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We're interested in your views

1. UCU Congress: HE in FE Fringe Meeting

The expansion of higher education in further education colleges in England has been a key policy of both the current and the previous government. It received a boost from the allocation of almost ten thousand directly funded HE places to FE colleges for the coming academic year. Some colleges clearly see HE provision as a central part of their future, including the securing of their own degree-awarding powers.

At Congress the implications of these developments were discussed both in formal debate and at a fringe meeting. In Congress a motion was passed calling on the union to ensure that the expansion of HE in FE was not at the expense of quality. It also instructed us to begin looking at the implications for the conditions of service and professional development of members with significant involvement in HE in FE. We have already undertaken a survey of colleges which has provided us with some useful data on current practice. In terms of teaching hours and time for scholarly activity, the survey shows that there is much work for

the union to do in supporting our members, but that there are also some pockets of good practice to build upon.

The Policy Team have set up an email list for members with an interest in the professional issues associated with HE in FE. If you want to join the list, please email

dhendrey@ucu.org.uk.

2. University places – further deregulation for high performing students

BIS have announced that from 2013-14 students achieving ABB grades or higher will be outside of student number controls. They are already implementing a change from this September to allow universities to freely recruit AAB students. The number of places affected by the two changes is estimated at around 120,000.

At the same time, the number of contestable 'margin' places open to institutions charging lower fees has dropped to 5,000 from 20,000 in 2012-13. The most selective universities will be able to recruit freely, but other institutions will have to make choices as to whether to compete for unregulated students to maintain their numbers, to compete for the margin places or to target their existing resources more narrowly to shore up their financial position (potentially closing courses or departments and not investing in facilities and staff).

There is concern that the policy will impact adversely on social mobility. It may reverse the progress made on the use of contextual information for admissions; and mature students or those without traditional academic qualifications will be disadvantaged. There is also evidence that some institutions are beginning to direct scarce resources at high performing students by offering merit based bursaries as opposed to bursaries based upon financial need. The drop in the number of margin places also removes the incentive for institutions to lower their fees. UCU will be monitoring the impact of the policy both on students and institutions delivering HE.

3. Policy in Wales

Qualification Review Update

Earlier this year, the Welsh Government announced it was to appoint a board, led by Huw Evans (former Principal of Coleg Llandrillo) to review 14-19 qualifications in Wales. This board has now reported back its initial findings, which have been put out for formal consultation.

The consultation document itself includes more than 50 points for discussion. One of the points suggests the creation of an overarching qualification for Wales, based upon the Welsh Baccalaureate. In addition, another suggestion made has been to grade the advanced version of the Welsh Baccalaureate.

The consultation document notes that a further divergence between Wales and England should be allowed, as changes that are happening in England do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Welsh Government, such as social and educational inclusion.

UCU Cymru will be responding formally to the consultation during the summer period.

Further Education Governance

UCU Cymru has received a response from the Minister to the letter that was submitted in April 2012. UCU Cymru raised concerns over plans to remove the categories of membership from governing bodies which would result in staff no longer being represented on governing bodies. UCU Cymru also raised concerns relating to the effectiveness and accountability of the model proposed for the membership bodies.

The Minister noted that the position made in his statement on 22 November 2011 has not changed. In the statement he gave assurances that there would be reserved places for staff on the new membership bodies, but not on the governing body. He also notes in his response that staff in general will not be precluded from sitting on the governing bodies; the chair of the membership body will have observer status on the governing body.

With regards to the national contract, the Minister said there are various approaches available to the Welsh Government to encourage colleges to implement and maintain the national contract, for example as terms and conditions of their funding.

North East Wales HE provision

Following on from the announcement made by the Minister for Education and Skills in February 2012 that he will commission Sir Adrian Webb to conduct a review of HE provision in North East Wales, UCU Cymru branch representatives from Glyndwr University, Yale College and Deeside College met to discuss our response to the review. Several issues have been raised, of which have formed the UCU Cymru response to the review.

