INDEPENDENT HIGHER EDUCATION

Independent Higher Education response to the government consultation on Accelerated Degrees

February 2018

Independent Higher Education is the UK's representative body for independent providers of higher education, professional training and pathways. Our members are known for their innovative course design and delivery, including flexible learning which allows students to experience more than one provider and accelerated courses which have been developed for and in partnership with industries which require job-ready graduates. The proven success of the innovative flexible and accelerated models of provision offered by Independent HEIs should serve both as inspiration for the wider sector and as a prism through which to interpret any further development the Government may wish to achieve through the implementation of this consultation area.

1. **Are there any other technical features of accelerated degree courses that we should take into account for the purpose of new fee arrangements?**

   Yes

   The consultation suggests that accelerated degrees would have the same pace of learning week-on-week but would run for an envisioned 45 weeks of ongoing study. This is not always the case. There are some accelerated degree courses which differ from this pattern but still deliver a first degree course in one year less than the standard equivalent course:

   a) Higher pace of learning week-on-week: Some courses offer more intensive week-on-week learning but do so by restructuring module delivery, increasing contact time, and creating innovative assessments which encourage students to make better use of their independent study time.

   Example: London School of Business and Management (LSBM)

   The London School of Business and Management teaches a two-year BA (Hons)in Business Management, a two-year LLB (Hons) Law and a two-year BA (Hons) Accounting and Financial Management. Each programme has 30 weeks of teaching per year, with breaks in which students may be required to complete assessments including exams. Their course runs in three semesters from the beginning of October to the end of July, but their model has students completing only two modules per semester allowing them to focus better on the topics and providing more flexibility in the timetable for innovative and personalised delivery. Their Accounting and Financial Management degree has been accredited by the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), Their LLB Law course *has been granted Institutional Exemptions for Chartered Institute of Legal Executives (CILEx) qualifications, and these students can start work immediately from graduation as a Trainee CILEx Lawyer, Paralegal or Legal Clerk, and they have been commended for the enhancement of their students' learning opportunities by the independent Quality Assurance Agency.*

b) Integrated Foundation models: Many independent higher education providers offering accelerated degree courses also offer their degrees with an integrated foundation course for those students who do not yet have the qualifications or skills for entry directly into the first year of the accelerated degree model. These students can exit after 'Year 0' with an award at that level but this will not be a higher education award. The students will follow the delivery of the accelerated degree after they have successfully completed 'Year 0' and gained the equivalent necessary qualifications to those entering directly. This is an incredibly valuable route for widening participation students in particular, who gain a year to adapt to the accelerated model and intensity before beginning degree-level study. The equivalent standard integrated model would be a 'Year 0' plus three years of degree study.

   Both of these models will deliver a standard undergraduate degree, and to groups of students who are unlikely to enter either the standard three year model or even the accelerated model which teaches through the summer. It is important for these students that they are able to attract the higher loan and fee limits proposed.

Data on areas such as attendance and continuation is unlikely to fit neatly into existing definitions for the purposes of regulation and the Student Loans Company (SLC). Government guidance will need to consider current definitions of attendance and measuring of continuation to better fit accelerated degrees. For example:

a) Current schedules for when a student can withdraw without liability for tuition fees as set by SLC are unlikely to match either the semester model or the amount of delivery within that period. Both attendance points and withdrawal dates will need to be reviewed to reflect accelerated models.

b) Continuation metrics will need to be reviewed and likely altered or benchmarked to reflect accelerated degree delivery models. There are likely to be more hurdles for progression at the point of measuring continuation in an accelerated course compared to a three-year course. For example, a first year student may have two sets of exams by the end of their first year, culminating in a decision to progress that student to year two or to provide an exit award at Level 4. At one year and 50 days from the date they started, that student will be counted as having continued or not. At that same one year and 50 days, a student on an accelerated course may have had 3-4 sets of exams, reflecting the increased number of semesters or weeks delivered, and have undertaken more progression-based assessments than the student taking the three year course. They are statistically more likely to have failed a progression hurdle than the three-year student.

Further guidance and clarification would be welcome on how accelerated degrees will be viewed in student protection plans. It is unlikely that students will be able to find the same course at an accelerated pace, at least until there is more growth of such provision. Clear and appropriate expectations for student protection would enable the growth of collaborative provision in this area, and ensure students experience a consistency of approach across providers.

