



Department for Business, Innovation & Skills

Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice - Consultation

You can reply to this consultation online at:

<https://bisgovuk.citizenspace.com/he/fulfilling-our-potential>

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<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/higher-education-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice>

The Department may, in accordance with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, make available, on public request, individual responses.

The closing date for this consultation is 15/01/2016

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Please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent to this consultation.

	Alternative higher education provider (with designated courses)
	Alternative higher education provider (no designated courses)
	Awarding organisation
	Business/Employer
	Central government
	Charity or social enterprise
	Further Education College
	Higher Education Institution
	Individual (Please describe any particular relevant interest; parent, student, teaching staff etc.)
	Legal representative
	Local Government
	Professional Body
✓	Representative Body
	Research Council
	Trade union or staff association
	Other (please describe)

Public sector equality duty

Question 1:

- a) What are your views on the potential equality impacts of the proposals and other plans in this consultation?

Business schools are very supportive about the stated intention of the proposals. However there are serious concerns that the metrics proposed to judge teaching excellence may in themselves cause greater difficulties for the widening participation agenda. There is a danger that measuring, for example, the percentage of 'good degrees' may deter rather than encourage offering places to students from lower socio-economic groups, who often have a much

longer academic road to travel to achieve this level. To discourage universities from offering such students places on the grounds that it could result in a lower judgement for the institution would be a grave error.

Likewise it is important that the proposed Office for Students does not foster traditional elitism, and gives equal recognition to pre and post 92 institutions. If the proposals are introduced, there will need to be careful scrutiny to assess any impact.

b) Are there any equality impacts that we have not considered?

Yes

No

Not sure

Please provide any further relevant evidence.

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (Part A: Chapters 1-3)

Question 2: How can information from the TEF be used to better inform student and employer decision making? Please quantify these benefits as far as you can.

It is very difficult to answer this question in any great detail until we know the specifics of how it will be constructed and how it will be used. If the metrics used are those already available elsewhere, e.g. Unistats and NSS, there is no perceived benefit.

However, if a fuller picture is made available then the outcome would be beneficial for all involved; students, employers and the HEIs themselves. The method would need to be clear and consistently applied, without the possibility of 'gaming', as has become the case with the NSS and the REF.

A proper value-added measure of teaching quality is essential if it is to produce more than a simple measure of entry criteria where previous life chances have had a dramatic impact. In such a way the TEF could bring a much needed balance between teaching and research.

There is a comment made on page 21 of the green paper which states: "excellence is the sum of many factors – focussing on metrics gives an overview, but not the whole picture." We agree that the metrics will not give a full picture of excellence or quality. Consequently, we would welcome a measurement system that attempts to give a clear overall picture of excellence. Getting the system right will ensure that students and employers are better informed to make a decision on the best institution for them.

*It would seem that the best way to have the information represented in a consistent and comparable way would be for a new externally visible data capture method to be used. We would advise against creating league tables as this will inevitably lead to gaming. We prefer the proposal to have a small number of levels of TEF, but for there to be no ranking within those. We see the link between TEF and the ability to increase fees as detrimental and confusing to the cause. Any institution able to raise their fees would effectively be forced to raise them to the highest level as fee level would become **the** indicator of 'quality'.*

Question 3: Do you agree that the ambition for TEF should be that it is open to all HE providers, all disciplines, all modes of delivery and all levels?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answers.

The majority of our members believe this will help provide a level playing field, although there are questions about what this means in practice. From a practical point of view, leaving FE providers out of the TEF in the initial stages may be sensible as there has traditionally been a greater focus on teaching at these institutions and the tension with research does not exist to the same extent. However, alternative providers should be included in the first wave to allow greater comparability for students and employers. This is especially critical for the business and management sector, where most newcomers to the market often first venture.

Question 4: Where relevant, should an approved Access Agreement be a pre-requisite for a TEF award? What other mechanism might be used for different types of providers?

Yes, an access agreement or something similar should be a pre-requisite. There is a question about how this would apply to private providers. Other suggestions are analysis of scholarship and bursary agreements.

We also agree that those institutions taking on a greater proportion of under-represented groups should NOT be disadvantaged by the TEF for doing so. It is possible that this is where the best and most innovative teaching can take place, although the outcomes may not suggest so if just looking at blunt calculations such as degree classification.

