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1. **UCU Conference, 8 May – Teaching and Learning: What is at Stake for UCU?**

UCU staged a conference, *Teaching and Learning: What is at Stake for UCU*, on Saturday 8 May. There were keynote speeches by leading academics, Professor Ken Spours, Head of Continuing and Professional Education, London Institute of Education, on 14-19 curriculum and assessment, and Maire Daley, Chair of UCU's Education Committee on radical pedagogy as well as workshops presented by expert practitioners. The conference was well received and there were calls for it to become an annual event.

Material from the conference will be available on UCU's website listing for the event (<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4502>) in early June.

2. **Policy Statement on Good Governance in Further and Higher Education**

In order to support and strengthen the union's campaign for open, representative and collegial governance the UCU's Education Committee has drawn up a policy statement on good governance. The statement draws out seven principles of good governance applicable to both further and higher education and makes a series of recommendations to substantiate the seven principles across both sectors. The statement will be debated at the UCU Congress to be held in May-June 2010. We would welcome comments on the statement and its recommendations.

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/html/ucu267.html>

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/rtf/ucu267.rtf>

3. Policy Department Briefings and Networks

Briefings

Over the past six months UCU's public policy team has produced a number of briefings on UCU policy relating to key education issues. The briefings are on the UCU website at <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4381> with the following topics available so far:

Policy Briefings Available:

- Analysis of the Emerging Policy Positions on HE in FE
- Research Excellence Framework
- Young People not in Employment, Education or Training (NEETS)
- The Bologna Process
- Student Participation in Quality Assurance in the FE and HE Sectors
- Higher Ambitions – The Government's Framework for Higher Education
- Two-year Degrees
- Higher Education in Further Education Colleges
- Changes in post 16 education post LSC
- Funding – suggested questions for management
- FE College Funding 2010 – 2011
- Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS)
- UCU and NUT activity at local level on 16-19 provision
- Student: Teacher Ratios in HE and FE
- Tuition Fees in HE

UCU Guide to Online Learning

A briefing updating the current UCU guidance on online learning guidance will be available on UCU's website in early June – see the Professional and Publications section under the menu on the left of the homepage.

Policy Department Electronic Networks

We have a number of electronic networks for UCU members working or interested in the following areas of the education:

- FE Teacher Education and Training
- ESOL
- HE in FE
- School Teacher Education and Training
- 14-19/Diplomas
- Intellectual Property

Joining a network will include you in the distribution of relevant information including details of events, and access, via head office, to a group of peers with whom to share experiences and advice. If you would like to join one or more of the above networks, or suggest the formation of network in another area contact Diana Hendry (dhendry@ucu.org.uk).

4. Quality Assurance in FE and HE

New Quality Assurance Procedures in Post-16 Quality Assurance System

BIS and DCSF have published [*The Quality Assurance System for post-16 education and training provision*](#). The new quality assurance system has been designed to 'ensure that each provider will be held to account for the quality of its provision by a single sponsoring body'. FE colleges will be the responsibility of the Skills Funding Agency as will providers of Apprenticeships. The role of the sponsoring body is 'to provide support, challenge and, where necessary, intervene to ensure that poor performance is addressed quickly and robustly'. For 14-19 significant amounts of provision will be commissioned by local authorities from FE Colleges. Local authorities as sponsoring bodies and lead commissioners will judge how well a provider is performing by evaluating a range of evidence, including that provided by the self-assessment, Framework for Excellence (FfE) and Ofsted inspections. Further details can be found in the Policy Department Briefing on Post-LSC arrangements (see above) and/or from Dan Taubman dtaubman@ucu.org.uk.