The consultation document points out that additional funding has been provided to publicly funded providers to support accelerated provision at £800-£1400 per student per year. Despite this additional funding, the consultation document also noted that 70% of the 2,500 students studying accelerated courses were enrolled across six Alternative Providers of higher education, who do not access any grant funding from HEFCE and the remaining 30% – just 750 students – were enrolled with the 24 publicly funded HE Institutions (HEIs) who were eligible for the support. It is clear from these numbers that independent providers find it easier both to deliver accelerated degrees and to attract students to them, even though financial support has not been available to facilitate this. We hope this will be rectified under the Office for Students, by continuing to financially support the development and provision of accelerated degrees and extending this support to any provider registered at Approved or Approved (Fee Cap) who can meet the required standards of accountability. The nature of grant funding which is designed to be shorter term and deliver specific outcomes is such that it could be extended to providers on the register who supply the necessary information to ensure accountability for funding of that nature.

2. **Do you agree that an annual fee cap set initially at the standard rate plus a 20% uplift is the right amount to incentivise wider provision of accelerated degrees?**

   No

   The priority for accelerated degrees should be that the teaching and learning is equal in content and quality to that of a three-year course. While we welcome the principle that fees and loans should be pro rata to those of a three-year course, limiting fees and loans to a 20% uplift on each year will equate to a 60% reduction in funding compared to an equivalent Bachelor’s degree course.

   Course fees are set primarily on the staff needed to teach students and the resources required to deliver that teaching. Contact hours over an accelerated course should not be different from those of a three-year course, and the access to facilities needed and materials consumed should also not differ. We are concerned that the lack of parity in funding will be a disincentive for providers to offer accelerated degrees as they will not want to offer a course whose quality suffers from a reduction in contact hours or in the resources available.

   This is particularly the case for providers offering specialist courses, and courses with a high level of materials required. For example, from the 111 providers who responded to *The Independent Higher Education Survey 2017*, 17 indicated that they were teaching accelerated degree models. 13 taught specifically for their industry or profession, and 6 taught courses with high delivery costs such as engineering, technology, construction, digital/graphic arts, or music/film/television production. 7 of the 17 also had higher than average levels of industry placements and engagement which is considerably more expensive to provide than classroom-based learning but is also vital to graduate employability.

One of the main aims of the proposals in the consultation is to get skilled graduates into work more quickly, and this is especially important in areas with skills shortages. Many of the courses which prepare students for employment in skills shortage areas are high cost such as STEM subjects, and technology in particular. As technology changes, re-skilling in these areas will become essential and accelerated degrees will offer an ideal opportunity to fill these skills shortage areas as they emerge.

Limiting the funding available to these courses, in particular to specialist providers who are often the first to react to changes in their industries, will restrict growth in provision of high cost but much needed courses in skills shortage areas. For example, the rapid growth in 2D/3D Animation needs for the film and television industry has resulted in staff shortages across both junior and senior roles. In *The Independent Higher Education Survey 2017*, 17 of the providers who responded indicated they were offering accelerated two-year degree courses. Two of these providers offered accelerated degrees in Animation, another offered a three-year degree and another one a six-month short course to fill this skills gap, in spite of these two providers both offering accelerated degree courses in other areas of their specialism. Teaching animation requires both the institution and student to make a considerable investment in the appropriate hardware and software, as they have to be proficient across the technologies used in the industry. In addition, teaching staff in an area already plagued by skills shortages can demand a much higher salary than those which are in lower demand in industry. Any restriction in funding has a proportionate impact on the accessibility of teaching and learning resources to students on these high-cost but much-needed accelerated courses.

Example: Met Film School

Met Film School offers accelerated degrees in practical filmmaking alongside its foundation and postgraduate courses. They also offer a range of six month courses designed to get students into industry more quickly. These six month courses are ideal for skills shortage areas, as students undertake an intensive programme with industry experts, focused on the latest technologies. To address the demand for these skills, Met Film offer six month courses in Digital Animation and VFX, and Post-Production. Students with previous degrees can transition into their MA course in Post-Production. Met Film would consider expanding their accelerated degree provision into this vital skills shortage area if students were able to access a greater amount of funding to cover the high costs of delivering the course. The availability of right level of student funding is vital to ensuring a domestic student base in these courses. Without it they will be unable to ensure an accelerated degree course will have enough of a domestic student base to be viable.

