

Review of post-18 education and funding

Call for evidence

Launch date: 21 March 2018

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Summary

The independent panel supporting the Government's Review of Post-18 Education and Funding invites interested individuals and organisations to submit evidence to inform its work.

The review was announced by the Prime Minister on 19 February 2018. It will consider how Government can ensure that the education system in England for those aged 18 years and over is:

- accessible to all;
- supported by a funding system that provides value for money and works for students and taxpayers;
- incentivises choice and competition across the sector; and
- encourages the development of the skills that we need as a country.

The review's full terms of reference are set out in the Annex.

The independent review panel, led by Philip Augar, will provide input to the review on the issues above. The panel will publish their report at an interim stage, before the Government concludes the overall review in early 2019.

Alongside this call for evidence, the independent panel will consult in a number of ways with a wide range of interested parties including people currently or recently participating in post-18 education. To ensure the fullest possible engagement with those affected by the issues covered by this review:

- The panel will establish three reference groups to engage with students, providers and employers. These reference groups will invite key parties to meet with them and provide evidence directly as well as through written submission to the call for evidence.
- The panel will use a range of different online and social media forums to broaden its engagement especially with students, as well as focus groups, and will provide further details on this shortly.
- A number of public events will be held for those interested to attend and discuss the issues covered by the review.

About this call for evidence

This call for evidence will inform the panel's thinking on the issues set out in the terms of reference. It will open on 21 March 2018 and run for 6 weeks, concluding on 2 May 2018.

In particular, the panel is seeking evidence from interested parties on the following topics:

- How to support young people in making effective choices between academic, technical and vocational routes after 18;
- How to promote a more dynamic market in education and training provision;
- How to ensure the post-18 education system is accessible to all;
- How best to support education outcomes that deliver the skills the UK needs; and
- How the post-18 education system can best deliver value for money for graduates and the taxpayer.

The next section sets out some specific questions under these headings. Those responding to this call for evidence may wish to provide specific answers to some or all of the questions, but can also provide a general response, using the questions as prompts.

All interested parties are encouraged to submit evidence for the panel's consideration. Responses are particularly welcome from education and training providers, academics, employers, students, learners, graduates, student representative groups, professional representative groups and learned societies as well as from the public.

Enquiries

If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the call for evidence you can contact the team by emailing: post18review.evidence@education.gov.uk

If your enquiry is related to the DfE e-consultation website or the consultation process in general, you can contact the DfE Ministerial and Public Communications Division by email: consultation.unit@education.gsi.gov.uk or by telephone: 0370 000 2288 or via the [DfE Contact us page](#).

Questions

Q1. This review will look at how Government can ensure that the post-18 education system is joined up and supported by a funding system that works for students and taxpayers. The panel would like to understand your priorities. What, if any, are your principal concerns with the current post-18 education and funding system?

Part 1: Choice and competition across a joined-up post-18 education and training sector

Q2. How do people make choices about what to study after 18? What information do they use and how do they choose one route over another: for instance, between academic, technical and vocational routes?

Q3: How do people make choices later in life about what further study to undertake?

Q4: In recent years we have seen continued growth in three-year degrees for 18 year-olds. Does the system offer a comprehensive range of high quality alternative routes for young people who wish to pursue a different path at this age? How can Government encourage provision across a wider range of high quality pathways to advanced academic, technical and vocational qualifications?

Q5: The majority of universities charge the maximum possible fees for most of their courses and three-year courses remain the norm. How can Government create a more dynamic market in price and provision between universities and across the post-18 education landscape?

Q6: What barriers do current and new education and training providers face in developing innovative or diversified provision?

Q7: How can Government further encourage high-quality further education and higher education provision that is more flexible: for example, part-time, distance learning and commuter study options?

Q8: To what extent do funding arrangements for higher education and further education and other post-18 education and training act as incentives or barriers to choice or provision: both at the individual and provider level? How does this impact on the choices made by prospective students and learners? What can Government do to improve incentives and reduce barriers?

Part 2: A system that is accessible to all

Q9: What particular barriers (including financial barriers) do people from disadvantaged backgrounds face in progressing to and succeeding in post-18 education and training?

Q10: How should students and learners from disadvantaged backgrounds best receive maintenance support, both from Government and from universities and colleges?

Part 3: Delivering the skills the UK needs

Q11: What challenges do post-18 education and training providers face in understanding and responding to the skills needs of the economy: at national, regional and local levels? Which skills, in your view, are in shortest supply across the economy? And which, if any, are in oversupply?

Q12: How far does the post-18 education system deliver the advanced technical skills the economy needs? How can Government ensure there is world-class provision of technical education across the country?

Part 4: Value for money for graduates and taxpayers

Q13: How should students and graduates contribute to the cost of their studies, while maintaining the link that those who benefit from post-18 education contribute to its costs? What represents the right balance between students, graduates, employers and the taxpayer?

Q14: What are the most effective ways for the Government and institutions to communicate with students and graduates on the nature and terms of student support?

Q15: What are the best examples of education and training providers ensuring efficiency in the method of course provision while maintaining quality? And what are the challenges in doing this?

Q16: What are the ways that Government can increase the value for money of post-18 education?

How to respond

Respond online

Visit www.education.gov.uk/consultations to submit your response through our consultation system.

