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## Policy Eye

Highlights of week ending Friday 20 May 2016



*(Welcome to Policy Eye, a weekly service from Policy Watch offering a regular round up of UK education headlines and stories from over the previous 7 days.)*

### The week summed up

Papers, Bills and more Papers make the education headlines this week.

The big Paper this week has been the Higher Ed White Paper setting out the next stage of reform for the HE sector. In essence the Paper adds further details, and some useful modifications, to the three core principles set out in last autumn's Green Paper of teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice.

Headline features include: a simpler, speedier system for entry of new providers, a simplified agency infrastructure, a sharper division between teaching and research, a closer relationship between undergraduate provision and graduate earnings, a standardised model of teaching excellence, and an increase in transparency on data and performance. As to what appears to be missing at present, that includes anything much on HE in FE, on mature or part-time learners, on learning technology and on quality mechanisms.

For those who want more detail, there's been some excellent commentary not just on the White Paper but also on the blitz of other HE Papers out this week. The [Times Higher](#) and [Wonkhe](#) have both provided valuable running commentary all week while [Andrew McGettigan](#), [Mike Boxall](#), [Paul Goodman](#) among others have offered expert opinion. Links to these and other Papers have been listed.

And so to Bills where the Queen's Speech this week set out the legislative programme for the latest session of Parliament. The journalist Gaby Hinsliff summed up the occasion for many: "Ah Britain. The only Parliament in the world where someone turns up by horse drawn carriage to promise everyone else driverless cars." Behind the ceremonial lies the serious business of Parliament and on this occasion a government seeking to refresh its social reforming mojo.

Among the 21 Bills listed for the 2016/17 session were at least six of potential interest to the world of education. These included those on extending school system reform, implementing the HE White Paper reforms, formalising the National Citizen Service, reforming prison education, introducing a soft drinks levy, and further devolving of powers to Local Authorities through a local Growth and Jobs Bill. The HE Bill, now formally the Higher Education and Research Bill, has already been laid listing over a hundred clauses and eleven schedules, details of which can be seen in the Explanatory Notes with the accompanying Impact Assessment Paper offering some telling insights. It points for example to notable increases in the numbers of Alternative Providers and financial rewards for teaching excellence over the next ten years.

And finally those more Papers? This week by some coincidence, four Reports have been published on the importance of STEM subjects. In summary, they are still important if not more so.



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## Top headlines this week

- 'University changes: Plan for more new universities and higher fees.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Supply teacher spend exceeds £800m.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'Labour condemns plans to give private providers degree-awarding powers.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Queen's speech: government confirms raft of reforms in a new Education Bill.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Morgan offers unions olive branch of new pay and workload talks.' ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- [Lining up the Bills](#). The Queen announces the legislative programme for the coming Parliamentary year with Bills on the school system, HE reform, prison education and the National Citizenship Service prominent for the world of education
- [Heads Together](#). Wills, Kate and Harry help launch a new 'Heads Together' charity campaign bringing together eight charities hoping to raise over £1bn to help young people with mental health issues
- [Not so sweet 16](#). Paul Johnson, Director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, calls for a better balanced 14-19 curriculum as he sets out his thoughts on young people's learning ahead of the Sainsbury Review outcomes
- [Inspection plans](#). Ofsted lists three new overarching priorities (improved quality and efficiency, improved focus, improved engagement) in its latest strategic plan
- [Term-time holidays](#). The government re-considers what constitutes 'regular' attendance at school following last week's High Court ruling which allowed a parent to take his child away during term-time
- [Sport for All](#). Sport England sets out a new 4-year 'sports active' strategy targeted particularly at the young, families and the inactive and including training to help at least two teachers in every secondary school in England work with kids
- [English language testing](#). The Home Affairs Committee launches a new Inquiry into English language testing and the issuing of visas

### HE

- [HE White Paper](#). The government sets out its latest plans for the HE sector, building on the proposals in last autumn's Green Paper with some modifications on timescale but sticking with the core principles of rewarding teaching excellence, increasing social mobility and improving student choice
- [Teaching Excellence](#). The government accompanies the White Paper with a technical consultation on the proposed operation of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) with particular reference to its trialling in Year 2
- [Supplementary Papers](#). Three further Papers are launched alongside the White Paper including a [Call for Evidence](#) on whether there's much student interest in changing courses or even universities if things aren't working out for them and respective Papers on the importance of STEM and computer sciences



