who provide ITT are well placed to act as appropriate bodies for the assessment and accreditation of QTS
- UCU believes there is a market for both specialist NPQs – or similar – for teachers who aspire to other forms of leadership within the school system as well as non-leadership NPQS aimed at further developing subject expertise
- a CPD badging system could help protect against a 'race to the bottom' by providers; universities are best placed to provide such high-quality courses
- tackling excessive workloads is a crucial part of ensuring that teachers feel able to effectively engage in CPD
- a fund to pilot sabbaticals would be a positive step for the profession.

**Investigating higher education institutions and their views on the race equality charter**

**September 2018**

A study exploring the impact of the race equality charter mark (REC) on equality policy and inclusion in HEIs.

**Key findings:**

- access to resources (e.g. funding of staff) was a key factor in whether institutions would participate in the REC
- award holders highlighted the significance of support from senior management in the application and submission process
- award holder institutions and member institutions consistently discussed a belief that the process of applying for the REC mark was just as important as achieving the mark itself
- all of the institutions in the study recognised the importance of addressing the BME attainment gap and the need to understand the lived experiences of their BME students
- all participants mentioned using the REC as part of a long term process to address the lack of representation of BME staff at all levels and particularly at senior levels
- participants highlighted the importance of the REC and its principles being linked to real institutional change
- there were some concerns that the REC would be used for competitive advantage over other institutions in the sector, rather than to address racial inequalities
- participants emphasised the REC enabled all staff to address and confront the culture which encouraged a 'fear of race' which existed in HEIs.

**Key recommendations:**

- linking the REC to UKRI funding would ensure that all HEIs seriously consider investing in the REC
- making unconscious bias training mandatory for all senior staff
- all HEIs should have a senior member of staff – separate from Equality and Diversity officers – whose job it is to ensure that race equality policy is implemented
- all HEIs must be required to provide annual reviews showing how they have addressed the BME attainment gap and the strategies they have used to improve it
- a specific focus on the professional development of BME staff.

**National policies to facilitate the above:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ AdvanceHE should reassess the requirements for applying for the REC (data sources, questionnaires, statistics) and consider introducing a gradation/scale of application stages</li><li>■ AdvanceHE should consider department/faculty REC awards in order that individual departments/faculties can claim ownership of the award</li><li>■ HEIs must encourage safe approaches to developing conversations which address racism and white privilege, in which racial inequality is seen as a priority to be addressed rather than its legitimacy questioned.</li></ul>
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**The Experiences of Prison Educators in England and Wales**

**September 2018**

A review surveying the experiences of prison educators in England and Wales.

The consultation findings paint a grim scene:

- prison teaching staff are undervalued, under supported and under resourced.
- they feel unsafe and vulnerable and their roles have by necessity expanded to include duties more closely aligned with uniformed staff: carrying radios, escorting prisoners and carrying out security checks.
- their classes are disrupted by a regime which fails to prioritise – or even facilitate – education.
- their classes are disrupted by a regime which fails to prioritise – or even facilitate – education.
- they are left alone and are required to manage violent and difficult behaviour, drug use and mental health problems in their classrooms, typically for lengthy periods of time with no comfort breaks or administrative assistance.
- they lack support from uniformed staff and senior managers and morale is low.

Recommendations focus on:

- increase the presence, training and support of operational staff
- promote learning culture in prisons
- manage risk more effectively, making sure to consider the effects of mental illness and substance misuse on prisoners and staff alike
- improve staff morale, leadership and workforce development.

