

Consultation Summary Paper

UCAS Consultation on Proposals for a New Tariff

19 May 2014

Opened 04/04/2014, closed 16/05/2014, Pearson lead: David MacKay

A brief introduction to Pearson

Pearson is the world's leading learning company. Our education business combines 150 years of experience in publishing with the latest learning technology and online support. We are also part of the wider Pearson family which includes Penguin, Dorling Kindersley and the Financial Times. We provide education and assessment services in more than 70 countries. Our qualifications, courses and resources are available in print, online and through multi-lingual packages, helping people learn whatever, wherever and however they choose.

A summary of the Pearson response

Design principles – Pearson generally supports the new design principles and holds the view that the proposals for the new Tariff will make it transparent, comprehensive and sustainable.

Calculation of Tariff points – The ways in which the size and demand are assessed are simple and transparent, as is the calculation of the Tariff points. The scale proposed results in a good correlation with the present Tariff. The only downside is that the values of the points are less straightforward than the current values. We appreciate the reason for reducing the Tariff points for the AS levels from 50% to 40% of an A level. However, this may make the study of a fourth AS level less attractive and lead to some A level programmes being reduced in breadth.

Management of the Tariff – There are benefits in making the process of adding qualifications to the new Tariff HE provider-led. This reflects our own processes in qualification development whereby new and revised qualifications are supported by HE. However, we are concerned about the proposals for the process for management of the Tariff:

- Having only one opportunity per year for qualifications to be added, and the timeline for the process for both new/revised qualifications running from September to April for qualifications already accredited by September is problematic. Meeting the September deadline for accreditation may not always be possible for reasons that may be beyond the control of awarding bodies. There should be some flexibility about this requirement.
- The process is protracted. The announcement in April would present problems to schools and colleges as they hold options evenings/open days in mid autumn/early spring to recruit students to their courses for the following year. The process should be shortened so that it aligns more closely with the school/college planning cycle.
- It would help to know how UCAS would be engaging with HEIs to ensure that there was clear communication between all interested parties.
- We have concerns about the proposal to limit the number of new qualifications to 30 per year. The criteria for inclusion in the Tariff will need to be clear, transparent and have an appeals process.
- It is unclear as to whether a new title in a suite of qualifications, for which there is already a Qualification Information Profile (QIP), will be regarded as being a 'new qualification'.
- Awarding bodies have to submit new/revised qualifications to the DfE for inclusion in 16-19 performance tables and this process requires letters of support from HE institutions to confirm that they are acceptable as entry requirements for degree programmes. The Tariff process should run parallel to this process and use the same letters of support.

Inclusion of international qualifications – Pearson welcomes the inclusion of international qualifications in the new Tariff but should not only include qualifications accredited in the country of origin. It would be illogical if there were a big increase in international qualifications included in the Tariff, but an exclusion of UK international A levels, which are highly regarded around the world.