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- [The Higher Education and Research Bill](#). BIS moves swiftly to publish the Bill intended to enact the White Paper proposals, all 100+ clauses but with explanatory notes
- [Assessing the impact](#). BIS assesses the impact of the HE reforms for the sector in an accompanying Impact Assessment Paper pointing for example to an increase in Alternative Providers, a reduction in regulatory burdens and an increase in financial returns following the introduction of teaching excellence

## FE/Skills

- [Get In, Go Far](#). The government launches its latest apprenticeship promotional campaign with young apprentices from 12 leading businesses showing how far an apprenticeship can take you
- [Who supports Functional skills?](#) The current review moves on with the launch of a Provider Survey inviting practitioners to offer their thoughts

## Schools

- [Unregistered schools](#). Sir Michael Wilshaw writes a follow-up letter to the Secretary of State outlining a range of concerns identified in initial investigations
- [Education, education, mental health](#). The think tank IPPR publishes a report suggesting mental health is becoming a critical issue in young people's education and calls for all secondary schools to have access to trained support for at least one day a week by the end of the current Parliament
- [STEM strength](#). The Royal Society and CBI publish a 5-step practical guide for the business world to work more closely with schools and colleges in helping develop STEM skills among young people
- [Not an either/or](#). Sir Michael Wilshaw raises concerns about the emphasis being given to English and maths in some primary schools and what impact this having on other important subjects such as Science and Languages
- [It helps to have careers talks](#). The Education and Employers Taskforce publishes research showing that employer-provided careers talks at school can lead to increased job prospects and wage returns later

## Tweet(s) of the week

- "It's official. Employers can't force you to be happy. Hallelujah" - [@GuardianUS](#)
- "Good research is just like good drinking really. You just have to know your limits" - [@JoeHallg](#)
- "Don't throw your mortarboard in the air, it's too dangerous students told" - [@tele\\_education](#)
- "Majority of students don't know EU referendum is in June" - [@skillsontap](#)

## Word or phrase(s) of the week

- 'Canon in D-Pachelbel.' The best piece of classical music to listen to for those who need an uplift during the heavy days of revision, according to the latest listing from Classic FM



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## Quote(s) of the week

- “A Bill will be brought forward to lay foundations for educational excellence in all schools, giving every child the best start in life” – The Queen’s Speech re-ignites the Academies programme
- “We have not yet made a decisive enough move to open out the higher education market”- Jo Johnson, the HE Minister proposes a more open provider market in the new HE White Paper
- “An impatient but confusing document which bristles with resentment towards an established university sector apparently not biddable enough to develop the kind of flexible, diverse provision it wants to see” – Andrew McGettigan cuts to the chase on the new HE White Paper
- “The increase in mental ill health among our young people is exacerbated by our trophy culture” – stem4, a charity that works to prevent mental ill health among young people, reflects on its latest survey which finds a mental health system under growing pressure
- “The decision to target 3m new apprenticeships by 2020 is a colossal failure to learn from experience” – The IfS’s Paul Johnson suggests it helps to learn from experience when it comes to target setting
- “You could email all your apprentices to explain how easy it is to do or you could convene a meeting or debate to talk through why it matters” – What employers could do to encourage apprentices to vote in the EU referendum according to the education and Business Secretaries

## Number(s) of the week

- 40. The number of major policy decisions listed in the HE White Paper
- 1.7%. How much wages will rise over the coming year according to the latest forecast from the Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD,) up slightly from its previous forecast of 1.3%
- 2%. How much the economy is forecast to grow over the next 12 months according to the CBI, down slightly from 2.3%
- 1.69m. The unemployment figure for the first quarter of this year, down slightly on the previous quarter but with youth unemployment notably up
- £821m. How much was spent on supply staff last year according to analysis of latest data by the BBC
- £155m. Ofsted’s budget for this year
- 4.1%. The pupil absence rate in state schools in England for autumn 2015, down slightly from the previous year but with unauthorized family holidays increasing
- 78%. The number of GPs reporting an increase over the last five years in patients experiencing mental health problems in a recent survey

## What to look out for next week

- All Party Parliamentary Group meeting on Careers Information and Guidance (Tuesday)
- MPs debate the education and skills bits of the Queen’s Speech (Wednesday)
- Education Committee witness session with the Children’s Commissioner (Wednesday)