<p><b>Teaching Excellence Framework</b></p> <p><b>June 2017</b></p>	<p>UCU is opposed to the TEF, both in terms of its methodology and the outcomes for institutions, staff and students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ the core metrics it uses are poor proxies for measuring teaching evidence</li> <li>■ UCU is concerned that universities may try to alter the mix of their core metrics to appear to have higher quality teaching, without actually addressing teaching practice itself.</li> <li>■ TEF has been cited as a reason for jobs cuts in some universities</li> <li>■ we are concerned about the link between the TEF with increased tuition fees and further marketization of the sector.</li> </ul>
<p><b>NSS boycott</b></p> <p><b>2017</b></p>	<p>The National Student Survey (NSS) is taken by final year undergraduates. The boycott, initiated by the National Union of Students (NUS) came about after it was announced that the teaching excellence framework (TEF) would use NSS scores among its metrics. UCU objects to government plans to use TEF ratings to allow some universities to raise fees in line with inflation.</p> <p>A boycott of the NSS was agreed between UCU and the NUS. The agreement held that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ local student unions and UCU branches agree a common position in support of the NUS boycott of NSS</li> <li>■ UCU will share materials with members in support of the boycott</li> <li>■ both unions defend the right of staff to express a position of support for the NUS action so long as they fulfil their contractual duties in respect of NSS</li> <li>■ both unions issue detailed advice to their branches on implementation of this position.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Higher Education and Research Act</b></p> <p><b>2017</b></p>	<p>The Higher Education and Research Act was signed into law in 2017.</p> <p>UCU opposed the legislation on the basis that it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ opened the sector up to marketization</li><li>■ made it easier for new providers to award their own degrees and gain university titles, especially when operating for profit</li><li>■ gave the secretary of state/Office for Students powers which could threaten university autonomy and academic freedom</li><li>■ tied in the Teaching Excellence Framework as a system for rating universities and determining tuition fees</li></ul> <p>Sally Hunt said that, despite accepting a few watered down amendments, the government kept its long-term plans to marketise the sector firmly on-track.</p>
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## Higher education apprenticeships

March 2017

### What are apprenticeships in HE?

- HE apprenticeships can be higher apprenticeships or degree apprenticeships
- can include qualifications from level 4 to level 7. A higher apprenticeship that results in the award of a Bachelor's or Master's degree at the end is a degree apprenticeship.
- degree apprentices benefit from a salary and do not pay tuition fees
- an apprentice can be of any age and can be an existing or new employee
- government wants to switch all apprenticeship provision to new apprenticeship standards designed by employer-led trailblazer groups.

### Impact of apprenticeships on HEIs:

- HEIs can work with trailblazer groups to develop new apprenticeship standards.
- apprenticeship standards will exist where HEIs have had no input and are still required to deliver this standard. This could have implications for institutional autonomy.
- for a degree apprenticeship based on a standard, the cost of delivering the apprenticeship will be agreed between the employer and the HE provider
- HEIs that usually have a local or regional focus may have to adjust to the requirements of national employers.

### HEFCE degree apprenticeships development fund:

- HEFCE have set up a degree apprenticeship development fund to help the sector increase degree apprenticeship provision on new standards
- funding can only be used to develop degree apprenticeships at Level 6 or Level 7.

### Quality assurance:

- the picture is still emerging but already complex
- from May 2017 providers of apprenticeships at any level must be registered on the Skills Funding Agency's register of apprenticeship training providers (RoATP)
- although HEIs will award the degree or HE qualification as part of the higher apprenticeship, they will not determine whether the apprenticeship has been successfully completed



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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ OFSTED are currently only responsible for inspecting the quality of apprenticeships in FE. They are in talks with the government about a role in HE, but there is no clarity about how this would work in practice</li><li>■ the QAA are developing a statement about the characteristics of degree apprenticeships</li><li>■ The Institute for Apprenticeships will be taking on overall responsibility for the entire apprenticeship system.</li></ul> |
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**BME doctoral students' perceptions of an academic career**

**June 2017**

A report exploring the experiences of BME doctoral students and the impact of these on an academic career. The authors note that the findings of the report are not generalizable to the wider BME student population due to the small number of participants.

