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1. Professionalism in Further Education

The final report by the Lingfield Review Panel on FE workforce professionalism was published on 23 October. It can be found at: <http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/further-education-skills/docs/p/12-1198-professionalism-in-further-education-final>. This final report goes well beyond a consideration of professionalism for the FE workforce. It lays out what it sees as being the principal roles that FE should undertake and calls for a unified tertiary system including FE and HE. Its main recommendation is to support the BIS initiative around the creation of the FE Guild. BIS came up with this idea and another initiative to give FE providers chartered status if they met certain criteria. The FE Guild is intended to be a body representing FE employers and staff. Both corporate and individual membership will be voluntary. It is hoped that the Guild will enhance the status of the sector by providing a single body to set professional standards and codes of behaviour, as well as develop qualifications. The Report also recommended that high performing colleges and providers should be recognised and given more freedom with membership of the Guild and the independent and publicly recognisable award of chartered status. The government published a prospectus for applicants to come up with proposals for the Guild. Such bids had to be employer-led. The successful application from the AoC and the AELP was discussed with FE sector organisations including UCU before it was sent in. The Report also recommends an FE

Covenant through which staff would agree to undertake initial training, CPD and participate in performance management measures whilst the employers would undertake to support training and CPD and enter into meaningful discussions on performance management. With all the discussion around professionalism, the policy department has come up with a discussion document setting out the kind of professionalism that all UCU members might subscribe to. This document sets out the reasons why it is imperative that UCU knows what kind of professionalism members would support. It discusses the main forms that professionalism can take now and puts forward the concept of democratic professionalism that can underpin UCU discussions. This document is intended to start a debate within UCU around professionalism rather than being a definitive statement. The full document and a summary is available from the policy department, email: dhendry@ucu.org.uk. Its author Dan Taubman will be happy to talk to branch and regional meetings on professionalism.

2. Higher education achievement report (HEAR)

A recent report has recommended that from autumn 2012, all students entering undergraduate degree programmes of study in UK higher education institutions will leave with a **Higher Education Achievement Report** (HEAR) as well as a degree certificate. See: <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Newsroom/Media-Releases/Pages/BurgessFinalReport.aspx>.

In summary, the HEAR should:

- adhere to a standard template, be issued as an electronic document and be a maximum of six pages long;
- measure and record achievement - capturing a wide range of knowledge and skills - providing students and employers with a much broader picture than a single degree classification – see: <http://www.hear.ac.uk/>.

More than half of all HEIs have said that they are now going ahead with the implementation of the HEAR and more may follow. However, the final decision rests with individual institutions and some universities have already said that they have no plans to introduce it. See: <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=421452>.

In principle, UCU has been supportive of attempts to produce a more comprehensive record of student achievement but we should be concerned about the enormous amount of extra work involved in this for lecturers and administrators and the danger of yet more time having to be spent away from the core activities of teaching and research. We suggest that UCU branches and local associations report back to the national office with any major concerns regarding the implementation of the HEAR. Please send comments to Rob Copeland rcopeland@ucu.org.uk.

3. Recent reports on HE participation, funding and access

Stephen Court, Senior Research Officer, provides an overview of recent reports in this area.

BIS: Widening participation in higher education (August 2012)

<http://www.bis.gov.uk/analysis/statistics/higher-education/official-statistics-releases/widening-participation-in-higher-education/widening-participation-in-higher-education-2012>

A report by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, which found that for maintained school pupils aged 15 who entered HE by age 19 in academic years 2005-6 to 2009-10, participation by those with Free School Meal status increased from 13% to 18% over the period, and that participation by non-FSM status rose from 33% to 36% - in effect narrowing the gap from 19 percentage points to 18 over the period.

UCAS: Interim assessment of UCAS acceptances by intended entry year, country of institution and qualifications held (20 September 2012)

http://www.ucas.com/documents/mediareleases/ucas_entry_year_acceptances_day28_2012.pdf

This report by UCAS found that acceptances by HEIs in England of England-domiciled full-time undergraduate students four weeks after the release of A-level results were 333,876 (2009-10), 339,944 (2010-11), 361,067 (2011-12) and 311,633 (2012-13), with a fall of 8.3% between 2010-11 and 2012-13, and a fall of 13.7% between 2011-12 and 2012-13.

Alan Milburn: University challenge - how higher education can advance social mobility (October 2012)

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Higher-Education.pdf>

A progress report by the Independent Reviewer on Social Mobility and Child Poverty which noted that the most advantaged 20% of young people were still 7 times more likely to attend the most selective universities than the 40% most disadvantaged, saying 'Access to university remains inequitable'; and that the new fees regime of 2012 had seen a fall in application rates from young people living in the most disadvantaged areas. It said 'every university should seek to do more to widen participation and make access fairer', and that the 'sector ... should set out publicly a clear ambition - in the form of statistical targets - for the progress it will make over the next five years on both widening participation and fair access'. Its recommendations included: universities, in place of the abolished EMA, providing financial help to promising disadvantaged school pupils; a review of all public funding dedicated to widening participation; all universities using contextual data in admissions.