Question 5: Do you agree with the proposals on:

a) what would constitute a 'successful' QA review

Yes No Not sure

In the first year this seems to be the most sensible solution. Obviously we cannot comment on what might change in the future definition of 'successful'.

b) the incentives that should be open to alternative providers for the first year of the TEF

Yes No Not sure

Our members are very split on this issue, although it would seem unfair to expect the same standards without offering the same incentives. In any case, reputational incentives are not really in the gift of the government or any other body. On financial incentives, please note our opposition to this being linked to the TEF. Not only does it create incentive to 'game' the process, it adds far too many complications. In particular, will fees be set by institution, subject area, or perhaps individual programme level? How are fees for joint degrees to be determined? If the belief is that the TEF will help the market differentiate between institutions then the market will surely determine the fee level.

c) the proposal to move to differentiated levels of TEF from year two?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

Our members find it difficult to answer this question without seeing the detail. All agree that there should not be an aim for homogeneity. Difference should be encouraged, so long as there is quality of provision. However, we would caution against having varying levels as dissatisfaction and challenge always comes at the boundaries. Trying to judge levels of excellence would be cumbersome and contentious. We would propose two levels would be optimum; a simple pass/fail. It is hard to imagine it would be feasible to judge excellence at four clear levels.

Question 6: Do you agree with the proposed approach to TEF assessments on

Timing?

Yes No Not sure

Assessment panels?

Yes No Not sure

and process?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

The TEF needs to have credibility from the outset and therefore should not be rushed. The current lack of detail remains a concern. In order to minimise cost and distraction from actually teaching, the review should be periodic and timed to be counter-cyclical with the REF. We agree that interim assessments should be able to be made where either the institution requests it or there is reason for concern that an institution should be downgraded.

Assessment panels seem a sensible idea, but we recognise that finding suitably qualified people who have the time and no conflicts of interest may be difficult. Moderation will also be complex.

Question 7: How can we minimise any administrative burdens on institutions? Please provide any evidence relating to the potential administrative costs and benefits to institutions of the proposals set out in this document.

Once again the lack of detail on offer makes this a difficult question to answer. It is inevitable that this exercise will have an administrative burden, and to have a meaningful outcome this should be accepted by institutions. However, there should be a commitment to limit the cost to that associated with the current QAA institutional review. There is a fear over the cost associated with the review panels and how this cost will be met. Above all, measuring teaching shouldn't unduly distract from teaching.

One possible way to minimise the administrative burden is where there are robust (particularly international) accreditation processes in a subject area, efforts should be made to harmonise the TEF processes with these (even use these as means of assessing performance). For example, within Business and Management the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), is already working with the NVAO in the Netherlands to link national QA review requirements with the AACSB accreditation process. The Chartered ABS would be happy to provide more information on this.

Question 8: Do you agree with the proposed approach to differentiation and award as TEF develops over time?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

Our members are broadly in agreement, although again would stress that this shouldn't be used as a mechanism to cause division within the HEI provision, but should recognise the different missions of each institution.

We again would caution against different levels of award. And again please note our opposition to the link with financial incentives.

Question 9: Do you agree with the proposed approach to incentives for the different types of provider?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

This needs more dialogue at the detailed design stage. The notion of incentives is problematic: ways of recognising all round quality and economic contribution need exploration. To link it to fees is contrary to one of the aims of the green paper: to increase social mobility and to make access to HE easier.

That said, if there is to be a link to fees, we agree that 'banking' should not be permitted and that an institution newly awarded a higher TEF level should be able to charge fees at the same level as those who have held the higher level for longer. The judgement should be about the present, not the past.

Alternative providers should be entitled to the same treatment as they are subject to the same standards.

Question 10: Do you agree with the focus on teaching quality, learning environment, student outcomes and learning gain?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

It would be difficult to disagree with such a statement, and care will need to be taken to ensure this doesn't just become an outputs measurement. Inputs are important too. It will be complex, but not impossible, to devise metrics for learning environment, and this needs to be done.

It is important to ensure that research is taken into account as an element in assessing teaching quality - the role of research led teaching is critical to a quality student experience.

Care will also be required when measuring student outcomes. For example, has a successful social worker received a poorer education than a mediocre doctor, simply because of the pay differential?

Question 11: Do you agree with the proposed approach to the evidence used to make TEF assessments - common metrics derived from the national databases supported by evidence from the provider?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

Views on this are mixed. There is concern across the sector regarding students from widening participation backgrounds. If graduate destination/salary is to be included as a metric it could have an adverse impact on institutions that do great work in this area. We note that on page 31 this issue is recognised and there is a suggestion that for institutions that have a high proportion of widening participation students' data will be analysed separately.