**Key findings:**

- students held a strong appetite for pursuing an academic career past PhD level
- mentoring and supervisory support was highlighted as important during PhD study and progression to an academic role. Many respondents alluded to a preference for a BME mentor
- many experienced feelings of marginalisation, isolation and exclusions due to microaggressions and differential treatment
- students exploring race within their work felt that they were at risk of being typecast as a race-specialist, limiting scope for career progression
- the challenge of being the only person of colour at a university was highlighted multiple times
- opportunities to teach were considered important in profession development and access to an academic post
- themes that might also apply to the wider PhD cohort included employment prospects, casualisation, and deemed poor quality supervision.

**Recommendations:**

- government should commission research into the level and stage of attrition at PhD level, including detailed ethnicity analysis
- HE sector should develop a sector-wide charter on what good PhD supervisory and mentoring support looks like
- HEIs should establish a system of mentoring by senior academics to support PhD students
- HEIs should development the skills of department managers to address conscious and unconscious bias
- HEIs must ensure they adequately support BME networks at institution level
- HEIs must ensure transparent access to development opportunities
- government should establish national funding streams for BME PhD students in all disciplines

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ research councils should explore doctoral funding for BME applicants in areas where there is poor representation.</li></ul> |
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## **UCU manifesto for the 2017 general election**

In the run-up to the 2017 general election, UCU released a manifesto for the future of post-16 education. It is as follows:

- change how post-school education is funded
- increase public investment in tertiary education to at least the OECD average.
- abolish tuition fees in further and higher education.
- explore alternative funding options including a Business Education Tax

Oppose marketisation in education:

- oppose for-profit provision within further and higher education.
- oppose the Teaching Excellence Framework and any proposed link to tuition fees

Protect the rights of international staff and students:

- Immediately guarantee the right to remain of EU citizens working and studying in the UK.
- Remove international students from the net migration target.

Invest in the education workforce:

- invest in 15,000 further education teaching staff to support over 250,000 more learners into education.
- eradicate zero-hours contracts and strengthen duties on employers to offer secure employment.
- promote action on excessive workloads.

Protect local access to adult learning:

- increase funding for basic skills so that more learners can benefit.
- develop a national ESOL strategy to ensure that everyone who needs them can access to English classes.
- increase support for flexible and part-time learning.
- ensure that devolved skills funding is ring fenced for education and that educators have an input on local skills decisions

Make university admissions fairer:

- ban the use of unconditional offers based on predicted grades.
- explore a move to post-qualification admissions (PQA) which allows students to be selected on the basis of their results rather than predicted grades.

Invest more in prison education:

- commit an additional £30 million to prison education to deliver more high level qualifications which support effective rehabilitation.
- take action to improve health and safety for prison personnel.

Increase investment in research and development

- commit to a UK spend of 2.4% of GDP on R&D, in line with the OECD average.
- review the increasing concentration of research funding across a small range of universities

Expand and reform the apprenticeship levy:

- expand the levy to cover more employers, with different sized employers paying amounts proportionate to their total pay bill.
- reform the levy so that it can also be used for other types of work based learning which is valued by employers.

Review the Prevent strategy:

- undertake a comprehensive review of the Prevent strategy in education.

## **Tomorrow's academics**

**February 2016**

Staffing related issues have not been integrated into policy-making on the quality of teaching and research. UCU has put forward a positive agenda for academic careers in higher education in the belief that this dimension is crucial to both the quality of students' education and to the success of the UK's knowledge base.

### **Renewal of the workforce**

The majority of the UK's research-focused academics are PhD students. Postgraduate courses are a stepping-stone onto PhD programmes. However in many areas the number of students progressing to take postgraduate courses is falling. To ensure the supply of the UK's research-focused academics, UCU advises the government to expand the number of postgraduate students. The government must consider:

- restoring proper grants
- writing off undergraduate debt on completion of a postgraduate course.

The second main supply of academics are international researchers. To ensure the continued supply of these academics UCU calls for the end of the government's points-based immigration system and the removal of:

- international students from the net migration figures
- Home Office 'quotas'
- the monitoring of the attendance of non EEA students.

