

SENATE

28 JUNE 2018

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Introduction

Consistent with the new approach to Senate, this report will largely cover sector-wide developments. Matters local and national to do with research, teaching and learning and international will be covered by the relevant pro-vice-chancellors in written reports (where these are available). Matters of significance arising from the University Executive Board will also be covered, as appropriate, in separate agenda items.

Any questions arising from this paper can be raised at the meeting.

Implications of Brexit

The government is soon expected to publish a lengthy white paper on matters relating to Brexit. This is likely to contain more detail on the future of Britain's science and research engagement with the European Union

Since my last report, there have been other important Brexit-related developments which are worth noting here. First, [the government has confirmed](#) it is proposing that EU migrants who come to Britain during the Brexit implementation phase will have the right to gain settled status and settle permanently in the UK.

This is a welcome announcement which ensures that talented EU staff and students can continue to work and study in the UK during and after the implementation period.

Second, the [government published its view](#) of how Horizon Europe (the successor to Horizon 2020) could best build on the achievements of earlier programmes in strengthening Europe's science base.

Although the UK's role in Horizon Europe - which is not due to commence until 2021 - is still subject to negotiation (and further elaboration - see above), the document follows the [Prime Minister's Mansion House speech](#) where she said that the UK was committed to establishing a far-reaching science and innovation pact with the EU. These points were reinforced in comments made by the Prime Minister in May.

It is worth noting that the priorities for the new programme are generally

considered to be sensible and include, above all else, retaining a focus on excellence. For that reason, it is very likely that it remains in the UK's interest to be part of such arrangements, post-Brexit.

Third, the Erasmus+ exchange programme is likely to be open to any country in the world, which would then provide a way for UK universities and students to take part post-Brexit.

The European Commission has said that countries outside the EU and the European Economic Area would be able to participate fully as long as they do not have a power over decision making and are prepared to pay a fair contribution for participation.

Access and Participation Plan guidance for 2019/20 in England

As part of the suite of regulatory framework documents published recently, the [guidance](#) for institutions requiring an Access and Participation Plan sets out further details of the Office for Students' social mobility-related priorities within the wider risk-based approach to regulation.

As expected, the plans themselves will not look vastly different to existing access agreements in year one (2019/20) when it comes to targets, investment, coverage and frequency. However, OfS has shifted its emphasis towards outcomes, across the student lifecycle, and makes clear that the 'baseline' expectation of institutions is one of continuous improvement in reducing the gaps that exist for underrepresented groups in terms of access, student success (retention/attainment) and progression.

The University has submitted its plan for 2019-20 and now awaits feedback. We were also pleased to welcome to the University Chris Millward, the recently appointed Director of Fair Access and Participation in the OfS.

Response to Schools that work for everyone 2016

Following the 2016 green paper, *Schools that work for everyone*, the government published its final response last month. A key feature of the original paper was that universities would be required to sponsor an underperforming school as a condition of access agreements. The response confirmed that a more flexible approach will be adopted, recognising the strength of ongoing partnerships and the importance for universities and schools to work together in ways appropriate to their own context.

While the approach is no longer confined to a requirement to enter into formal sponsorship arrangements or to establish a free school, there is still an expectation of greater ambition on the part of universities when it comes to working with schools. Such work forms part of the University's Access and

Participation Plan (see above). Consideration is also being given to other ways of strengthening work with local and regional schools and colleges.

Opportunity for Everyone campaign

In May, UUK launched a new digital campaign – [Opportunity for Everyone](#). Using the hashtag #YesUniCan, the campaign featured inspirational real stories to show how higher education can transform lives. It also demonstrated the important work being done by universities – our own included – on social mobility.

The hashtag was used 1,800 times in the first 24 hours, reaching 3 million on Twitter. It received backing from the Department for Education, OfS, and Robert Halfon MP, Chair of the Education Select Committee, with several graduates talking about the impact of going to university on their lives.