HEFCE: POLAR3 - Young participation rates in higher education (October 2012)

<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2012/201226/POLAR3.pdf>

This report by the Higher Education Funding Council for England analysed 18-19 year old participation rates in higher education from 2005 to 2009 across the UK using the latest version of the Participation of Local Areas (POLAR) classification. It found that the gap between participation rates of young people from the least and most disadvantaged areas

had narrowed slightly, but those from the least disadvantaged areas were on average 3 to 4 times more likely to go to HE than those from the most disadvantaged areas.

Higher Education Policy Institute: The impact on demand in 2012 of the government's reforms of higher education (November 2012)

<http://www.hepi.ac.uk/455-2105/The-impact-on-demand-of-the--Government's-reforms-of-higher-education.html>

This rather speculative and premature report was based only on 18-year-old applicants for full-time undergraduate courses in England, compared with Scottish-domiciled applicants. It reported a 1% fall in 18-year-old applicants from England between 2011 and 2012, but said '... it is far more likely that demand, as measured by application rates, has not been reduced by the increase in fees to any material extent' (para 45).

Institute for Fiscal Studies: Socio-economic gaps in HE participation: how have they changed over time? (November 2012)

<http://www.ifs.org.uk/bns/bn133.pdf>

The IFS aggregated a number of socio-economic indicators relating to state school pupils, and found that between 2004-5 and 2009-10, ie around the time of the introduction of top-up fees in England in 2006, that the percentage points gap between participation by pupils from the most advantaged 20% and the least advantaged 20% had narrowed from 40ppts to 37.3ppts; this narrowing in part explained by improved attainment by state school pupils at Key Stage 5 (A-levels).

Institute for Fiscal Studies: Fees and student support under the new higher education funding regime: what are different universities doing? (November 2012)

<http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/6429>

This reported on research into the introduction of the National Scholarship Programme, replacing the previous system of bursaries designed to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. One problem is that HEIs get NSP funding on the basis of their size, not socio-economic group makeup. So large 'high status' HEIs, which tend to have fewer disadvantaged students, end up getting more NSP funding than 'lower status' ones. Analysis of the support offered by 90 HEIs showed that at around 70% of them it was not transparent upfront what support was on offer to poorer students – so applicants did not know at the application stage whether they would get a NSP award. The danger is that NSP funding ends up going to students on the basis of merit rather than need, resulting in 'deadweight' i.e. waste of resources/opportunity, with funding going to those who would have gone to university anyway.

Futuretrack: Futuretrack Stage 4: transitions into employment, further study and other outcomes (November 2012)

http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/assets/assets/documents/Futuretrack_Stage_4_Final_report_6th_Nov_2012.pdf

Futuretrack is a longitudinal study by the Warwick Institute for Employment Research of people who applied in 2005-6 for a full-time place in a UK HEI, for entry in 2006. Stage 4 analysed the sample in winter 2011-12, by which time most had completed their course 18-30 months previously. Some key findings included: more than 10% of Futuretrack graduates

had experienced significant spells of unemployment; there was strong evidence that graduates were taking non-graduate jobs; the labour market 'allocates opportunities' on factors including university attended, and the age, ethnicity and parental education of the graduate (Asian graduates were significantly less likely to have worked in non-graduate occupations than graduates of other ethnicities); almost half of graduates from English universities had debts of £20,000 or more; the relative earnings advantage associated with a degree appeared to have been declining slowly over the past decade, though this varied according to degree subject and HEI attended; male graduates earned more than females; those least likely to have entered a graduate job had studied arts, humanities, languages and interdisciplinary subjects; there were no significant differences in non-graduate employment, or unemployment, according to graduates' socio-economic background; those who entered HE but did not complete a degree were more likely to come from routine and manual backgrounds, to have parents with no experience of HE, and to be mature students when they entered HE. The latter difference between graduates and non-graduates 'raises issues about the greater exclusion of some groups from HE and consequently the extent to which HE can be seen as perpetuating disadvantage rather than promoting social mobility'.

4. UCU member wanted to sit on AQA Council

UCU has been asked to find a nomination of AQA Council from 1 April 2013. Nominees should be 'active in their field with an interest in and where possible current or recent exam and assessment experiences across the range of qualifications offered by AQA'. AQA would welcome nominations from groups underrepresented in their Committee structure, women BME groups and people with disability. The Council meets five times a year in London. The Advisory Council has oversight of the strategic aims and objectives of AQA and decides overall policy in relation to exams and assessment. The closing date for nominations is 31 January 2013. If there is anybody who is interested in being nominated, please let Dan Taubman know by 15 January 2013 at: dtaubman@ucu.org.uk.

