

## **Review of post-18 education and funding: Response from Goldsmiths, University of London**

Founded in 1891, Goldsmiths, University of London is home to 9,000 students studying undergraduate, postgraduate, teacher training and return-to-study courses in the arts and humanities, social sciences, cultural studies, computing, and entrepreneurial business and management.

Goldsmiths has been part of the University of London for over a century, formally becoming a School of the University in 1988.

Based on a single campus in the heart of south east London's New Cross community, Goldsmiths is internationally-renowned for its creative and interdisciplinary approach to both teaching and research.

Goldsmiths is glad of the opportunity to contribute to the Government's Review and we have responded to the question areas in turn, below.

**Goldsmiths, University of London**  
**May 2018**

## 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?

*A major issue with the current funding system, as stated persuasively by many commentators<sup>1</sup>, is that it breeds a confusion around whether higher education is a private or public enterprise. This identity problem threatens staff morale, muddles student perceptions about the purpose and value of their studies, and weakens public support for the UK's world-leading university sector.*

*Universities are encouraged to act as market competitors on the one hand - maximising their distinctiveness and improving performance in the narrow range of metrics which inform various league tables and government publications, while on the other hand they are subject to a statutory framework typically reserved for public bodies (e.g. Freedom of Information, ongoing demonstration of Value for Money via metrics, etc).*

*Goldsmiths believes in the fundamental value of education for education's sake: research and teaching across a full range of academic disciplines nurturing knowledge, critical reflection and disruptive thinking for the benefit of society in the both the UK and globally. We expect our students to share this vision and to pursue intellectual enquiry for its own value, challenging a marketised view of higher education which calculates worth purely in terms of net economic value.*

*Our concern is that the narrow terms of reference of this Review leave little room for the concept of a shared investment by the state and the student in the formative education of the latter, and make limited acknowledgement of the wider societal benefits of higher education. We hope that the Review can embrace the critical role which the diverse range of universities play in society, in our local communities, in sustainable economic growth<sup>2</sup>, in innovation, in 'brand UK' internationally, and in the soft power which comes from having a world-class higher education sector in the UK.*

*Rather than developing a range of new interventions in further attempts to 'drive behaviours' in the post-18 education sector, we sincerely hope that the Review*

---

<sup>1</sup> See for instance A McGettigan (2015), *The Treasury View of HE: variable human capital investment* (<https://www.gold.ac.uk/media/documents-by-section/departments/politics-and-international-relations/PERC-6---McGettigan-and-HE-and-Human-Capital-FINAL-1.pdf>); P Scott (2015), *Universities are losing their sense of public responsibility and social purpose* (<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2015/jan/06/public-universities-becoming-corporate-losing-social-purpose>); A Gideon (2015), *Blurring Boundaries between the Public and the Private in National Research Policies and Possible Consequences from EU Primary Law*, *Journal of Contemporary European Research*. 11 (1), pp50-68; S Marginson (2017), *Higher education and public goods* (<http://www.researchcghe.org/perch/resources/central-european-university-30-jan-2017.docx>); B Rammell (2016), *Protecting the Public Interest in Higher Education* ([http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hepi\\_Protecting-the-Public-Interest-in-Higher-Education-WEB.pdf](http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Hepi_Protecting-the-Public-Interest-in-Higher-Education-WEB.pdf))

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/economic-impact-higher-education-institutions-in-england.aspx>

panel, and Government in turn, will take this opportunity to reflect more broadly on the tensions which have led to the current situation.

*Above all we call for DfE and other statutory stakeholders to draw upon the wealth of expertise and experience in the sector that has helped shape UK universities as globally leading. As will no doubt become evident from the range of responses from other HEIs, the sector is very keen to work collaboratively with policy makers to reach evidence-based decisions on how to ensure our colleges and universities retain their international reputation in a post-Brexit world.*

## **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?

*Information, advice and guidance provision lacks formal organisation within the English post-16 education system. As such, the majority of information about where and what to study post-18 is informed by teachers, parents and in some cases careers advisors, heavily supported by both universities and colleges. In the academic year 2015-16 (the most recent year for which we have data on actual investment), universities and colleges spent £725.2 million on access measures under their access agreements. This represents 27.4 per cent of their income from fees above the basic level.<sup>3</sup>*