### **Building sustainable careers**

Precariousness remains the number one obstacle to a sustainable career in university research. UCU argues that the failure to tackle job insecurity is perpetuating the 'churn' of research staff out of the sector. This can and should be tackled at all levels. Research councils in particular must:

- create more long-term funding streams and commitments
- build in incentives for universities to invest in the long term.

Research workforces must be made more diverse. UCU has proposed:

- 'quick' win policies such as mandatory unconscious bias training for all research council panels
- 'big' win policies such as making diversity a central plank in the development of all government policy making, particularly in STEM subjects.

### **Better career pathways for teaching-focused staff**

UCU has been pushing for proper recognition for teaching in the academic career structure. Teaching must have parity of esteem with research-focused jobs and an improved teaching role overall.

UCU believes that professionalising the teaching workforce is a central part of improving the careers of teaching-focused staff. We support the development of accredited training courses and HE teaching qualifications that are:

- accessible to all newly appointed members of academic staff, including hourly-paid colleagues
- flexible enough to reflect major disciplinary differences
- built to encourage effective links between teaching, scholarship and research.

In addition, a progressive agenda on professional development requires:

- overall increases in staff development budgets and identified time and budget for training and development activities
- the preservation of time for research and scholarship
- the protection and revitalisation of the link between academic and related staff and to ensure a common approach for career development.

### **Making academic careers more attractive**

UCU believes that there are broader employment and professional issues that need to be addressed if we are to make academic careers more attractive.

- workload and workload planning needs to be improved
- academic pay is low relative to that in other highly qualified jobs in the UK

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ UK academic freedom must be improved in order to attract talented people into academia.</li></ul> |
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## Response to Unlocking Potential

May 2016

In September 2015 the government commissioned a review of prison education chaired by Dame Sally Coates.

There are two main features of the report<sup>1</sup> with which we are clearly dissatisfied: governor-led commissioning and the proposal for a 'Prison Direct' teacher-training approach. A number of the other proposals are to be welcomed. The key problem is that the overwhelming majority of recommendations are proposed within the existing constrained budget of £130m.

### **Governor-led commissioning:**

- governor-led commissioning could lead to fragmented delivery and a reduction in quality
- we would like to see a central government role in assuring standardised quality across the sector with an agreed role for staff feedback in the evaluation process
- a governor-led model risks public funds being siphoned off to the for-profit private sector
- we would like to see safeguards for teachers' pensions similar to existing safeguards for teachers working in academies
- a rigorous accountability framework risks the development of blame-and-sack/de-commission culture without consultation with the relevant unions.
- the government must set out clear parameters for assessing the capability of governors to deliver teaching and learning in prisons
- CPD programme plans should be built into tender criteria.

### **Casualisation:**

- our key concern about the OLASS contracting process has been about the short-term and precarious nature of the contracts. This has not been resolved by the new proposals.
- UCU believes that high quality education and fair working conditions depend on contracts that give staff stability and continuity of employment.

### **Prison-direct model:**

- we have reservations about the appropriacy of the graduate recruitment model in education, and in particular for prison education.
- this is mainly due to the lack of pedagogical underpinning in these models.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ the direct recruitment model can be unnecessarily divisive, promoting damaging competition between initial teacher education providers and prisons</li><li>■ recruitment into the sector is best facilitated through fair terms and conditions and comprehensive, career-long offer of CPD and clear progression routes.</li></ul>
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**Response to the consultation on accelerated courses and switching**

**October 2016**

UCU has serious concerns about accelerated courses in the higher education sector. We welcome the principle of developing and enhancing a credit transfer system, however have concerns about the marketised approach that this consultation document proposes.