3. **Do you agree that a 20% reduction overall for students, in tuition fee and maintenance loans, would incentivise wider take-up of accelerated degrees by students?**

No

Many of our members offering accelerated provision do so at fees above the current £6000 loan limit due to the high cost of delivery per academic year. The students taking these courses choose them because of the savings afforded by lower maintenance costs and a faster entry into work. Where our members have found barriers to uptake is where those students eligible for loans are faced with additional upfront fees, due to the cost of delivery being higher than the amount covered by the loan. This suggests that in order to incentivise greater take-up of accelerated degrees, the priority for the government should be to ensure that, as far as possible, student loan funding can cover the actual cost of these high-intensity, specialist courses, rather than focus on a marginal reduction in the overall loan taken out.

Where the cost of their provision can fit within the higher loan limit as set, our members are keen to apply to register with the OfS in the Approved (Fee Cap) category. However, where the cost of delivery will exceed this higher loan limit, providers will be compelled to remain in the Approved category instead, which ultimately will result in more students on accelerated courses facing up-front fees.

Example: Academy of Contemporary Music

The majority of students at the Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) seek to fund their programmes through a student loan. ACM is currently eligible for student loans up to the lower limit (£6,000 plus TEF uplift). ACM set its annual fees for its existing accelerated programmes at £7,995, above the lower loan limit. The additional up-front payment represents a significant barrier to some applicants and an ongoing financial worry to students on ACM programmes. For the last two years, ACM has felt it necessary to provide all students on the accelerated programmes with bursaries of £1,000 a year, however this is not necessarily sustainable for the future. These bursaries have totalled around £1.5M and have been considered necessary to facilitate student number growth to support investment in infrastructure. Although the bursaries have improved access, retention and helped reduce student's financial worries, it is still evident that the self-funded aspect is having a negative impact on widening participation. Recently published HESA data[1] on under-represented groups in higher education for 2015/16 entrants at ACM shows that the percentage from low participation neighbourhoods is 5.6% below the location-adjusted benchmark of 13.1%[2]. Despite being below benchmark, analysis of their application data indicates that the percentage of applications from low-participation postcodes is in fact well above benchmark at 24%. This suggests that the private fee contribution is acting as a serious barrier to entry.

In further support of this, analysis of ACM's POLAR3 data for ACM London shows enrolment for low-participation postcodes is 18%, which is above the location-adjusted benchmark for a similar provider in the London area (at 9%). The ACM London provision is a traditional three-year delivery model, which is fully funded via student loan through a Franchise arrangement. This suggests that appropriate funding support for the accelerated model will improve engagement from low participation post codes.

While ACM is currently able to keep costs for courses below the proposed upper fee limit for accelerated degrees, it is clear from their evidence that upfront fees are a considerable barrier to students.

[1] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/experimental-statistics
[2] https://www.hesa.ac.uk/files/UKPIs_2015-16_Experimental.xlsx

To meet the fee cap for accelerated degrees and remain financially sustainable, some providers will need to reduce the amount of resource to students included in fees. For example, some providers give students digital equipment, art materials and pay for integral work placements necessary for course delivery. Many feel that to reduce upfront costs to meet the maximum threshold they are now eligible for under Approved (Fee Cap), they will need to ask students to pay for these themselves, essentially swapping one upfront course fee for another. The best solution for students is to ensure that where possible the true cost of the course can be included in the fee and that this can be covered by the student loan and associated fee cap.

We are also concerned that significant numbers of students will be disadvantaged by the limitations of the current and proposed maintenance support package through student finance. The Long Course Loan (LCL) top-up is means tested, making it only available to those students able to access the highest levels of maintenance loans. In addition, students who receive Disabled Students' Allowance and parental allowances will also be worse off per year in a two-year degree, having to fund 12 months of study on an allowance meant for 9. We have further outlined these concerns in response to Question 7.

4. **Do you agree that a 20% increase in loan cap rates per annum is the right value to incentivise wider uptake of accelerated degrees at Approved providers?**

No

As mentioned in the previous question, evidence from our members suggests that the barrier to student uptake of accelerated degrees is the level of upfront fees. Where these can be mitigated by the availability of loans then students, particularly those from widening participation backgrounds, are more likely to choose accelerated degrees.

When we surveyed independent higher education providers in 2017, some stated that they would choose to register with the OfS at the Approved level because the cost of their course sat above the fee cap. There is no evidence that for providers offering accelerated courses, the amount of loan available has a significant impact on the fees charged, which are determined instead by the high cost of delivery per year. We have seen however in the case of the Academy of Contemporary Music that upfront fees can have a negative impact on uptake.

Our members suggest that giving students greater access to loans by making available an equal amount to that available to students taking the same degree across a three-year delivery model, would act as far positive an incentive than limiting access to the amount they can borrow.