*Students have access to a wide array of information sources including, but not limited to: aggregate websites (whatuni.com, hotcourses.com, Which?), information from universities and colleges (websites, face-to-face advice and guidance, prospectus), information from providers such as UCAS, government advertising campaigns related to specific initiatives (apprenticeships) and the information and rankings provided through press publications and league tables.*

*However, our experience suggests that decisions are heavily influenced by perceptions. Family and peer attitudes can heavily influence choices. The lack of a national careers service in England means that provision and access is variable across the country.*

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

*Those striving to access information, advice and guidance later in life face a significant challenge. The only real sources of information are the web, supported by face-to-face information provided by peers, students, graduate, providers, and*

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.offa.org.uk/press/quick-facts/>

*employers. We believe that an effectively organised national careers service in England could help to fill this gap.*

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?

*The removal of the student number cap and the year-on-year reduction in real value terms of the fixed £9,000 Home/EU UG fee are arguably the driving factors behind the growth of supply in traditional three year degrees. The growth in demand reflects the recognition attached by students and their advisors to this long-established route to higher education (including internationally), and acknowledgement that such programmes continue to offer students the opportunity to develop a wide range of hard and soft skills and lead to good and sustained employment opportunities for the majority of graduates.*

*Linked to previous responses, a more coordinated approach to the provision of information, advice and guidance could allow for students to have a greater exposure to potential pathways.*

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?

*The fundamental problem with alternative formats is the limited volume of perceived appeal for such models. This is reflected in the pattern of provision for Foundation Degrees, one example of an attempt to introduce alternative provision and a more vocational focus. According to HESA data, the number of students studying for first degrees in UK institutions grew by 22% between 2007/8 and 2016/17, while the number studying Foundation Degrees fell by nearly 40%. 'Market' evidence, therefore, suggests that the offer is less appealing to students and employers than the traditional three year degree.*

*The lack of evident demand for such programmes suggests that stakeholders in both the UK and internationally continue to value most higher education as a three-or-more year experience which provides an opportunity for personal development, acquisition of new skills and reflective learning as well as the broadening of social, cultural and professional horizons, in addition to studying for a qualification.*

*As such, we would question whether the Government's focus on accelerated degrees as a solution for reducing student debt cost (to both the individual and the state) is a realistic ambition. We also note the risk that it will increase stratification in higher education – with those from backgrounds with limited experience of higher education, limited financial means, and possibly a culture of debt aversion, taking the*

*'quick route' to a degree while those from more privileged backgrounds will be encouraged by family and peers to study via established routes.*

*It is also evident that the setting of a maximum fee level at the present £9,250 has had a magnetic effect, with very few institutions wishing to take the risk that the presentation of fees beneath that ceiling would be perceived as anything other than a recognition of poorer quality provision relative to the wider sector. We should also acknowledge the genuine costs – UUK noted in 2017 that by then the real term value of the £9,000 fee cap had fallen by 8% since its introduction in 2012/13.*

*Furthermore, Government will wish to ensure that any policy changes flowing from this Review do not endanger the strength of the sector over the long term. All stakeholders are united in wanting to sustain 'brand UK' as an attractive one to international as well as home students, and careful thought needs to be given before implementing any short term policy interventions that may jeopardise our current enviable position on the world stage.*

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

*Moving to alternative delivery models poses planning problems for institutions, particularly smaller ones. While these are not insurmountable when such alternative study patterns are delivered at scale, it is difficult for smaller institutions to launch risky programmes incrementally due to the need to employ additional staff or renegotiate existing contracts. The model currently prevalent in HE provides students with the opportunity over the summer to expand their horizons through work, travel, volunteering or other activities. In research intensive institutions, the use of the summer by staff as the opportunity to pursue research activities is well entrenched. Universities are competing globally for the best staff and any employment model which is perceived as less attractive will entail recruitment difficulties.*

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?

*The Government should work with institutions to establish the full costs of developing and running such provision, acknowledging the risks to institutions of potential low demand, particularly in the early years when trust in such models is likely to be low, and fund accordingly. Funding needs to take into account the greater support needs for students who choose these options, a larger proportion of whom are likely to be mature, perhaps with caring responsibilities, have been out of formal education for a number of years, and perhaps with non-traditional qualifications.*

*We echo the comments made in the response by the Higher Education Policy Institute to this Review, particularly regarding the strength of the policy case for*

*“reinvigorating direct public support, through the residual teaching grant paid to institutions, to encourage part-time study” at the widest range of HEIs<sup>4</sup>.*

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?