The Future of Quality Assurance: UCU Response

Quality assurance is another key policy issue for UCU members in higher education. In March we responded to the consultation on the future of quality assurance arrangements in England and Northern Ireland. Our submission stresses the need for direct academic involvement in the quality assurance process as well as the centrality of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. It emphasises our belief that a strengthened external examining system remains the best way to ensure academic standards. Above all, we highlight the importance of adequate public funding and properly paid and well-motivated staff in guaranteeing a high quality 'student experience':

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/a/8/qareview_ucuresponse_mar10.pdf

5. UCU and Teacher Education

Both AUT and NATFHE undertook considerable work on and around teacher education. UCU members are at the heart of the delivery of teacher education programmes for school teachers, FE and HE lecturers. The Policy Department will be undertaking work to revive this area of activity. The Department is looking for UCU teacher educator members who are, and will be, interested in this work. One of the aims will be to form an electronic network of members, and to construct an agenda for future activities around teacher education both in terms of current and future policy developments, and UCU policy formation. If you are interested in teacher education and want to be part of the network and policy making contact John Offord jofford@ucu.org.uk or Dan Taubman dtaubman@ucu.org.uk. Please specify if you are interested in all aspects of teacher education, or teacher training for FE and the Learning and Skills Sector, school teacher teacher training or HE teacher training.

6. Research Performance Management and the Research Excellence Framework

In the run up to the 2013 Research Excellence Framework (REF) a number of universities are attempting to bring in new 'research performance' measures for academic staff. As a result we are seeing an increasing micromanagement of individual research plans as well as the application of unacceptable capability or performance criteria (both in relation to grant income and publication behaviour). The national union is keen to get a better picture of the 'research performance' processes that are being introduced or piloted at a number of universities. Please can you send in any information, including details of the management's proposals and local UCU responses, to Rob Copeland, Policy Officer: rcopeland@ucu.org.uk

For details of UCU's 'Stand up for Research' campaign on the REF click on www.ucu.org.uk/standupforresearch

7. European Education Policy

An emerging trend in European Education Policy is the establishment over the last few months of a European sectoral dialogue for the Education Sector, an EU funded project which mirrors more developed 'dialogues' elsewhere. A very tentative structure has been set up, largely at the instigation of the ETUCE and with European Commission financial support – and with the employers' structures only very recently formed in order to meet this new challenge. Only one union and one employer representative per country is allowed although as a concession there is a subordinate structure for higher education in the process of formation, and UCU has been nominated to hold the higher education seat. The Social Dialogue is not intended to impinge on collective bargaining or the range of issues that are in the province of collective bargaining, so what the new structures will deal with is an open question. It will be particularly interesting to see how the Social Dialogue finds its feet in the period of harsh economic and financial decisions we are entering.

8. Select Committee Publishes NEETs Report

The cross-party Children, Schools and Families Committee has published on 8 April a [report](#) into 'Young people not in education, employment or training'. The report examines who NEETs are, the actions already taken by government and assesses what more needs to be done. It draws on the approach taken in the Netherlands where there are relatively generous levels of benefits and other support offered to young people in exchange for a greater compulsion to take up further education. The report makes a number of recommendations including: that government could enhance the benefits of the strategies outlined in *Investing in Potential* by extending the policies so that they apply more flexibly to a wider range of young people; a call for a joined-up approach to the provision of information advice and guidance (IAG), benefit advice, housing support and health matters in the form of a 'one-stop shop'; that government considers the balance between relatively generous benefits and support for young people in exchange for a greater compulsion to take up education, training or work; and that government considers strengthening the rewards offered to local authorities who are successful in raising rates of participation.

9. Student: Teacher Ratios in Higher and Further Education

The UCU policy team has been investigating the ratios in FE and HE because of their potential impact on education. The ratio of students to teachers provides an indication of workload for teaching as well as support for academic-related staff in higher and further education. It can also be viewed as one indicator of the quality of education provided for students and learners on the basis that the more teaching and support per learner, the better the learner's educational experience is likely to be.