There are also a number of providers currently offering accelerated degrees which are not yet designated for student loans. They do however have Tier 4 licences and so will be entering the Office for Students at the Approved level. The cost of their provision currently sits above the higher fee limit due to the cost of delivery, which is unlikely to reduce in the near future given the additional cost of regulation they will incur by joining the OfS. However, their courses will gain greater visibility and students will have greater should they apply for designation as part of their registration. There would be a greater incentive for them to apply to have their courses designated for loans if students had access to a higher loan limit. Access to higher loans would also improve access to these accelerated courses for domestic students.

As mentioned in answer to the previous question, many students are currently disadvantaged by the funding support package offered for accelerated degrees. Those students currently applying for the LCL struggle to gain the additional funding due to limitations in the means-tested model for LCL. It is maintenance funding, not tuition fee funding, which will make the most immediate difference to students' ability to successfully complete an accelerated degree. We outline these concerns further in response to Question Seven.

Our members indicate that the main disincentive for students in the case of tuition fee funding is the prospect of self-funding the difference between the available loan and the fee amount they must charge.

5. **Do you agree that accelerated degree fees should be treated in the same way as other higher course fees for the purpose of access funding?**

Yes

We agree that all providers choosing the Approved (Fee Cap) category should have the same requirements to use a portion of their fee income above the basic amount on access initiatives, provided this reflects the limited funding available to these providers through the government's decision to prioritise lower overall course fees when calculating upper fee limits for accelerated degrees.

Many of our members are specialist providers and some offer only accelerated courses, or a limited amount of non-accelerated provision. They are unable to offset the financial cost of these specialist courses, which often come with expensive industry accreditation, with more generalist courses which cost below the limit to deliver. This offset model is recognised by HEFCE in its grant allocations, providing grant funding where the cost of delivery, less the funding offset from other students, is greater than the fee paid by the student. Even with this grant, many universities must turn to additional sources of income to support higher education degree courses, much of which comes from profitable use of their large estates. Independent higher education providers are very unlikely to have large estates, or substantial reserves, but have three times the number of students on accelerated degree courses than those providers that do.

It is right that all providers charging above the lower limit should contribute some funding towards access and participation but this needs to be to scale and sensitive to first the ability of that institution to cover the cost of delivery through the fees they are permitted to charge or through other sources. It is not right that vital funding be directed towards spending on access and participation when it is being taken away from the experience of an existing student from a widening participation background.

Example: London School of Business and Management (LSBM)

As mentioned before, LSBM teach three accelerated degree courses, as well as offering Foundation Year + Accelerated Degree and one-year degree top-up models. 80% of their students are from widening participation backgrounds and widening *participation is a core part of their mission. They teach from the campus of Birkbeck College London, with few buildings leased for their exclusive use. They have no additional income streams other than fees. It would be perverse to take funding which LSBM is currently spending on enhancing the learning experience of their widening participation students (as evidenced in the commendation from QAA) and spend it on outreach or direct bursaries, when this institution is already succeeding in this area.*

The way grant funding is allocated suggests that Access and Participation Agreements are premised on having grant funding to make up the difference in cost of delivery and 'freeing up' funding for access and participation. This model would not make the existing proposals provider-neutral as intended by paragraph 17 (e) of the consultation, but would favour those with access to grant funding. A balance must be struck which ensures that the access and participation funding models, including the percentage of fee above the lower limit which must be spent on widening access and participation, do not disadvantage smaller providers with vastly different but equally vital delivery models. This will severely restrict the growth of accelerated provision in independent higher education providers, who have so far shown the most success in delivering it.

6. **Should any additional safeguards and controls be in place as a proportionate and effective measure to ensure expanded provision of loans for accelerated degrees provide value for money to the taxpayer?**

Yes

We believe that the incoming system of regulation by the Office for Students will greatly increase the level of oversight of providers offering accelerated models of delivery. From our 2017 survey, a further 200-500 students on accelerated degree courses through providers with a Tier 4 licence will be recorded in the HESA student record. The consultation document identified 6 'Alternative Providers of higher education' offering accelerated degrees. Our survey suggest there could be up to 11 more offering similar programmes outside of existing student finance who are likely to enter the Office for Students at Approved or Approved (Fee Cap) level. The rigour of the single system of registration will ensure effective regulation, and the provider-level approach should ensure that safeguards are proportionate, especially for different models of delivery.