In our response, we highlighted that the primary focus of Glyndwr, Deeside and Yale colleges is that of an educational establishment, designed to provide a balance of educational provision. The response also reiterated that UCU Cymru are supportive of the Transformation Agenda within higher education and further education on the basis that there are no compulsory redundancies of UCU Cymru members as a result of any proposals and that there is no unreasonable increase in workload for academic and lecturing staff.

UCU Cymru has also raised concerns regarding HE in FE. UCU Cymru have made it clear that there needs to be a recognition of the differing administrative and quality management and their impact on workloads of staff delivering HE curriculum on FE contracts.

In addition, UCU Cymru is calling for clear and agreed remission time for scholarly activity to ensure a seamless provision of HE offering in North East Wales (delivered at both HE and FE institutions).

In terms of governance, UCU Cymru is calling on the Webb Review to ensure that there are clear lines of accountability as part of the streamlined HE system in NE Wales. UCU Cymru is also calling for the Webb Review to conduct discussions around the governance of a possible hybrid institution, given the different policy positions the government hold in relation to FE and HE, and that staff and community groups are fully consulted.

Deeside College and Yale College to merge

UCU Cymru has responded to the formal consultation on the proposed merger between Deeside College and Yale College, which is due take place by August 2013. UCU Cymru are clear that our support for transformation is conditional on full engagement with the processes of the merger and appointments during merger discussions, a commitment to no compulsory redundancies as a consequence of the proposed merger and that the breadth of provision currently available within the two institutions is maintained.

UCU Cymru also urged the new institution to incorporate staff and students in the governance of the new institution in a democratic management style, which includes representation up to governing body level. In addition, UCU Cymru urged the new institution to ensure HE provision is delivered correctly. This means that staff who teach HE on FE contracts should have reduced class contact hours in line with the national agreements for post-92 institutions. These members of staff should also be given similar teaching and learning resources, as well as the opportunities to undertake scholarly activity as their colleagues in post-92 institutions.

Learning and Skills Measure

The National Assembly for Wales' Children and Young People Committee has published its report on its inquiry into the implementation of the Learning and Skills Measure. The final report can be found [here](#).

4. FE Loans/fees

UCU continues to campaign against the introduction of FE loans in September 2013. All government funding for level 3 and above courses for people 24 and over will be removed. This funding will be replaced by HE style FE loans. Even the government's own impact assessments show there may be over 100,000 adult students lost. UCU are working with NIACE, NUS and UNISON on a campaign to stop loans being introduced, or at the very least delayed. UCU has promoted a number of parliamentary questions aimed at getting more information on exactly how many students and what programmes may be affected by the introduction of loans. On the 18th June UCU briefed the Labour Shadow FE team and Labour MPs. A briefing on loans has been sent to every MP with a FE college in their constituency. Working with FE Week UCU, NUS, NIACE, AoC and UNISON a survey was carried out in which the majority of respondents, largely principals, vice Principals and MIS managers, covering more than 150 different FE colleges supported delaying or scrapping the introduction of FE loans. More than half (55 per cent) said the sector was not very aware or prepared for FE loans. A further 89 per cent of respondents said the public was not very aware of the proposed system. FE Week hosted a roundtable debate on May 9 to discuss the sector's concerns about FE loans. The survey results can be found on <http://isect.co.uk/FE-week-28-tech.pdf>.

The SFA has recently published some frequently asked questions and answers on FE loans which clarify some of issues around the introduction of loans. This can be found on the SFA web site <http://skillsfundingagency.bis.gov.uk/>. This covers topics such as support programmes for providers, communications and awareness campaigns for potential student.

There will be formal guidance to providers and the new National Careers Service will be involved in giving advice to students. Loans will be available for up to 3 A levels, Access to HE courses and QCF level 3 and 4 certificates and diplomas. An individual can obtain a maximum of 4 loans but the loan will only cover the costs of tuition not books, travel or equipment. It will not cover any additional learning needs required by the student. Or any maintenance costs. Any apprentice over 24 will have to take out a loan to cover 50% of the tuition costs of their apprenticeship. If made redundant they will be liable to repay the loan when back in work.