*The continued growth of degree level education post 2012 and the introduction of a £9,000 fee level, demonstrates the continued appeal of degree level study and that the fee level does not necessarily put students off studying at this level. As such there seems to be little correlation between funding arrangements and choice.*

*However, the funding packages for non-traditional students, and the recent removal of the means-tested maintenance loan, EMA and related schemes, do mean that students from low-income backgrounds may be put off higher education or indeed face higher levels of hardship whilst at university, leading in turn to higher non-continuation rates and possibly greater anxiety levels among certain groups of students.*

*Relatedly, the part-time market for higher education and training has seen significant shrinkage and as reported by the Sutton Trust, much of this in England is attributable to the funding arrangements<sup>5</sup> thus demonstrating the importance of sustainable support arrangements.*

*For technical and vocational programmes, the opportunity to ‘earn as you learn’ is an important factor in the choice to pursue these routes of study.*

*It should be noted that the complex range of incentivisations and regulation in the market-driven model imposed on providers, students and the sector as a whole is more expensive to operate than previous systems of block grant to providers and individual grants to students. The management of fees following students and subsequent debt management, the regulation and monitoring of access agreements, and all related activities lead to a highly complex and regulated sector.*

## **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?

---

<sup>4</sup> N Hillman (2018), Post-18 Review: *10 Points-of-Note on fixing the broken parts of our education and training system based on recent HEPI output*, pp2-3 (<http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/HEPI-Submission-to-the-Post-18-Review.pdf>)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/lost-part-timers-mature-students/>

*A number of challenges may disproportionately affect the following groups of disadvantaged learners:*

- *Financial barriers including the access to information and guidance about funding and support inevitably have a significant impact on those students from low income backgrounds and low participation neighbourhoods.*
- *For students from care, or with caring responsibilities, the ability to access specialist support funds and appropriate benefits advice and support is crucial.*
- *For mature students, access to quality information, advice and guidance and appropriate financial support for those with family and/or caring responsibilities is vitally important.*
- *For students with disabilities, aside from physical barriers inherent in a majority of older accommodation, there can be issues around equal access to social activities and the speed and consistency with which applications for Reasonable Adjustments are processed.*
- *For those students with no heritage of higher education the barriers relate to a readiness to study at HE level, to accessing appropriate information, advice and guidance and in preparing for managing costs of study.*
- *For BAME students there are elements of unconscious bias that need to be overcome when accessing learning and/or training.*

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

*Students and learners are best supported when they know what support they will be receiving, when and by what means. It is our experience that this extends to receiving means-tested support that is paid directly to the student to support their learning experience at a time that they are aware of. This allows for students to manage their finances.*

*The learning relationship is best managed when the learner is not looking to the institution at which they are studying to be the funder of that study. As such, it would be preferable for support to be direct to student.*

### **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?

*We would emphasise the critical role of creative skills in building resilience in the UK's talent pipeline for the future of the economy both at home and abroad. As the Creative Industries Federation noted recently, "sector skills gaps stem from a mix of inadequate provision in schools, an underdeveloped technical education system and a lack of awareness about careers that the sector has to offer... These gaps are only set to get worse as the number of people studying creative subjects continues to decline."<sup>6</sup>*

*Goldsmiths joins other creative sector voices in welcoming the Government's recent acknowledgement of the part played by the cultural and creative sector in the UK economy<sup>7</sup> (£92 billion p/a, employing 2 million people and growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy) and would encourage joined-up thinking between this Review and the Industrial Strategy's commitment to a creative industries careers programme.*

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?

*Firstly, Goldsmiths believes strongly that creative skills form a critical part of the advanced technical skillset. Using data collated by the UK Commission on Employment and Skills (UKCES) to inform the Industrial Strategy, NESTA have recently estimated that the rate of growth for both creative and STEM occupations will be more than double the average job growth across the whole UK economy by 2024. Creative jobs are projected to grow by 5.3% and STEM jobs by 5.1%, whilst the overall job growth is only 2.5%<sup>8</sup>. Further to this, NESTA's findings argue that with the right strategy and support, the number of creative jobs could be increased by up to a further 1 million by 2030. At the same time, the NESTA report noted the decline in numbers of school children studying creative subjects at Key Stage 4 and at GCSE and challenged government to pursue a Creative Careers initiative, of the type anticipated in the Creative Industries Sector Deal referenced above (Q11). Recognition of the potential of creative disciplines and the creative sector to enhance a growing economy is critical, and Goldsmiths wholeheartedly endorses NESTA's recommendations in this regard.*