**Accelerated degree courses:**

- this consultation fails to sufficiently address the learning from previous attempts at implementing accelerated courses
- there is an educational risk that fast track programmes will make it harder for students to combine study with periods of reflection, critical thinking and a 'deep approach' to learning.
- opportunities for students to engage in part-time employment over the course of their studies will be reduced
- the lack of holiday time factored into these degrees also means that they could prove difficult for student parents; those with caring responsibilities; and students whose disabilities mean that they might benefit from low-intensity study.
- there is a risk that take-up of these courses could narrow participation
- these courses could result in increased workload and reduced time for CPD for staff
- fast track courses encourage employers to offer casualised terms and conditions on summer 'semesters' through short-term and precarious contracts.
- accelerated degrees could compromise summer school and widening participation activities some HEIs hold during the summer

**Credit transfer system:**

- UCU supports a credit transfer system which could support widening participation efforts by providing flexibility
- the language employed in this consultation document is unhelpful in that it encourages students to see higher education as a transactional process whereby if they are dissatisfied with their 'value for money' interpretations, they should simply chop and change institution
- it is noteworthy that this proposal is being put forward alongside proposed regulatory changes that could see new and inexperienced for-profit organisations joining the sector

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ the suggestion that students should decide whether or not to change course or institution by using the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is flawed</li><li>■ competition for undergraduate places is preventing the credit transfer system being used more extensively</li><li>■ a viable system would need to have a proposed methodology to address cases where students may not have all the pre-requisite elements needed to join an existing cohort of students</li><li>■ the limited opportunity for students in regions with little choice, caring responsibilities or financial constraints should be recognised</li><li>■ student loan arrangements present a practical barrier to students and institutions using credit transfer systems more widely as negotiations around the fee charged for a student leaving part-way through the year can be problematic.</li></ul>
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**Does Cost Matter?**

**June 2016**

This is the second annual report for the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) which looks at how students' views about the cost of higher education (HE) shapes the views and decisions of young people regarding HE entry.

**Key findings:**

- removal of grants further constrains HE choices
- significant and worrying gaps in knowledge of the HE finance system exist
- increase in interest in part-time learning
- students not applying for HE more debt averse
- removal of grants may increase term-time working
- university still more than a financial/career investment
- 'widening access' students may be more price sensitive
- post-qualification admission is more popular among 'widening access' students
- HE support pre-16 is lacking.

**Recommendations:**

The government and HE sector has a moral responsibility to young people to do more to increase their knowledge and awareness of the HE student finance system.

It calls for a new national Higher Education Finance Information Programme (HEFIP) that will include:

- standard information for all applicants on the system to be sent when they apply
- a Kitemark for post-16 providers on HE student finance information provision
- ringfenced investment via access agreements
- the establishment of an agreed sector-owned student finance curriculum across the key stages.

NEON is willing to co-ordinate such a programme

**GCSE English and maths in further education**

**November 2016**

The government's plans to make it compulsory for every 16-18 year old in England to reach at least grade C in GCSE English and Maths and keep resitting if they do not achieve this will not achieve its aim.

**Compulsion:**

Compulsion lies at the heart of the reason why the government's plans are deeply flawed:

- compulsion is an admission by educators and government that they have failed to convince young people of the importance of English and Maths
- it misunderstands the type of students who attend FE, which offers a different route for young people alienated by their experience at school
- students following different pathways such as art and design have found this has allowed them to reconnect with learning and re-approach their English and Maths skills

**One size does not fit all:**

- getting students to resit their GCSE exams again and again until they achieve a good grade is not sound educational practice
- functional skills programmes – for those believed incapable of reaching a good English/Maths grade – have helped to reinforce cynicism amongst those learners who had struggled with Maths and English at school
- it is accepted (even by government) that attainment rates will drop substantially as a result of its policies.

**Exam-only qualifications:**

- no evidence has been provided to prove that exam-only qualifications are more rigorous than ones based on projects or course work
- those who can afford private tuition alongside their schooling will be in a better position to do well in exam-only qualifications
- exams do not measure intelligence, they measure memory; they have more to do with instilling a competitive approach to learning over a collaborative one
- exams have a negative impact on young people's well-being.