BIS also have published on the 18th June a Regulatory Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment. These can be found on <http://www.bis.gov.uk/policies/further-education-skills/24-plus-advanced-learning-loans>. Access to HE courses and students will be hit hard by the introduction of FE loans. The student will have to take out a loan to take their Access course and then another HE loan if and when they are successful. UCU needs case studies of successful Access students as part of our campaigning work and also details of any Access courses which have or are being cut for next academic year. Please send details to Dan Taubman dtaubman@ucu.org.uk.

5. UCU Congress: international solidarity

International solidarity was a prominent theme at this year's UCU Congress in Manchester. The highlight was the speech by Colombian academic and former political prisoner, Dr Miguel Beltran. Miguel was in the UK to say thanks to UCU members for the role they played in securing his release from jail in June 2011. Miguel was also able to highlight the ongoing problems faced by Colombian trade unionists and political prisoners.

Colombia wasn't the only international issue debated in Manchester. Delegates also discussed the difficulties facing workers in Greece, Egypt and Burma. For a full list of the international motions, please go to <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=6113>.

A full update on the union's international work will be in the next UCU International Newsletter. For past issues, please go to:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5798>.

6. FE Workforce Professionalism

Most UCU members in FE will be aware that as a result of the UCU boycott of IfL's imposition of member subscriptions the Government set up an independent Panel to review and make recommendations on FE workforce professionalism. Just before Easter an interim report was published with the Panel's recommendations on IfL and the 2007 Regulations. These were that:

- IfL didn't command the confidence of the Sector;
- nearly 120,000 FE staff didn't pay the IfL subscription;
- the 2007 regulations on teacher training qualifications and CPD should be revoked;
- the IfL refunded the 2nd year of subscription to those who had paid for 2 years;
- the FE initial teacher training qualifications be renamed and simplified;

- PTLLS should be revamped and that there should be a level 5 Certificate in Education and a level 7 Diploma in FE for those who wanted these qualifications.

Although UCU achieved most of what we had been demanding, there is a danger that the baby of the requirement for a FE teaching qualification for newly appointed lecturers may be thrown out with the IfL bathwater. BIS has just completed a consultation on revoking the 2007 Regulations, and may well decide to revoke all the Regulations including the initial teacher training regulation. UCU has made a formal response to this consultation which can be obtained from the UCU Policy Department. The response argued that UCU did not support the revocation of the requirement for a teaching qualification so as to prevent the flooding of FE with none or part qualified cheap part time staff unless effective mechanisms are put in place to ensure that teaching staff are appropriately qualified for their professional role and to ensure a high quality of teaching and learning. UCU believes that there needs to be an appropriate level of qualification for the various teaching roles that are undertaken in FE. We also argued that there need to be conditions with funding agreements to ensure properly qualified teachers with access and support to good programmes of CPD. The UCU response did support the revocation of the Regulation on CPD. However the response strongly made the point that it would be necessary to have arrangements to ensure lecturers in all institutions have the necessary support and resources to undertake quality CPD. UCU has long argued that there should be an entitlement for CPD. This would underpin any future arrangements around CPD. We also want to see much better arrangements for part time teachers to access CPD.

Lingfield 's work is not yet complete. In its work through July it will look at nature of FE 'professionalism' given all that is changing in FE, guidance to OFSTED on how the new Inspection Framework could be used to ensure all FE staff were qualified and given CPD opportunities, any special arrangements for Basic Skills teachers and those involved with LDD. There are still other issues that will need to be addressed, most notably whether QTLS status will remain, and if it does not what will happen to the DfE's moves to establish equivalency between QTS and QTLS. UCU will be making a submission to this part of the Lingfield Panel's work.