Over emphasis on a measure of salary at a future age could discourage institutions from offering places to women, and those wanting to work in roles such as nursing (as opposed to doctoring), social welfare as opposed to banking, etc. Surely there is room and respect for all regardless of financial gain for the individual. It should also be recognised that there is a strong geographical influence on salary levels. A law graduate choosing to work in the North East will possibly earn less than a similar graduate working in London, simply because the cost of living is greater in London, not because of any judgement on the quality of the education they have received.

It is important that HEIs have an opportunity to contextualise metrics and to provide a self-assessment document in conjunction with other data.

Social mobility and widening participation (Part A: Chapter 4)

Question 12:

a) Do you agree with the proposals to further improve access and success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

Our members wholeheartedly agree that improving access and retention rates for those from disadvantaged and BME backgrounds is a key priority. However, there is insufficient detail in the paper to suggest how this might be achieved. There is also an observation that universities cannot right the wrongs of the education system up to the age of 18.

We also recognise the great work that FE Colleges offering HE courses do in providing a bridge in to HE. More should be done to build, recognise and reward links between local FE Colleges and local HEIs.

- b) Do you agree that the Office for Students should have the power to set targets where providers are failing to make progress?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

If the Office for Students is to replace HEFCE it will need to have the same level of distance from Government Ministers that HEFCE enjoys and, as stated in the paper, the transition period will be a crucial time to secure the knowledge and expertise that currently resides within HEFCE. It is a largely respected body and should be treated with care.

- c) What other groups or measures should the Government consider?

Other minority groups to consider are white males from disadvantaged backgrounds, post graduate students, international students.

Question 13:

- a) What potential benefits for decision and policy making in relation to improving access might arise from additional data being available?

This is not immediately clear from the green paper, although it is an opportunity to gain relevant information to identify and help those students who are failing.

- b) What additional administrative burdens might this place on organisations? If additional costs are expected to be associated with this, please quantify them.

Without more detail it is impossible to quantify this, but it is certain that there will be additional burdens on time, cost and information overload.

Opening up the sector to new providers (Part B: Chapter 1)

Question 14: Do you agree with the proposed single route into the higher education sector?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer, including information quantifying how the potential cost of entry would change as a result of these proposals.

A single, coherent model seems the only way to ensure the quality of UK HE and at the same time provide a level playing field. If the same standards are required of all providers then the same process should apply to all.

The cost of entry may be reduced, but it would still be substantial and therefore deter 'chancers'.

Question 15:

a) Do you agree with the proposed risk-based approach to eligibility for degree awarding powers (DAPs) and university title?

Yes

No

Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

In principle, this seems a very sensible approach, although we would like to see the detail before making any firm comment. There should be no reason for any new entrant that has been judged 'low risk' to be treated any differently from longstanding providers. It will also be a more cost effective model to run.

We also support the removal of University College title in favour of University title, for those meeting the criteria. The UC title can be confusing to students and employers.

b) What are your views on the options identified for validation of courses delivered by providers who do not hold DAPs?

There is insufficient information available for us to make any comment here however, granting DAPs to non-teaching bodies does seem to go against the point of DAPs.

Question 16: Do you agree with the proposed immediate actions intended to speed up entry?

Yes

No

Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

Our members wish for the processes to be sufficiently robust to protect students and the reputation of UK HE and they are not convinced they are. This is especially important where for-profit providers apply.

Some changes seem quite reasonable, but others are a cause for concern. We support allowing designation applications throughout the year and a risk-based approach to re-designation. However we see a danger in introducing a probationary designation period or allowing parallel applications for HER and course designation, or indeed decreasing the requirement for three years of financial data. There needs to be some confidence given to students that the institution they are applying to has a degree of existential sustainability.

Provider exit and student protection (Part B: Chapter 2)

Question 17: Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a requirement for all providers to have contingency arrangements to support students in the event that their course cannot be completed?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer, including evidence on the costs and benefits associated with having a contingency plan in place? Please quantify these costs where possible.

This is entirely reasonable and no other customer service provider would escape this. It is likely that all institutions already have these contingencies in place. This is both from the perspective of a course being withdrawn, and where a student's circumstances have changed. These measures are typically overseen at school level via the examinations board process and university level via academic procedures and processes. These may vary from school to school and institution to institution, but will already be in place. Our members can provide examples of where students studying through international partner institutions have been supported in completing their courses via alternative routes, where that has become necessary.