Sector progress to address harassment

Universities UUK recently published a report on the outcomes of a small qualitative survey to explore sector progress in implementing the recommendations from the report by UUK’s Harassment Taskforce, [Changing the Culture](#), and guidance on [how to handle alleged student misconduct which may also constitute a criminal offence](#).

UUK is also establishing a task and finish group to support institutions in addressing staff-to-student sexual misconduct and to provide practical support in this area.

These developments all helpfully contribute to the work that is being done internally to ensure that the University has robust systems and procedures in place to deal with harassment.

HEPI/Advance HE Student Experience Survey 2018

The Higher Education Policy Institute/Advance HE (previously Higher Education Academy) Student Academic Experience Survey (SAES) was published in June.

More than 14,000 students took part in the SAES this year. It is an annual survey that began in 2006 which records the views of students about their academic experience and their attitudes towards policy issues that impact upon them.

This year’s highlights include the following:

- 38% of students in the UK perceive ‘good or very good’ value from their course. This is a three percentage point improvement over last year’s survey and reverses a five-year downward trend.

- Fewer students studying in the UK, 32%, perceive ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ value when compared with 34% in 2017.
- There is a clear, statistically significant, improvement among students from England, representing the largest number of students, where 35% report ‘good’ or ‘very good’ value.
- 68% of students who felt they received ‘good’ or ‘very good’ value for money regard teaching quality as the most important factor behind this, while 62% of those who perceive ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’ value pointed to tuition fees as the most important factor.
- Students at institutions which secured a Gold award in the Teaching Excellence Framework are more likely to have received good value; but there is no noticeable difference on this measure between Silver and Bronze-rated institutions.
- For the first time, this year’s Survey asks students to reflect on the course choice they made: 65% are happy with their choice; and only 5% say they would not go into higher education given the choice again.
- While 65% of UK-domiciled white students report they are learning ‘a lot’ and 40% say they are receiving ‘good’ or ‘very good’ value for money, UK-domiciled Asian students report a poorer experience, with only 57% saying they are learning ‘a lot’ and just 23% perceiving ‘good’ or ‘very good’ value for money.

Review of post-18 education funding in England

The work of the review into post-18 education and funding continues apace. A final report is expected in the early autumn. The University submitted a response which is attached for information.

Advance HE

The creation of Advance HE on the 31 March 2018 has brought together the Equality Challenge Unit, the Higher Education Academy and the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education into a single organisation.

The new agency was launched following a review of higher education sector agencies. The new body is designed to offer a more integrated service to universities and create efficiencies. On the former, consultations are well underway to inform the reshaping of the new agency’s range of services. In addition, a review of Athena Swan is in train. On the latter, institutional subscriptions have been reduced by 10%.

Publication of National Student Survey (NSS) and other datasets

The Office for Students (OfS) is applying the Code of Practice for Statistics to its data publication in anticipation of its designation as a producer of official statistics by July 2018. This has implications for the pre-publication access that can be granted to NSS outcomes and Unistats data, as these will now be treated as official statistics.

As a consequence, OfS will now publish the NSS public dataset at the same time as providers are able to access their own data on Friday 27 July 2018. There will also be no provider preview as part of the annual Unistats data collection and publication process, and data available in system reports will be limited to that essential for quality processes associated with the Unistats return.

The Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset is a new dataset, which links information about employment and earnings from HM Revenue and Customs tax records to individual student records for the first time. It is a substantial administrative dataset, which provides much greater coverage than the previously available survey data on graduate earnings.

The OfS intends to add LEO data to Unistats in late June, for English providers for which they have appropriate student data returns. In deciding on the publication approach, the OfS has carried out work to ensure that what it publishes is robust and useful to prospective students, including testing various presentations of the data with them.

On behalf of HEFCE, I had been chairing the Student Information Advisory Group (SIAG) which considered the matters above (the future of SIAG under the OfS is not yet clear). In my view, the move to designate various data sets as national statistics is a very positive development as it ensures a high degree of rigour in their preparation and complete independence in their publication.