Those making submissions are asked not to exceed 4000 words in total (an average of 250 words per question if answering all of them) and are strongly encouraged to provide details of the evidence and data that support their positions, to enable the panel to understand the basis on which those conclusions have been reached. The online system allows attachments to be uploaded with your response.

Other ways to respond

Please use the online system wherever possible as it will make the analysis of responses more efficient.

If you are unable or would prefer not to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a word document version of the form and email it or post it to us at the addresses below. As with the online system those making submissions are asked not to exceed 4000 words in total and to provide details of data and evidence that support their positions.

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Deadline: Please provide response and evidence by 2 May 2018.

Confidentiality

Information provided in response to consultations, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want all, or any part, of a response to be treated as confidential, please explain why you consider it to be confidential.

If a request for disclosure of the information you have provided is received, your explanation about why you consider it to be confidential will be taken into account, but no assurance can be given that confidentiality can be maintained.

Annex: Terms of Reference for the Review

Review of Post-18 Education and Funding

Terms of Reference

The Government is committed to conducting a major review across post-18 education and funding to ensure a joined-up system that works for everyone. As significant reforms move into implementation, this review will look at how we can ensure that the education system for those aged 18 years and over is accessible to all, is supported by a funding system that provides value for money and works for students and taxpayers, incentivises choice and competition across the sector, and encourages the development of the skills that we need as a country.

Our system of post-18 education and training has many strengths: we have a world-class higher education system with record numbers of young people from disadvantaged backgrounds entering university. The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 sets the foundation for further improvements to the system. We have established the Office for Students to operate a new register of providers and ensure minimum standards; created the Director for Fair Access and Participation to drive social mobility; enacted the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) to hold universities to account for the teaching and outcomes they deliver for students; and are encouraging further diversity within the system with new providers and shorter degrees delivered at a lower cost to students.

The Government has introduced the Technical and Further Education Act 2017 which extends the responsibilities of the Institute for Apprenticeships to include technical education and has introduced degree level apprenticeships. New Institutes of Technology will be established, which will focus on higher-level technical skills and will be eligible for access to loans and grants for their students. A separate review has been launched to determine how best to extend technical education reforms to level 4 and 5, the findings of which will feed into this review.

These important achievements must be built on.

This review will look further at how we can ensure our post-18 education system is joined up and supported by a funding system that works for students and taxpayers. For example, in recent years the system has encouraged growth in three-year degrees for 18 year-olds, but does not offer a comprehensive range of high quality alternative routes for the many young people who pursue a technical or vocational path at this age. The majority of universities charge the maximum possible fees for at least some of their courses and three-year courses remain the norm. Average levels of graduate debt have increased, but this has not always led to higher wage returns for all graduates. And the system does not comprehensively deliver the advanced technical skills that our economy needs.

The review will focus on the following issues:

1. Choice and competition across a joined-up post-18 education and training sector:

- How we can help young people make effective choices between academic, technical and vocational routes after 18, including information on earnings outcomes and the quality of the teaching they receive.
- How we can support a more dynamic market in provision, taking into account reforms already underway, whilst maintaining the financial sustainability of a world-class higher education and research sector.
- How we can encourage learning that is more flexible (for example, part-time, distance learning and commuter study options) and complements ongoing Government work to support people to study at different times in their lives.
- How to ensure the market provides choice with higher-level degree apprenticeships and shorter and more flexible courses, in particular accelerated degree programmes, and supporting innovative new institutions that can drive competition.
- How we can ensure that there is world-class provision of technical education across the country including through the new Institutes of Technology.

2. A system that is accessible to all:

- How we can ensure that people from disadvantaged backgrounds have equal opportunities to progress to and succeed in all forms of post-18 education and training.
- How disadvantaged students and learners receive maintenance support, both from Government and from universities and colleges.

3. Delivering the skills our country needs:

- How we can best support education outcomes that deliver our Industrial Strategy ambitions, by contributing to a strong economy and delivering the skills our country needs.

4. Value for money for graduates and taxpayers:

- How students and graduates contribute to the cost of their studies including the level, terms and duration of their contribution, while maintaining the link that those who benefit from post-18 education contribute to its costs.
- Ensuring that funding arrangements across post-18 education and training are transparent and do not act as barriers to choice or provision, considering how best to promote institutional efficiency and value for money for students and taxpayers.
- How the Government and institutions communicate with students and graduates around student finance, ensuring this communication is as clear as possible (consistent with the relevant legal requirements) about the nature and terms of student support.

Many elements of our current post-18 education system work well and there are some important principles that the Government believes should remain in future. Therefore, the recommendations of the review will be guided by the need to:

- Maintain the principle that students should contribute to the cost of their studies while ensuring that payments are progressive and income contingent;
- Continue with the reforms in train to build a strong technical and further education sector that encourages the skills that we need as a country;
- Place no cap on the number of students who can benefit from post-18 education; and
- Support the role of universities and colleges in delivering the Government's objectives for science, R&D and the Industrial Strategy.

The review will not make recommendations related to the terms of pre-2012 loans or to taxation, and its recommendations must be consistent with the Government's fiscal policies to reduce the deficit and have debt falling as a percentage of GDP.

The overall review will be led by the Department for Education and report to the Secretary of State for Education, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister.

An independent panel, led by Philip Augar, will provide input in to the review on the issues above. The panel will comprise experts from across post-18 education and the business world, and consult with, among others, people currently or recently participating in post-18 education.

The panel will publish their report at an interim stage, before the Government concludes the overall review in early 2019.

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