There is still a great deal of confusion as to whether people still need to be getting a CTLLS or DTLLS qualification and the future of QTLS. Advice to UCU members is to sit tight, don't rejoin IfL and don't be bullied into going for QTLS status until the various issues are resolved. There should not be pressure from managements to either go onto a CTLLS or DTLLS course or go for QTLS status. If your management is putting pressure on staff then let your regional office or UCU FE Department know immediately.

7. Policy in Northern Ireland

HE Strategy – "Graduating to Success"

On 24th April Dr Stephen Farry, Minister for Employment and Learning published the Higher Education strategy for Northern Ireland until 2020.

The 80 page document “Graduating to Success” can be accessed on www.delni.gov.uk/graduating-to-success-he-strategy-for-ni.pdf.

The ‘guiding principles’ are **responsiveness, quality, accessibility and flexibility** – that is, HE must be responsive to the needs of the economy (this would fit neatly with the universities’ preference for DEL – Dept for Employment and Learning to slip into Dept of Enterprise, Trade and Industry or a new, improved Department for the Economy when the decision is finally made – *see below for further detail*).

Quality of the student experience means that excellence in teaching will be a priority – a quality assurance framework developed with the QAA.

Accessibility in HE will see more pilots of university bases at the FE colleges to enable access to HE throughout NI; with HE providers encouraged to collaborate on an all-Ireland basis.

Flexibility will mean a flexible lifelong learning environment with new routes into HE and increased p/t and PG capacity.

There will be a review of the Maximum Student Number (MASN) policy by 2016.

A Project Steering Group will now be established to take forward the 16 identified projects emanating from the strategy. These are:

- 1** Increase the number of learners undertaking HE in economically relevant subjects
- 2** Support internationally excellent and world-leading R&D
- 3** Build up and increase sustainable Knowledge Transfer activities
- 4** Develop a single quality assurance framework for all HE providers in NI
- 5** Create a more supportive learning environment
- 6** Enhance the employability of NI graduates
- 7** Increase NI’s international HE activity
- 8** Improve learner information in regard to HE
- 9** Enhance engagement between the HE sector, community and government
- 10** Establish university bases at FE colleges
- 11** Facilitate cross-border co-operation and student mobility
- 12** Establish a flexible lifelong learning system
- 13** Review the HE funding mode
- 14** Achieve efficiency savings within the sector
- 15** Review the Maximum Student Number (MaSN)
- 16** Enhance the governance and accountability framework

NEETS Strategy – Pathways for Success

‘Pathways to Success’, the Executive’s Strategy for young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training was presented to the NI Assembly on 11th June.

The Strategy links to both the Programme for Government and the Executive’s Economic Strategy. It is a cross-departmental initiative, addressing in particular the challenge presented by young people who are not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). The Pathways to Success strategy will have a particular emphasis on those young people furthest from the labour market and facing barriers to participation in learning and employment.

The strategy aims to deliver a three tier package of measures aimed at preventing young people falling into the NEET category in the first place; helping young people in the 16-18 age group, especially those facing barriers; and assisting unemployed young people aged 18-24 more generally. Some of the initiatives include:

- The Careers Service, using information available from schools, colleges, providers of 'Training for Success' and other training programmes, will case manage those young people aged 16 and 17 who drop out of provision or do not have a positive destination when they leave school. An identification and tracking system will be developed for those young people who are in or who might enter the NEET category.
- A new Community Family Support Programme which will focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged families, to enable young people to re-engage with education, training or employment.
- A community based access programme will engage and mentor young people using community and voluntary sector organisations. The organisations will provide continuity of support for young people to engage or re-engage with learning and to progress through mainstream training provision into employment.
- The introduction of a training allowance for young people participating on existing ESF programmes targeted at those who are NEET.
- An innovation fund to test new approaches based on sound evidence will be aimed at piloting a range of other approaches to re-engaging those young people in the NEET category.

