

UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

For the meeting of the Steering Committee to be held on Monday 16 November 2015

Subject BIS Consultation on the Higher Education Green Paper

Report prepared by Ms Jo Horsburgh, Deputy Registrar

Purpose of the Report

To provide the Steering Committee with a summary of the Government's green paper on higher education '*Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*'.

Recommendation

The Steering Committee is invited to consider the green paper and provide initial views to inform the collation of an institutional response to the consultation.

Key Points

1. The green paper details proposals intended to raise teaching standards, widen participation, establish a single entry route for new HE providers and simplify higher education architecture.
2. Key proposals include the introduction of a Teaching Excellence Framework and a new regulatory body, the Office for Students.
3. An institutional consultation process is planned and proposals will be shared in the meeting.
4. The deadline for responses is 15 January 2016.

Route Map for this Paper		
Committee	Date	Action Requested/ Taken
Steering Committee	16 November 2015	To <u>consider</u> the green paper and provide initial views to inform the collation of an institutional response to the consultation.

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BIS Consultation on the Higher Education Green Paper**Introduction**

The Government's green paper on higher education, '*Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice*' was published on 6 November 2015. It details proposals intended to:

- Raise teaching standards (via the Teaching Excellence Framework).
- Widen participation for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Make it easier to establish a new university through faster access to degree awarding powers and university title.
- Ensure better value for money and employment prospects for students (via a new Office for Students).
- Provide greater focus on graduate employability.
- Reduce the regulatory burden on the sector.

The Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) is consulting on the proposals and the deadline for responses is 15 January 2016. The green paper is attached as Appendix 1 (online only). With the exception of those in Part D, the proposals contained in the Paper pertain to England only.

This paper provides a summary of the content of the green paper, to signpost members of the Committee to the relevant sections; no analysis is provided at this stage, however relevant commentaries are available at:

http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/insite/news/intnews2/green_paper_consult.

A consultation process is planned and proposals will be shared in the meeting. Also attached (Appendix 2), is the list of consultation questions and the identification of the lead authors in terms of preparing the draft response. The overall response will be coordinated by the Governance and Assurance Services team, within the Deputy Registrar's Office.

Teaching Excellence, Quality and Diversity (Part A)*Teaching Quality*

The key proposal in this section is the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which is intended to both recognise and reward excellent teaching. Underlying the proposal is the premise that, since most students now fund a significant proportion of their degree costs, there are increased responsibilities on the sector to demonstrate quality, transparency and value for money.

The Paper notes significant variability in teaching quality across the sector and a tendency in some areas, to place greater significance on research than teaching. The TEF is intended to incentivise good practice and redress this balance (p.19-20). It is also intended to provide prospective students, and employers, with more information about the quality of teaching in an institution, so as to facilitate decision-making (p.19; Q2). The Paper states clearly that the TEF 'should change providers' behaviour' (p.19).

This section contains several chapters that seek views on the proposed design for the TEF (including the assessment process, outcomes and incentives, metrics and criteria; Qs.5-10).

Most immediately, the Government's proposal is that for the 2017/18 academic year, eligibility to increase tuition fees in line with inflation will be determined by an institution's achievement of the first level of the TEF (p.23); this would be equivalent to a recent successful quality assessment (QA) review (see also pp.24-26). A key question in the consultation concerns the definition of criteria against which a 'successful assessment' in the TEF will be judged (Q.5).

From year two, it is proposed that four levels of TEF assessment be introduced; financial incentives would be applied institutionally from 2018/19 and be differentiated according to the level awarded (p.23). Institutions would decide whether or not to apply for a higher level of the TEF.

Other key points in this section include:

- The intention to encourage greater use of a Grade Point Average (GPA) system (pp.25-26).
- A proposal for a rolling cycle of TEF assessment (p.28).
- The intention for institutions to bear the cost of TEF assessment (p.28).
- The identification of the following existing metrics as being best suited to inform TEF judgements¹ (pp.33-35; Q.11):
 - Employment – Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) survey.
 - Retention/continuation – UK Performance Indicators (published by HESA).
 - Student Satisfaction – National Student Survey (teaching quality and learning environment).