*The successful study of creative disciplines develops a range of skills beyond originality and creative thinking, from interpersonal and communication skills, to social and cultural interpretation and understanding, to judgement and strategic thinking. This breadth of skills enables people to contribute in a variety of ways, beyond directly 'creating' roles, to a range of different sectors, including the 'STEM' sectors (which are intertwined with skills from the creative sectors: it is important to acknowledge the overlap between creativity, social understanding and successful technical development).*

---

<sup>6</sup> Global Talent Report, Creative Industries Federation, October 2017 (<https://www.creativeindustriesfederation.com/publications/global-talent-report>)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/creative-industries-sector-deal-launched>

<sup>8</sup> Creativity and the Future of Work, NESTA, March 2018 (<https://www.nesta.org.uk/publications/creativity-and-future-work>)

*UKCES's own findings on the labour market of 2014-2024 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-labour-market-projections-2014-to-2024>) projected a significant increase in the scale and range of jobs that would be categorised as managerial, professional and support services, and which require the range of generalist skills outlined above. These jobs will be needed to support the technical, creative and other sectors and should not be underestimated. The wide range of skills that such jobs require, beyond professional specialisms, can be taught through the study of creative subjects and also through the broader range of humanities and social sciences.*

*Goldsmiths disputes the narrative that these generalist skillsets are in oversupply, either at home or abroad. UUK's recently published report also challenges this notion, and demonstrates the economic benefit that graduates across all disciplines achieve (<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/blog/Pages/employment-data-reveals-added-value-graduates.aspx?>).*

*As a final point, we find it important to note that as well as a strong economy, the notion of a 'good society' is also critical to the nation's (and other nation's) health, and higher education has an important role to play in enabling both of those. In the narrative about economy, technology and industrial sectors, the positive contribution that the study of the broad range of liberal arts and sciences is too easily lost.*

#### **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?

*If we accept the premise that there is currently limited political will to support increased funding for post-16 education from general taxation, the current system of loans is arguably among the most progressive, although recent changes to repayment terms and the removal of the maintenance grant have been notably regressive.*

*Given this context, to reduce the total burden of the state 'loan book' (the "RAB charge"), Government might consider ways in which higher earners can contribute more over time. Higher interest rates or repayment rates above the 9% threshold for those in the highest earnings brackets, combined with financially disincentivising the immediate repayment of loans could enable stability (or even reductions) in the repayment and interest rates applicable for graduates of more modest means.*

*One idea mooted in the run-up the publication of this Review was the prospect that Government may move towards proposing that maximum fee levels are set by academic discipline, more closely reflecting the apparent cost of typical programme delivery alone. Such a policy could seriously undermine efforts to ensure equality of access to different professions for those of all backgrounds, and also risks sending*

*confusing messages about the value society places on different subjects. We would strongly oppose any such model and again echo the concerns cited by HEPI in this regard<sup>9</sup>.*

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?

*Student support and finance is best provided direct to the student, with clear messages about the levels of support available and associated support channels to assist with applications and to manage student questions.*

*One successful example of an external campaign that provided information was the collaboration between Universities UK and Martin Lewis in 2012, as higher fees were being rolled out. This high quality, centrally provided, campaign was able to disseminate important communications without the responsibility falling on the provider – institutions who were charging the fee and trying to explain the support mechanisms.*

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?

*The higher education sector is striving to achieve maximum efficiency whilst providing students with a high quality academic experience which meets their expectations. Some methods that are driving efficiencies relate to the increased and more sophisticated use of technology-enhanced learning (TEL). This sees an increased use of virtual learning environments, lecture capture, online teaching and blended learning to enhance and supplement the delivery of face-to-face learning.*

*Goldsmiths would argue that TEL should never replace the vital personal interaction between the student and the member of staff responsible for teaching and supervising a student, but it is noted that this is an area that potentially enables student success at the same time as delivering efficient services.*

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

*Through the introduction or promotion of some of the policy ideas suggested above in our responses to Q13-15.*

---

<sup>9</sup> Hillman (2018), pp3-5 (<http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/HEPI-Submission-to-the-Post-18-Review.pdf>)