8. UCU/NUS guidance on internships published

In recent years there has been a growth in the number of graduates taking up unpaid 'internships' to gain work experience. The NUS and the UCU have published advice on the use of such internships, including in the further and higher education sectors:

<http://www.nus.org.uk/PageFiles/24282/NUS%20unpaid%20internships%20advice.pdf>

The NUS and the TUC have also launched a new campaign that is aimed at abolishing the unlawful employment of unpaid internships. For more information on the campaign, click on:

<http://www.nus.org.uk/en/campaigns/citizenship/unpaid-internships-we-cant-work-for-free/unpaid-internships-campaign-launch/>

9. A-level consultation

On June 19th OFQUAL, the exam regulator issued a new consultation on A levels. A level resits could be reduced under potential changes announced today by Ofqual, as part of its consultation into A level reform in England. This will look at the structure and assessment arrangements of the qualification. The consultation also outlines plans for universities to determine the content of A levels. Among the changes proposed are ensuring involvement of higher education in the design and sign-off of A levels, the abolition of January exams and limiting resits and whether or not AS levels should continue. Following the consultation, any changes will take place from September 2013 to 2018. The consultation document can be

found at <http://comment.ofqual.gov.uk/a-level-reform/>. The consultation will run for 12 weeks, until 11 September.

Although UCU has long standing policies around 16-19 qualifications including parity between academic/general and vocational/applied qualifications and the need for a multi-level overarching qualification framework into which various elements such as GCSE, A levels, BTECs and other vocational qualifications could fit, we do not have policies on some of the details that the consultation proposes such as the number of resits allowable or whether AS levels should remain. UCU members are encouraged to let the Policy Department know their views on the proposals which will be taken into account in a final UCU response. Contact Dan Taubman dtaubman@ucu.org.uk.

10. Policy in Scotland

Cabinet Secretary at UCU Scotland Events

Mike Russell, Cabinet Secretary for Education, delivered a general speech to UCU Scotland conference covering his plans for education reform in Scotland. He stated that the curriculum for excellence, CfE, in schools would bring about improvements in the knowledge and skills in students attending higher education in the future, as the first cohort of pupils begin the new system. He outlined his plans for post-16 reform which mainly addressed the move towards regionalisation of colleges.

On governance, Michael Russell stated that academic freedom should be protected and that democracy and transparency should be underlined. He welcomed the HE Governance Review report with the Presidents of UCU and NUS Scotland after his address and posed for photographs.

He left plenty of time for questions and in reply to the chair said that legalisation would be introduced on governance and post-16 reform with the later likely to have a draft bill in the summer. He answered further questions including the following topics:

- governance – stated he wished to see change to improve governance
- subject closures – said it was a matter for the institution but lamented the lack of consultation with staff and other providers
- older learner – stated he wished to prioritise young learners due to the lack of funding
- research funding – again he insisted he had to prioritise funding on best research
- business interaction – he agreed that academia should go into industry citing Horizon 2020
- migration – he stated that Scotland could have a different approach with independence

At the UCU Scotland Presidential reception on 9 May, the Minister commended UCU for its work stating that though there were disagreements on policy we were able to work together for the good of universities. He went on to state that he would make a statement to the Parliament on the review of post-16 education in June before the summer recess.

Fees for rest of UK students

Confusion has blown up over Northern Irish fees due to the possibility that such students could have dual nationality and apply as EU students with Irish passports. This story gained legs when it was realised that many more UK students could apply for dual EU passports if any of their grandparents were born in another EU country. It was further revealed that these applicants could cause a breach of the consolidated student numbers. The Scottish Funding Council responded by stating that penalties for over recruitment could be relaxed for such students.

Ironically, the Scottish government is also considering implementing the Irish system whereby all students are charged fees but home students are compensated in the student support arrangements. EU sources have told Scotland on Sunday that the plan is the only way the SNP Government can “get away with” charging European students while maintaining free access to those based in Scotland.

11. Upcoming policy events

There are a range of events in the pipeline in the policy department at the moment. These include a joint event with NIACE on adult basis skills in October, the annual HE Teacher Education event, likely to be in November and another FE Staff Governors conference in November or December. If you’d like to register your interest in any of these events, email Diana Hendry at dhendry@ucu.org.uk.

12. Comments and feedback

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