In higher education, the UK average SSR has fluctuated around 17.0:1, and has decreased in a small but steady fashion since 2005-6, when it was 16.8:1, to 2008-9, when it was 16.3:1, according to data produced by the Higher Education Statistics Agency. The UK SSR is still higher than the average for member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, although the most recent OECD average figure was 15.3:1 in 2007. Given that academics combining teaching and research are counted as full-time teaching staff by HESA, it may be that the 'real' SSR in HE is higher than shown in the data. In FE colleges in England as a whole, the LTR was 19.9:1 in 2008-9.

10. Global Education Policy

Education International 7th Global HE Conference – September 2010

Education International will hold its 7th global higher education conference in Vancouver in September. It will work on strategies to challenge the notion that universities and other public sector institutions should feel the pain of cuts generated by the greed of the private finance sector. The conference will also keep up the pressure to build stronger cooperation between higher education unions and systems in the industrialised countries and in the global south.

EI Global Task force on Vocational Education

The EI global task force on vocational education has set out a policy agenda for the sector, which has historically been neglected in international structures. It is hoped that the next EI World Congress in July 2011 will revitalise policy across the range of post-school education.

11. Scotland Scottish Funding Council

UCU Scotland has welcomed the SFC decision to delay changes in the way it funds teaching in Scottish universities. The union had raised concerns that the proposals were based on patchy data and dubious analysis, which would have seen some of the newer universities losing out. The SFC announced it will delay the implementation of the proposals for a year to allow for further data to be collected and to reassess plans.

UCU Scotland Congress

UCU Scotland Congress passed resolutions calling on the Scottish Government to initiate an inquiry into future of Scottish universities. Other resolutions attacked the creeping privatisation and targets culture in Scottish universities, the undermining of academic freedom and the use of social networking sites and anonymous student evaluation questionnaires in disciplinary procedures.

12. BIS Launches Consultation on Low-Carbon Skills

BIS has launched a consultation on 23 April on [Meeting the low carbon skills challenge](#) which sets out the Government's key skills priorities, and the challenges which 'must be met' to enable British workers and businesses to take advantage of the opportunities in those sectors that are key to reducing our carbon emissions and embed the necessary skills across all sectors to move the UK to a low carbon and resource efficient economy. The document identifies five key challenges for employers, the skills system and the government. The consultation seeks views on potential action across the education and training system and how Government, business, individuals and training providers can work together to 'deliver the right skills to nurture sustainable growth and build Britain's low carbon future'. UCU intends to make a response on questions that relate to further, adult and higher education. Responses are sought by 23 June 2010 and UCU members are invited to send comments on and thoughts on these to Dan Taubman dtaubman@ucu.org.uk.

13. Trials to Prepare for Raising the Participation Age

Five new Raising Participation Age (RPA) [trials](#) (Ealing, Blackpool, Plymouth, Worcestershire and a joint trial involving Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull) have been announced to help prepare young people and the education sector for a change in the law towards all young people continuing in education until they are 18. These trials are being piloted in addition to the extension of 11 existing trials (Barnsley, Swindon, Wandsworth, Derby, Staffordshire, Cumbria, East Sussex, Hertfordshire, Lambeth, Newcastle and Greater Manchester). The funding for the additional trials is backed by approximately £1 million of investment in preparation for the raising of the participation age to 17 by 2013 and 18 by 2015 across England. RPA will involve all young people staying in full-time education, work-based learning such as an Apprenticeship, or part-time education or training. The trials focus on developing best practice in three different priorities: re-engaging 16- and 17-year-olds who have dropped out of learning, back into education or training; providing the right careers advice to young people drawing on the recent DCSF information, advice and guidance strategy; and developing area-wide strategies that meet local needs and enable full participation of all young people in education or training.

If you are working in these areas and have been involved in these trials, the Policy Department would be grateful for any information and your opinions. Contact Dan Taubman dtaubman@ucu.org.uk.

If you have any comments or feedback on PolicyNews, please send this to Diana Hendry dhendry@ucu.org.uk. The next issue will be out at the end of June.