However, we remain concerned that the metrics for regulation are not yet fit to effectively regulate the diversity of delivery models including accelerated degrees:

a) As mentioned above, continuation metrics need to reflect the greater amount of progression hurdles undertaken at the point of measurement. The easiest way to do this would be to benchmark by mode of study for accelerated degrees and use benchmarks and not absolute values when regulating.

b) Outcomes metrics need to reflect the number of students re-training through accelerated degrees which can mean that many return to the same job, or level of job, after graduation. This can be reflected by monitoring and benchmarking for previous employment and placing a greater emphasis on the graduate outcomes survey which will empower the graduate voice rather than their salary.

c) Year 0 courses which articulate into accelerated degree courses, whether integrated or not, must be regulated alongside other higher education courses. This includes students on Year 0 being returned in data sets which monitor progression. The ‘Foundation Year’ which articulates into an accelerated degree is a popular option for many students, often from widening participation backgrounds or mature students re-training, to gain both the entry requirements and a degree in three years rather than four or longer. It is particularly popular with students who may not have the specific background needed for the course, for example the right computer skills to undertake a degree in Graphic Design, Animation or Game Design. There is a risk that the OfS will not be able to effectively regulate this type of provision without these students being considered in the available metrics. Much is unknown about the success or failure of these models due to these students not be counted in any central student data, in further or higher education regulation. They effectively fall through the cracks of both.

   Fit for purpose metrics will ensure that regulation supports those providers offering a successful student experience and correctly identifies those providers who might fall below expectations.

A further way to minimise financial risk would be to deliver maintenance funding in more frequent payments than is currently proposed. As we outline in question 7, a model of delivering financial support in monthly payments is of great benefit for students, both in mimicking a salary payment and in ensuring there is no significant period where students are expected to fund around half of the calendar year of study with 34% of the funding. It would also mean that supplementary maintenance can be more effectively calculated. Finally, it would ensure that maintenance can be adjusted should the student change their mode of study or stop studying altogether with less risk of overpayment than in semester payments.

7. Are there any additional practical considerations we should take into account as we develop our final regulations to support accelerated degree course provision?

Yes

There are several practical considerations which need to be addressed across the regulatory and student finance systems when the final regulations to support accelerated degrees are developed.

Maintenance Loans and Long Course Loans (LCL)

Maintenance Loans for study are currently based on 30 weeks of funding and have a maximum amount (for students living in London but not with their parents) of £11,354 or £378.50 per week. The rationale is that this is the amount of money a student is expected to spend per week according to the student income and expenditure survey. However, the maximum LCL available for each week over 30 weeks for the same student would be £116, less than one third of the total it is anticipated a student would need. This is further compounded by the means-tested approach to LCL, where a student with a family income of just £45,000 would get only £34 per week to live for every week beyond 30 weeks. (SLC costed example: http://www.practitioners.slc.co.uk/media/1206/sfe_long_courses_loan_fs_1718_d.pdf). The same student, undertaking the same number of weeks but over a three year course would find it considerably easier to pay their living expenses than if they took an accelerated degree course. This is a considerable disincentive for a student considering both routes, who is likely to be more concerned about having enough money to live than about the eventual repayment of the loan:

- 2-year Undergraduate Degree (44 weeks per year), Maximum Maintenance (London, not living with parents), plus Maximum LCL per week: **£24,332**

- Equivalent 88 weeks receiving Maximum Maintenance (London, not living with parents) for 3-year Undergraduate Degree (30 weeks), Maximum Maintenance (London, not living with parents): **£33,308**

8. Should the Government be aware of any other issues relating to the way in which the proposed tuition fee policy for accelerated degree courses will affect any of the protected characteristics?

Yes

<u>Students with Disabilities will need support for longer</u>

As mentioned above, DSA allowance is set to a maximum amount and paid according to need, which is currently calculated on an academic year. However, some need within this is capped, such as the non-medical helper(s) allowance (currently set at maximum to £21,305 at 2017/18 rates). These caps do not increase to reflect a longer year. To ensure that these high cost support needs are adequate to support students with disabilities on accelerated courses – they must be increased in line with the greater number of weeks needed, or the greater number of contact hours they are required for in those models which alter intensity week-on-week rather than over the course of a year.