5. New FE teacher qualifications

One of the recommendations of the Lingfield Panel's interim report was that the current various FE teacher qualifications should be reviewed and simplified. LSIS were given the task of undertaking this. Their new proposals on new FE teacher qualifications can be found on the LSIS website: <http://www.lsis.org.uk/AboutLSIS/strategicprojects/FE-Teacher-Trainer-Qualifications-Review/Pages/default.aspx>. The overall aim of the work is to produce qualifications that have been simplified and renamed; are widely valued and taken up by employers and practitioners; are used by the FE sector to evidence their commitment to quality and are widely recognised as supporting career progression. There is an on-line consultation process which can be found at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Newquals>.

The consultation closes on 26 November. Following this there will be a series of expert working groups to support the development of the qualifications and the associated guidance.

6. Higher Education Commission's independent inquiry into postgraduate education

The **final report** of the Higher Education Commission's independent inquiry into postgraduate education has been published. The paper sets out the range of data and evidence that is available and, crucially, where more data is needed in order to support the growth of a healthy post graduate system.

UCU welcomes the five key messages which are:

- the prospect of a 'perfect storm' ahead due to the cumulative effect of increasing fees for postgraduate courses, banks being less willing to offer career development loans, and changes to the immigration system which could limit international demand for postgraduate study;
- postgraduate education should be part of a holistic vision, rather than a discrete stage of the education system;
- access to postgraduate education needs to be improved, indeed, postgraduate education is highlighted as '*the new frontier of widening participation*';
- more home-domiciled students should undertake postgraduate education; and
- there should be a sustainable system for funding postgraduate education and government should *establish a senior level taskforce to examine the feasibility of a postgraduate student loan scheme.*

The report chimes with motions passed at the higher education sector's conference earlier this year which highlight equality and access concerns about the narrowing opportunities for staff to deliver, and students to study postgraduate qualifications. We have written to the EHRC requesting an impact assessment of the effect of concentrating Doctoral Training Centres in Russell group institutions only (**HE23**). In addition, to support **HE24** please do let us know if you have examples of the reduction in the number and/or diversity of postgraduate courses at your institution, this will support us to strengthen our evidence base. Please email any examples to anartey@ucu.org.uk.

7. Exam changes

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, has had a busy summer proposing changes to exams. In the early summer OFQUAL consulted on a series of changes to A levels with proposals to reduce the numbers of re-sits, possibly drop AS levels, increase the amount of terminal assessment and involve 'high performing' universities in A levels design. The proposals can be found on the OFQUAL web site:

<http://www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-and-assessments/qualification-reform/a-level-reform/>. UCU submitted its response which can be obtained from the policy department via: dhendry@ucu.org.uk.

Gove tried to trail changes to GCSEs in the early summer announcing that he intended to bring back a two-tier system for exams at the end of compulsory schooling and return to an O-level type of exam for some. Faced with almost universal opposition and particularly from the Lib Dems, Gove withdrew from the fray. However he did announce changes to GCSEs in

September. GCSEs are to be replaced by an English Baccalaureate certificate (EBacc), with the first courses to begin in September 2015. The examination will be linear i.e. no modules, reduced course work assessment only where necessary, exam at the end of the programme with only external assessment. The new examination will be for the whole cohort and there will only be one exam board per subject to prevent the alleged 'race to the bottom'. The consultation paper can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/departmentalinformation/consultations/a00213902/reforming-key-stage-4-qualifications>. The closing date for responses will be 10 December. UCU will making a submission. Contact Dan Taubman at dtaubman@ucu.org.uk for further information.

8. Open Access Publishing

Many members will be aware of the open access publishing movement, which has been campaigning for free public access to research publications. This movement has been influenced by a number of factors: the ever-increasing cost of academic journals and their commercial ownership; the emergence of open access, on-line, refereed journals, some of which have achieved high status in their fields; and the growing use of repositories which provide access to versions of papers before they are published or at some point after publication, usually subject to an embargo period. Also, some major funding bodies, notably the Wellcome Trust in the UK, have for some time had a requirement that the research that they fund be published in an open access form.

The government review of access to publicly-funded research (the Finch review) reported in June 2012. Finch recommended that government policy should be to support publication in open access or hybrid journals funded by article processing or publishing charges (APCs). The idea is that funding bodies and to some extent universities should include the cost of APCs in their research grants. In September the government announced the creation of a £10 million fund to support the payment of APCs in the 30 most "research-intensive" universities.

While the principles underlying open access publishing may be laudable there are obvious problems with the adoption of the APC (or "Gold" open access) approach. An underfunded transition to open access will disadvantage researchers whose work is not externally funded or who are not in institutions able to assist with APCs or whose research is not for various reasons deemed suitable for support.

UCU is very keen to hear members' views on this extremely important policy area. What are your views on the "Gold" model? Do you favour the more radical "Green" open access model based on author self-archiving? Should UCU commit to a policy stance on open access? How do we ensure the protection of our members' interests and continue to support the free exchange of knowledge?

All feedback welcome. Comments to Paul Cottrell (pcottrell@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 in March.