- the FE sector needs to move towards project or coursework based qualifications not towards exams as the main form of assessment

**Towards project-based learning:**

- government must bring to an end its forced resit programme.
- all students must be encouraged to develop their English and maths skills
- government must provide independent funding for those students who wish to resit English and maths GCSE and give colleges the resources to be able to effectively and imaginatively promote a voluntary resit programme.

<p><b>Post-16 area reviews</b></p> <p><b>January 2016</b></p>	<p>In September 2015, the Westminster government announced a new review of further education provision in England. Its findings, if implemented, are likely to mean the biggest change within the sector since colleges were removed from local government control and incorporated in the early 1990s.</p> <p>UCU has serious concerns about the direction of government policy.</p> <p><b>UCU's position:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ we believe that further and adult education is a crucial part of our society and economy and that it should be invested in properly</li> <li>■ if implemented, the review is likely to lead to the end of the general FE college, based in the community, which has been a vital part of most major English towns and cities.</li> <li>■ we have made these representations to government, to the FE commissioner, and to the head of the national steering group.</li> <li>■ we will continue to campaign in favour of a broad, local curriculum available to all who would bene</li> </ul>
<p><b>Prevent</b></p> <p><b>December 2015</b></p>	<p>UCU opposes the 'Prevent duty' as defined in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015. We contend that it is a threat to academic freedom and freedom of speech; will stifle campus activism; fosters racism; and forces our members to be involved in the racist labelling of students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ UCU Congress 2015 called for a 'national boycott' of the Prevent duty where legally possible</li> <li>■ UCU will look to identify any potential conflicts between different statutory duties</li> <li>■ the government must immediately review its counter-terrorism legislation</li> </ul>



<p><b>Business Education Tax</b></p> <p><b>February 2015</b></p>	<p>UCU proposes that UK HE should be funded by charging large, profitable employers who benefit from the plentiful supply of graduates through a new Business Education Tax (BET):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ UCU proposes an increase in main rate corporation tax. This would apply only to companies with annual profits greater than £1.5m p.a.</li> <li>■ companies who fund their employees to learn new skills would be favoured with tax breaks on the BET.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Trade union act</b></p> <p><b>September 2015</b></p>	<p>The trade union bill became an act of parliament in 2016. UCU is completely opposed to the legislation because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ undermines the role of trade unions by curtailing their ability to mobilise effective industrial action</li> <li>■ will strain industrial relations and weaken the position of employees in dealing with intransigent employers</li> <li>■ lacks statistical evidence to substantiate its equality impact assessment conclusions</li> <li>■ proposes changes around the use of agency workers that will seriously impact the student experience and health and safety of our members.</li> </ul>

**Mind the Gap,  
London  
Economics**

**November 2015**

London Economics were commissioned by UCU to provide an independent assessment of the level of public funding allocated to learners undertaking higher and further education across the UK.

**Main findings for HE:**

- there are relatively sizeable differences in the level of public funding per eligible HE student enrolled in a HEI in their home country compared with other countries in the UK
- there are large differences in the funding mechanisms across the nations  
e.g. whether funding is provided mostly through student support or allocated through a funding council or government department
- given these differences in the means of allocation, HE students enrolled in HEIs outside of their own Home Nation are associated with markedly different levels of funding. This impacts where they are incentivised to enrol, and how valuable they are to respective HEIs.

**Main findings for adult skills, 16-19 apprentice and non-apprentice training:**

- funding per student within the adult skills system is extremely low in comparison to the level of funding associated with HE participation
- funding for 16-19 education in general FE colleges is noticeably larger than that within the adult skills system but is still considerably smaller than funding for HE students.