Simplifying the higher education architecture (Part C)

Question 18:

a) Do you agree with the proposed changes to the higher education architecture?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

The majority of our members agree. Those who were unsure suggested that getting the detail right, in both the design and implementation phases, would be crucial. There is also concern that the expertise currently contained within HEFCE is not lost.

b) To what extent should the Office for Students (OfS) have the power to contract out its functions to separate bodies?

Fully Partially Not at all

c) If you agree, which functions should the OfS be able to contract out?

One possible function our members would be happy to be contracted out would be data collection. If there is a good reason and proper monitoring, similar outsourcing to that undertaken by HEFCE should be permissible.

d) What are your views on the proposed options for allocating Teaching Grant?

Option 1: BIS Ministers set strategic priorities and BIS officials determine formula.

Agree Disagree Not sure

Option 2: BIS Minister sets strategic priorities and allocation responsibilities divested to OfS

Agree Disagree Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer,

The current scheme with HEFCE seems to work. It is important that regardless of who is in government there is an element of continuity and long-term perspective and therefore BIS officials should not be responsible for the actual allocation.

Question 19: Do you agree with the proposal for a single, transparent and light touch regulatory framework for every higher education provider?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer, including how the proposed framework would change the burden on providers. Please quantify the benefits and/or costs where possible.

This is one of the very few questions where our members are unanimous in their view. A single body that applies the same rules with consistency and with an overview of the entire sector will be a benefit to the sector.

Question 20: What steps could be taken to increase the transparency of student unions and strengthen unions' accountability to their student members?

At a minimum Student Unions should be set common disclosure requirements. At best the NUS should be audited and regulated.

Question 21:

a) Do you agree with the proposed duties and powers of the Office for Students?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

b) Do you agree with the proposed subscription funding model?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

This may work so long as subscription levels were kept in check. A scenario where a significant portion of student fees was spent on OfS and other subscriptions would be counterproductive. If such a model were to exist the OfS should have its budget approved by the subscribers before subscription levels were set. The government should also be compelled to take these expenses in to account when setting fee levels.

Question 22:

a) Do you agree with the proposed powers for OfS and the Secretary of State to manage risk?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer.

b) What safeguards for providers should be considered to limit the use of such powers?

There needs to be a right of appeal against findings and the processes need to be transparent. This will help guard against short term political actions.

Question 23: Do you agree with the proposed deregulatory measures?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer, including how the proposals would change the burden on providers. Please quantify the benefits and/or costs where possible.

Reducing complexity and bureaucracy in research funding (Part D)

Question 24: In light of the proposed changes to the institutional framework for higher education, and the forthcoming Nurse Review, what are your views on the future design of the institutional research landscape?

There needs to be a way of enabling teaching led institutions to be recognised and rewarded for assuring all teaching is research informed.

There needs to be a more joined up approach and we need to develop ways of supporting and promoting interdisciplinary research. The focus on STEM at the expense of other disciplines has been effective in attracting more people to study STEM subjects and driving scientific progress, but little of this has resulted in benefits for UK plc because the importance of business and management as part of the innovation process and entrepreneurial activity within the economy has been overlooked. The Chartered Association of Business Schools recognises the importance of the investment in STEM to the long-term future of the UK economy, but we have called for research funding in STEM to be connected with business and management research. As the Nurse Review recognised, the complex “path from scientific discovery to the marketplace...often needs to draw on research from a range of disciplines.” Business and management research capability is well placed to enable the translation of discovery and invention into innovation. We are more than happy to work with the Government and Research Councils to identify proven models of inter-disciplinary research which benefit from collaboration between STEM and business and management researchers. The Nurse Review also recognised the need for more strategic investment in the skills needed, at all levels, to help businesses to be internationally competitive. With 56% of small business failures attributed to poor management, we know that business sustainability, for businesses of all sizes, and the UK’s productivity can be improved

through investment in management skills and research. Other countries benefit far more from UK scientific and technological inventions than we do for exactly this reason. Social science, and business and management in particular, are equally important and should be supported to help these discoveries drive productivity.

We would urge the current focus on STEM to be extended to STEMM, where the additional M stands for management. For UK productivity to be boosted by STEM research there needs to be a business proposition at the end. Currently this is not always the case. By including Management research in the ring-fence we can ensure there is maximum economic benefit for the UK.

Question 25:

- a) What safeguards would you want to see in place in the event that dual funding was operated within a single organisation?

