

# Finding the silver lining in the cloud – a response to the pandemic

Professor Colin McCaig  
Sheffield Institute of Education

# Widening participation research

2 strands of my work as a political scientist interested in HE and WP

- evaluation of WP outreach programmes
- research into WP policymaking (national, institutional)

Methods: content analysis - critical discourse analysis - critical policy discourse analysis

Context: developing market system in English HE



# THE MARKETISATION OF ENGLISH HIGHER EDUCATION

A Policy Analysis of a Risk-Based System

Colin McCaig

 GREAT DEBATES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

# Equality and Differentiation in Marketised Higher Education

A New Level Playing Field?

*Edited by*

**Marion Bowl**

**Colin McCaig**

**Jonathan Hughes**



Palgrave  
Studies in  
Excellence and  
Equity in Global  
Education



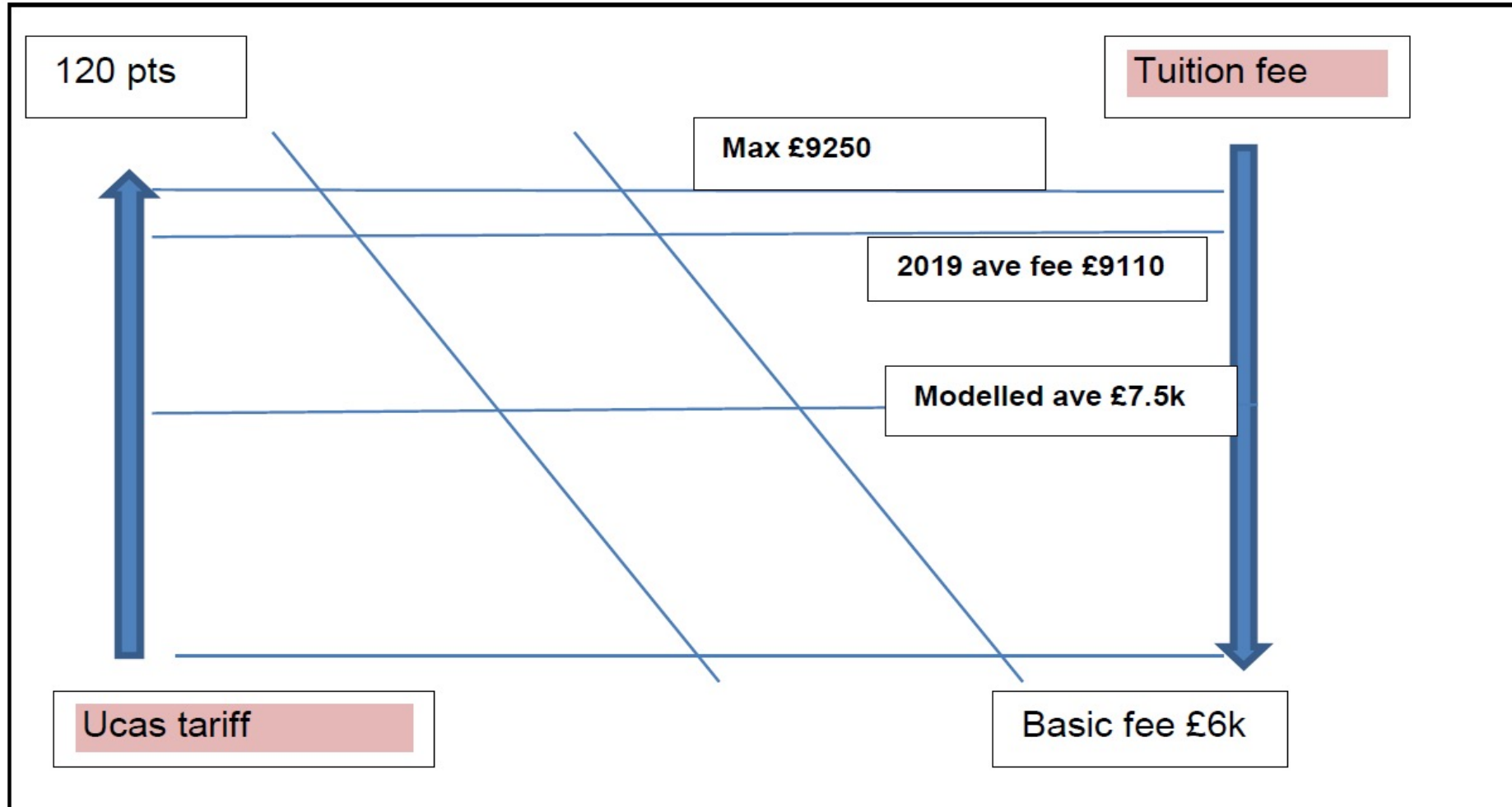
# Silver linings?