**Main findings in annual changes in public funding per student/learner between 2012/13 and 2013/14:**

- the resource gap across higher education students has widened during the period under review
- as a result of changes in the proportion of total public funding awarded to HEIs by the relevant public body (as opposed to direct funding through student support), the variation in growth in public funding available to cross-border students studying in England is even greater
- across sectors (in England), between 2012/13 and 2013/14, there has been a widening of the gap in annual funding between eligible higher education students and 16-19 funding

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ there has been a narrowing of the funding gap between per capita adult skills funding and per capita higher education funding (particularly amongst non-apprentices).</li></ul> |
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## **Beyond the employability agenda**

**November 2015**

This paper sets out UCU's priorities and principles in relation to teaching in FE with the aim of strengthening the value and recognition of teaching in further education.

It seeks to develop an alternative agenda to the employability drive in FE and is complemented by 'Beyond the consumerist agenda' the UCU policy paper on teaching quality and student learning in HE.

### **Stable funding and a broad and balanced FE curriculum**

Recommendations:

- the government should fund an education service that is able to develop in all students the level of critical thinking needed to play a role within society.
- it should commit the UK to funding tertiary education at a level that can close the international competitive gap in investment with other countries and enable the UK to compete on an equal footing
- clear funding commitments over a five-year period are needed to allow coordinated planning of resources.
- FE Colleges should be able to offer a fully rounded vocational education, including opportunities for adult students, rather than a narrow approach to skills and training.
- government should reverse Advanced Learning Loans policy
- government should not abolish the maintenance grant
- FE should be returned to the control of local regional bodies, with input from parents, education providers, community groups and employers and a focus on local collaboration rather than competition.

### **Improved conditions for FE teachers**

Recommendations:

- FE teachers should be fairly rewarded  
Teachers in further and adult education should receive at least equal pay to school teachers. In the longer term, FE lecturers' status and pay should be restored to their long-term position sitting between school teachers and university lecturers.
- FE teachers should be employed on proper contracts of employment

We call on college employers to prioritise the conversion of hourly-paid post to full-time, or part-time, fractional positions.

- UCU will continue to campaign to prevent or to mitigate explicit attempts to substitute lecturing jobs with instructor/demonstrator posts.

### **Teaching qualifications and CPD**

Recommendations:

- government should reinstate the requirement for FE teachers to be qualified.  
The regulations should not be applied retrospectively where existing staff are highly qualified and experienced or in a way that impacts disproportionately on equality groups.
- government should set out plans to ensure that the methods for conferring QTLS and QTS are aligned – QTLS should be awarded automatically and free of charge following completion of a teaching qualification.

### **The Professionalism of FE Lecturers**

Recommendations:

- UCU has welcomed the creation of a Centre for Vocational Education Research (CVER), and will watch the development and outputs with interest.
- UCU notes bottom-up initiatives that argue the need for tutor-led, democratic professional association.

### **Relevant and Appropriate CPD as part of the Normal Workload**

Recommendations:

- teachers and lecturers must be trusted with their own continuous professional development.  
They must be supported with the resources and time to work with peers to reflect on their practice as professionals
- training must be provided and fully funded
- there should be a contractual minimum entitlement to CPD
- time off for learning, cover for teaching, payment of fees for external courses and the provision of materials and

equipment must be an explicit feature of the employment contract.

### **Developmental, peer-based accountability and assessment**

Recommendations:

- removing the use of grades and exploring alternative models of observations
- removing the automatic link between observations and capability procedures
- prioritising the professional development of staff - including meaningful, mutually-agreed, support for lecturers where particular development needs are identified
- formal allocation of timetable hours for observations - including pre-observation planning and post-observation feedback
- a portfolio approach to assessing performance - lesson observations should not be the only or main indicator of performance
- the criteria for any informal assessment of lesson observations should be negotiated and agreed
- introducing statutory training and qualifications for all observers.

### **OFSTED inspections**

Recommendations:

- UCU awaits the outcome of feedback from members and analysis of the first inspections under the new common inspection framework for education, skills and early years and will continue to represent our members concerns about the rigour and validity of Ofsted inspections.