Social Mobility

By 2020, the Government aims to double (compared to 2009) the percentage of people from disadvantaged backgrounds entering higher education and increase by 20% the number of black and ethnic minority (BME) students (p.36). The Paper also identifies the need for measures to address the differences in attainment and progression for students from disadvantaged and BME backgrounds, which cannot be accounted for by factors such as prior attainment (p.37).

The consultation details proposals to meet its goals around social mobility and widening participation (p.38-39; Qs12-13), including:

- Strengthening the guidance given to the Director of Fair Access (see also p.59).
- Providing more data linking students' backgrounds and characteristics with their applications and learning outcomes.
- Name-blind applications via UCAS.

The Higher Education Sector (Part B)

The proposals in this section are intended to 'remove the unnecessary barriers that prevent high quality providers from entering the sector and expanding their provision, while ensuring value for the taxpayer' (p.14). The proposals include:

- Creation of a single route for entry to higher education (pp.45-46, Q.14).
- A faster process by which new providers can award their own degrees and be granted university title (pp.46-49; Q.15).
- Options for the validation of new entrants (pp.50-53; Q.16).
- Protections for students in the event of an institution closing a course or exiting the system (pp.54-55; Q.17).
- Risk-based monitoring and compliance, with much reduced regulation for providers who are operating effectively.

A newly created body, the Office for Students (Part C), would have statutory duty and power for the operation of the single route for entry (see also pp.62-63, and Q.21a).

¹ The TEF would also incorporate evidence selected and submitted by the institution (see p.34).

Reforming the Higher Education Architecture (Part C)

Significant changes are proposed for the higher education regulatory system, with the underlying aim of making this simpler, more efficient, and responsive to the current and evolving landscape. The new system would regulate all providers, including alternative and new providers.

The creation of a new 'light-touch' regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), is intended to place students at the heart of this system. The new regulator would take on the majority of HEFCE's current functions and create a more streamlined architecture, merging some of the organisations that currently have a publicly funded regulatory role (potentially including those responsible for access agreements, teaching funding, quality assurance and the new TEF, see p.58-59; Q.19). The consultation seeks views on whether the OfS should be able to contract out some (or all) of its proposed functions (as HEFCE currently does); it also seeks views on the proposed options for allocating the Teaching Grant (Q.18).

The Paper proposes that the OfS be funded by institutions via a subscription model (p.63; Q21b).

Part C also references the role of Students' Unions, noting that the Government has previously provided funding here (via the NUS); the consultations seeks views on steps that could be taken to increase the transparency of student unions and their accountability to their members (p.61, Q.20).

Finally, Part C seeks views on proposals to manage risk within the new regulatory system (pp.64-65; Q22) and for a number of deregulatory measures (pp.66-67; Q.23).

Reducing Complexity and Bureaucracy in Research Funding (Part D)

Part D of the Paper explores the implications for the research funding landscape brought about by proposals to change the role of HEFCE (detailed in Part C). The Paper indicates the intention to consider the consultation responses alongside the recommendations from the forthcoming Nurse review of the Research Councils (due to be published in the next week).

The Paper recognises, and notes the intention to preserve the dual support system, which combines funding for high-quality, peer-reviewed project proposals, with formula-based, quality-related funding that rewards performance retrospectively (based on peer review and proven impact). Possible options for the future delivery of the dual support system are detailed on p.71; views are sought on these, and on safeguarding measures (Qs24-25).

Part D also discusses the Research Excellence Framework (pp.72-73), and acknowledges the significant costs and bureaucracy that this currently entails. Questions 26-28 seek views on the benefits of the REF and suggestions for possible improvements.

Recommendation

The Steering Committee is invited to consider the green paper and provide initial views to inform the collation of an institutional response to the consultation.

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11 November 2015