There would need to be a system for ensuring that research funding was not limited to a small number of institutions and in limited subject areas. A single body would need a broad constituency with specific subject expertise in all subject areas.

- b) Would you favour a degree of hypothecation to ensure that dual funding streams, along with their distinctive characteristics, could not be changed by that organisation?

Yes No Not sure

Please give reasons for your answer

We are not sure why, if there is an identified need for change, change could not happen. So long as it is transparent then there should not be a problem. This would, however, require safeguards to prevent the complete disappearance of either funding route.

Question 26: What are the benefits of the REF to a) your institution and b) to the wider sector? How can we ensure they are preserved?

There are both benefits and disadvantages to the REF. On the positive side, the focus on impact has raised the profile and standing of UK research within the stakeholder community. The database of world leading case studies is something of which we should be proud. It also motivates staff to be research active.

On the other hand, it is expensive, open to gaming, and drives inappropriate behaviours. For some it is seen as elitist, as only those with the highest rankings are recognised at all. Just as crucially, the current REF system produces a very volatile and expensive labour market, especially towards the closure of a review period, and this needs to be addressed.

The purpose of the REF should be to drive up quality and increase the breadth of research excellence that rests upon a solid base and should not be seen in subject specific islands. A systematic production of excellence in research that is sustained for the long term and becomes more globally competitive can only be ensured if the breadth of research is also encouraged and supported.

Question 27: How would you suggest the burden of REF exercises is reduced?

It is suggested that it is difficult to see how this could be reduced. However, using the past REF results as a baseline with a lighter touch review may work. A fairer system that eliminated gaming would be welcomed and would eliminate some of the costs borne by the institutions. For example, requiring institutions to submit outputs for all research active faculty in the assessment period may help. Clarity about the rules for measuring impact and environment, well in advance of the submission deadline, would be welcome.

Question 28: How could the data infrastructure underpinning research information management be improved?

Leave less to small group judgements.

Do you have any other comments that might aid the consultation process as a whole?

Please use this space for any general comments that you may have, comments on the layout of this consultation would also be welcomed.

Overall, our members are encouraged by the focus now being put on teaching. It is an area where business schools believe they have a lot to offer and to share. The rewards on offer for research can distort the purpose of institutions and it is pleasing that this issue is being addressed. However, so long as there is a significant financial reward for individuals who conduct research over those who teach it is unlikely there will be significant change. We would encourage BIS to consider ways in which the individual can reap the benefits of their good teaching. A financial reward at institutional level will not make its way down to those displaying individual excellence.

Our members would welcome recognition for the difference institutions make to the lives of young people. The focus on widening participation is encouraging but it is difficult to see how it fits with everything else that is being proposed.

As we reported in our response to the initial consultation we would suggest the TEF look at a basket of metrics including:

- *Retention rates*
- *Completion rates*
- *The percentage of teaching staff with teaching qualifications*
- *Percentage of academic staff engaging with communities of practice*
- *How research activity of lecturing staff feeds in to teaching*
- *Evaluation of peer review mechanism within each institution*
- *Some CPD measures*
- *Staff to student ratios (potentially with subject specific moderation)*
- *Student satisfaction/feedback*
- *Student destinations*
- *A value-added measure*
- *Some form quality measure of e-learning materials*

We do have concerns about the prevalence of league tables and the behaviours they drive and would encourage BIS to avoid this, especially when metrics tend to be output based, ignoring the inputs, which are always more difficult to measure. HE is in desperate need of investing in high quality staff and providing high quality support for those staff.

Another key concern for our members is the tight timescale surrounding this. It is an important move and one that needs to have credibility from the outset. If this means delaying the introduction we would support that.

We would welcome the opportunity to work with BIS to refine these proposals to ensure they result in the desired outcomes and are respected and used by all stakeholders.

The Chartered Association of Business Schools *is the voice of the UK's business and management education sector. We support our members to maintain world-class standards of teaching and research, and help shape policy and create opportunities through dialogue with business and government.*

The UK's business and management education sector represents 1 in 5 university students and contributes £3.25b to the UK economy. Its management students go on to lead global businesses and its entrepreneurs contribute to our dynamic economy. Its research has an impact across society and helps to turn our capacity for invention into viable businesses. Our 150 members consist of 122 business schools and higher education providers, as well as affiliate stakeholders, corporate members and international partners.

Thank you for your views on this consultation.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply ✓

At BIS we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be okay if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Yes

No

BIS/15/623/RF