

Annex

Approach to evidence gathering

Summary

The panel approached this review with no preconceptions and many questions; ensuring that its findings and recommendations are underpinned by a robust and comprehensive evidence base has been of utmost importance throughout. With this in mind, the panel undertook and commissioned an extensive programme of evidence collection and analysis as their first priority.

Broadly, the evidence base for the review can be divided into two components: (i) a core suite of primary and secondary research and analysis that, considered as a whole, spans the entire remit of the review; and (ii) an extensive programme of engagement that enabled the panel to hear the knowledge and opinions of specific stakeholder groups first-hand. The panel received extensive support from Department for Education analysts throughout.

Core research and analysis

Call for evidence

A call for evidence, which ran from 21 March to 4 May 2018, was conducted to seek views and evidence on a wide range of issues across the post-18 education system from students, providers, the public and other stakeholders. Three hundred and seventy responses were received: 215 from organisations and 155 from individuals. A summary of the call for evidence responses, conducted by Pye Tait, is published alongside the review.

Cost of provision study

A major and comprehensive study was commissioned to improve understanding of the cost of delivering undergraduate and foundation degree courses at a subject group level within higher education institutions. The study, conducted by KPMG, is published alongside the review.

Literature reviews

External analysts were engaged to conduct desk-based literature reviews on: (i) international comparisons of post-18 compulsory education; (ii) the impact of the current student finance system on disadvantaged young people; (iii) the choices that students make; (iv) post-education job and career choices; and (v) the wider (non-market) benefits of post-18 education. These are published alongside the review.

Other research commissions

New research reports were commissioned on: (i) attitudes to the student finance system; (ii) the decline of part-time/mature study; and (iii) a bespoke analysis of data from the Longitudinal Survey of Young People on post-16 aspirations and outcomes.

Expert witnesses

The panel held individual meetings with a wide spectrum of experts, leaders and senior figures in fields relevant to the remit of the review, in both England and the devolved administrations. Collectively, the panel undertook more than 330 such meetings and calls. An academic roundtable was also convened, with key themes discussed including skills needs, the role of the further education sector, adult and lifelong learning, and employers' relationship with the tertiary education sector.

Stakeholder engagement and evidence gathering

The process of gathering evidence directly from stakeholders was organised into three separate strands: (i) students (ii) providers and (iii) employers.

Students

A user reference group, composed of student members from student and other representative bodies from across the tertiary education sector, was established and convened regularly throughout the review process. This group included the *National Union of Students (NUS)* representing both FE and HE students; *The Student Room*; *British Youth Council*; *Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) panel of apprentices*; *Office for Students (OfS) student panel*; and the *Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) student advisory committee*. Panel members utilised the group to gather information, provide insight into perspectives and opinions amongst students and to test emerging ideas. The panel also undertook a number of roundtables across the country with a range of further and higher education students, and apprentices, which a particular focus on non-traditional students such as part-time learners, mature and adult learners, and students that have taken alternative routes into their studies.

Providers

The panel undertook an in-depth programme of provider engagement, visiting a wide range of further and higher education providers with contrasting funding models, sizes, positions in the market and other characteristics. In total the panel visited 33 separate providers spanning the country from Exeter to Cumbria. The panel also met with representatives from HE and FE sector bodies, visited institutions in Scotland, and engaged with Universities Scotland, Universities of Wales and providers in Northern Ireland.

Employers

A number of employer roundtables were held, with representatives from employer associations, large and small businesses, public sector and charity organisations and Local Economic Partnerships. Each roundtable brought together senior figures from these organisations to explore the skills needs in their sectors, how these are being met by the current post-18 education system, and their hopes, concerns and thoughts on the future skills landscape in the UK.