### **Students satisfaction surveys**

Recommendations:

- UCU will keep a watching brief to ensure that any attempts to misuse student satisfaction survey data taken from the FE Choices Learner Satisfaction Survey to discipline staff and cut provision are challenged.

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ UCU will continue to highlight the methodological and pedagogical flaws in 'student satisfaction' surveys.</li></ul> |
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**Restructures  
and mergers in  
FE and adult  
education**

**October 2015**

UCU's response:

14-19:

- implement an integrated 14-19 phase with a multi-level diploma based on credit accumulation and transferability to be taken by all students
- overhaul careers education, information, advice and guidance for young people to ensure it is independent, high quality and accessible to all
- employers, teachers and learners all have a valid role in designing vocational qualifications
- restore proper financial support for learners to replace EMA.
- a new kite-marked 'youth resolution' scheme for employers who provide fair pay and structured training and development for their young staff.

Adults:

- over-25s to have a bespoke career change/fresh start programme to replace apprenticeships in recognition of their different educational needs
- reverse the decline in workplace training with statutory time off for learning
- scrap equivalent or lower qualification policy
- skills support for unemployed adults matching local labour market needs using expertise of colleges and LEPs
- implementation of youth resolution for young adults up to 25.
- reconstituted sector skills councils in a social/industrial partnership model to include employers of all sizes, unions, learners, and FE and HE providers.

Apprenticeships:

- revert to a programme for under-25s only
- move towards a statutory three-year minimum duration
- have education at their heart, with mandatory off-site
- learning provision including wider learning aims
- abolish the gap between national minimum wage and apprenticeship minimum wage
- a certified professional title should be awarded upon completion



- financial support through fiscal measures that will work for small and medium enterprises – tax credits, wage subsidies, grants from levy system
- employers should contribute financially to training through levies proportionate to size.

Funding:

- voluntary approach has failed; statutory underpinning of vocational education and training (VET) needed with fiscal measures such as tax credits and levies to properly support and fund learning
- scrap failing 24+ advanced learning loans
- social/industrial partnership model to properly engage all types of employers, provide union role and representation, raise levies and provide grants
- government to fund VET seamlessly without an arbitrary divide at age 19.

## Seeing the bigger picture

December 2014

A paper developing UCU's position on research and funding.

UCU believes that the time is right for a long-term review of research policy and we call on the next Westminster government to undertake this at the earliest opportunity.

### Why research matters

Universities play an important role in the UK economy, for example by providing employment and export earnings. Research is an important part of this economic contribution with licenses, spin-out companies and specific research and consultancy for businesses.

### UK spending on research and development

There is a growing consensus that the UK urgently needs to address the lack of public and private investment in research and development (R&D).

Research and technological innovation are internationally competitive, yet the UK is falling behind countries such as the US and China who have increased – not cut – public spending on R&D. UCU calls on the government to ensure that spending on R&D catches up with the average for OECD countries.

The UK has particularly low levels of private investment. The government should consider a more radical approach to stimulate private investment in R&D, for example in creating a state investment bank.

### Priorities for UCU research:

- long-term investment strategies
- fundamental review of R&D funding and assessment
- strengthening institutional autonomy and academic freedom in order to protect the independence of research councils
- focus on making the UK an attractive place for research and staff.

<b>Additional learning support</b>	<p>UCU and Disability Rights UK called jointly for properly funded and consistent additional learning support funding to support disabled learners to fully access and participate in further and higher education.</p> <p>We call for an inclusive education system that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ removes financial barriers to access to further and higher education</li><li>■ is founded on respect for equality and diversity, commitment to the promotion of social inclusion and active opposition to all forms of discrimination.</li></ul> <p>The government should recognise and meet the extra course costs students can face as a direct result of a disability or specific learning difficulty.</p>
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