- WP is not going to go away
- More awareness of the critical importance of contextual admissions
- Demand is holding up
- Mature and commuter students report advantages
- Less obvious for staffing .....

# Policy trends

- Augar Review
- 'make the market work better'
- Shift from HE to FE
- --- but Govt still wedded to reducing the average tuition fee .....

# Dual price scale



# Now and future policy

- What happened to Augar review.....?
- Spending Review ..... ?
- 2020 recap
  1. suspension of market activity (fear of numbers drop-off so as 2019 +/- 5%)
  2. ban on con/unconditional offers
  3. No drop off of applicants
  4. pre-92s grew about 10%.... post-92s held up

# Now and future policy 2

- 2021 cycle - BTEC and A level exams cancelled again (centre assessed grades or 'limited entry exams')
- UCAS suggests more studying locally since Covid
- Flip to online - how permanent will this end up being? - impact on costs and fees?
- Applicant numbers in next 5 years? likely to hold-up due to unemployment....?



# Government plans... interim response to Augar (Jan 2021)

- Con govt still **wants to** shift to Technical Voc Ed in FE colleges.....
- still **wants to** eradicate 'low quality' degree programmes - if it can define them
- LEO and his friends - but 'good HE' can't be reduced to remuneration
- Graduate premium still exists - demand remains high

# Augar possibilities still on the table

- Cuts to maximum tuition fee
- Reduction in state support for some subjects (favouring STEM)
- Higher Technical Qualifications (poss HE/FE link)
- Minimum entry requirements to qualify for student loans (DDD?)
- Skills for Jobs white paper - boost for careers advice

# Augar...but

- Single year only spending review
- Frozen tuition income
- 2025 date for lifelong loan entitlements
- Recognition that without a financial incentive young people won't turn away from degrees..
- Removal of London weighting for teaching support and research

# Further reading

**Archer, L.** (2003a) *Social class and higher education*, in L. Archer, M. Hutchings and A. Ross (Eds), *Higher Education and social class: issues of exclusion and inclusion* published by Routledge Falmer, London and New York

**Boliver, V** (2011) Expansion, differentiation, and the persistence of social class inequalities in British higher education, [Higher Education](#), March 2011, Volume 61, [Issue 3](#), pp 229–242

**Bowl** (2018) in Bowl, McCaig, C. and Hughes, J. (eds) *Equality, Equity and Differentiation in Marketised Higher Education*, Palgrave

**Leathwood, CJ & O'Connell, PJ** (2003) 'It's a struggle': the construction of the 'new' student' in higher education, *Journal of Education Policy*, November-December 2003 VOL. 18, N. 6, 597-615

**McCaig, C** (2018) *The marketisation of English Higher Education: a policy analysis of a risk-based system*, Emerald Publishing ISBN: 9781787438576

**McCaig, C** (2018b) System differentiation in England: the imposition of supply and demand in Bowl, M., McCaig, C. and Hughes, J. (eds) *Equality, Equity and Differentiation in Marketised Higher Education*, Palgrave

# Recent blogs...

**HEPI** *It's the autonomy, stupid: Augar, admissions and market signalling*,  
<https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2019/08/19/its-the-autonomy-stupid-augar-admissions-and-market-signalling/>

**SRHE Blog** *Five stages of marketisation in English higher education policymaking*. March 29<sup>th</sup> 2019

<https://srheblog.com/2019/03/29/five-stages-of-marketisation-in-english-higher-education-policymaking/>

**WonkHE** *Admissions: a contextualised tale of two reviews* August 1<sup>st</sup> 2019

<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/admissions-a-contextualised-tale-of-two-reviews/>

**Sheffield Institute of Policy Studies** blog [\*Augar and the Impact on the English Higher Education Market\*](#), 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019

**WonkHE** *A Graduate Tax: the right solution for the wrong problem?*

December 11<sup>th</sup> 2018

<https://wonkhe.com/blogs/a-graduate-tax-the-right-solution-for-the-wrong-problem/>

**WonkHE** *Lifting (or doffing) the cap: patterns of student acceptance across the sector*, February 2016, <http://wonkhe.com/blogs/lifting-or-doffing-the-cap/>

**WonkHE** *The strange death of student number controls*, October 2014,  
<http://wonkhe.com/blogs/the-strange-death-of-student-number-controls/>