<u>Mitigating Circumstances and Reasonable Adjustments</u>

Accelerated Degrees are likely to have shorter time frames to complete progression-based assessments before progressing to the next stage of the course. This may pose a challenge for those students with mitigating circumstances or who require reasonable adjustments. Some of our members offering accelerated degrees have found challenges when working with collaborative partners as awarding bodies, whose own policies reflect a three-year model and so longer time-scales. Further guidance on accommodating mitigating circumstances would be helpful, and in particular as part of OfS's work on validation. De-risking and facilitating collaborative approaches to accelerated degrees will facilitate more collaborate provision in this area. Especially as teaching providers who are not as research intensive may find it easier to deliver at that level of intensity using their staff model.

Age – Mature Students

Existing rules on Equivalent or Lower Qualifications needs to be revised to ensure that older students who need to re-train can access the same levels of student support as younger students engaging in higher education for the first time. Older students without ability to finance these courses themselves will be disadvantaged in accessing these courses which could then impact their success in finding a job.

Pregnancy and maternity

As mentioned above we remained concerned about the flat rate supplementary allowances for student parents and those with adult dependents. To ensure these students are not disadvantaged in two-year accelerated degrees, these allowances must be increased to reflect the additional weeks of study.

9. Do you currently provide any form of accelerated degree course?

17 of the 111 providers who responded to *The Independent Higher Education Survey 2017* indicated they taught some form of accelerated degree course.

- Between them they taught over 11,000 students on full-time courses, but half of these were at a single institution.
- All expected their UK student numbers to grow over the next year, just over half expected their EU student numbers to grow or stay the same, and all but one expected their Non-EU student numbers to grow or stay the same.
- 14 currently offered at least one course designated for student funding by the Department for Education.
- 8 offered specialist courses and 11 offered more generalist provision.
- For the generalist providers, their largest courses were in business or law related provision. Specialist course provision included:
    - Sound and Audio Engineering
    - Contemporary Music (including instrument-based, songwriting, production and business courses)
    - Fashion
    - Digital Creative (including 2D/3D Animation, Visual Effects, Graphic Design)
    - Film and Television (Making and Production)
    - Performing Arts
    - Engineering, Surveying, and the Built Environment
    - Health and Social Care
    - Tourism and Hospitality
- 0 received any direct grant funding.
- 10 had Tier 4 licences to recruit international students
- 5 offered apprenticeships
- 3 had their own degree awarding powers and all others offered degrees under a validation or franchise arrangement. Only one offered accelerated degrees under a franchise arrangement.
- 10 offered professional accreditations alongside their accelerated degrees.

- At the time of survey (March/April 2017) 2 of the 17 were intending to register with the Office for Students at the Basic level, 8 were intending to register at Approved, 3 were intending to register at Approved (Fee Cap) and the rest were unsure.
- 16 supported or strongly supported better funding for accelerated degree models, while one was unsure.

10. **Based on the policies set out in this document, are you considering offering new or additional accelerated degrees when tuition cap uplifts are enacted? If your answer is 'yes', please set out what types of course and volume of provision you are considering.**

    Not applicable

11. **Based on the policies set out in this document, are you considering applying for an accelerated degree when tuition cap uplifts are enacted? If your answer is 'yes', please set out what type of course and provider you are considering.**

    Not applicable

12. **Have you been, or are you currently an employer of any graduates of accelerated degrees? If your answer is 'yes', please tell us about your employee – subject of degree, job role.**

    Not applicable

13. **Based on the policies set out in this document, do you agree that an accelerated degree has any specific merit in current or future potential employees? If your answer is 'agree', please set out any advantages you consider an accelerated degree-qualified graduate might have as an employee over their standard three-year degree equivalent.**

    Agree

    From our survey, the providers who offered accelerated degrees:

    a) were more likely to offer industry-focused courses, with high levels of industry engagement and work-based learning opportunities. These graduates will have greater opportunity to network with industry, gain work-based learning transferable skills and be fluent in the practice and technologies used in their industry.

    b) were more likely to offer professionally accredited degrees. Students who gain these accreditations as part of their degree will normally be exempt from a certain level of the test/exams required to gain further accreditation from the professional body. They will cost less to employers to train and reach higher salary levels more quickly than those without the professional accreditation. They will also have had greater access to industry and employment-focused materials through their institution's engagement with the professional body.

c) were more likely to offer students additional, unaccredited courses in either transferable skills or emerging industry areas. These students will have greater opportunity to gain valuable skills for the workplace than those without the additional provision.

d) were more likely to have a core mission of Entrepreneurship. Students who experience entrepreneurship as part of their course, regardless of the core subject, are more likely to develop creative approaches to problem solving, be better at teamwork and be aware of the financial stability of an organisation. They are also more likely to have skills which contribute to personal growth and learning through failure.