



Pearson

Policy Tracker – Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in August 2017



Main talking points

A month dominated by exam results and the traditional fanfare that goes with them but also with some important reports including: monitoring the summer exams; closing the attainment gap in schools; career progression in FE; and improving access to HE. These and other reports all listed below.

Key headlines from the month

- Exam changes. The 3 UK regulators explain the similarities and differences for each country
- Ofsted. Prepares new guidance on safeguarding for this September
- Social media. The Children's Commissioner sets out 5 rules for safe social media use
- GCSE results. Slight drop in overall passes and top grades as new system introduced
- A' level results. Top grades up, overall pass rate slightly down, AS entries spiral
- Area reviews. Final batch of reports published
- Transition grants. Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) lists who got what
- FE workforce. ETF, AoC and UCU join forces to create a unified workforce database
- Education and Skills Funding Agency. Eileen Milner takes over as Chief Exec from November
- Learndirect. Facing difficult future following critical inspection report
- HE Student satisfaction. Remains high in latest survey but some traditional issues remain
- Tuition fees. Government confirms increased interest charge for loans in England from this autumn
- HE and Brexit. Russell Group publishes 10-point plan to help clarify status on EU nationals
- International students. Home Office commissions a review
- Data protection. Government draws up new rules to include protection of personal data

Reports/Publications of the month (in order of publication)

- **Analysis of Prevent annual reports from HE providers.** HEFCE assesses the first set of annual reports submitted by HE providers on how they're implementing the Prevent duty, most (95%) were
- **Youth Jobs Index.** The Private Equity Foundation Impetus-PEF who specialize in supporting disadvantaged 16-24 yr olds reports on the continuing issue of NEETs and the importance of quals
- **Educating World Leaders.** The HE Policy Institute (HEPI) tots up the numbers and finds more world leaders were educated at UK universities and colleges than in any other country
- **Closing the Gap?** The Education Policy Institute examines the attainment gap between different groups and regions and concludes that it's proving a hard nut to crack
- **School funding and pupil outcomes.** The DfE examines the evidence on any link between funding and pupil attainment over the last Parliament suggesting a modest link at KS2 but not at KS4

Policy Tracker on what happened in August 2017. Policy Watches are intended to help colleagues keep up to date with national developments. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of information given.



Pearson

- **Developing character skills in schools.** The DfE reports on some commissioned research showing most schools keen but hampered by a lack of time, resources and capacity
- **Career progression in the FE sector.** The Education and Training Foundation along with the Society for Education and Training outline the issues in a new joint report
- **A new Data Protection Bill.** The government sets out its plans to update and strengthen current data protection laws, import new EU standards and generally offer better protections for individuals
- **National Student Survey 2017.** HEFCE indicates students have high levels of satisfaction with their courses generally but have concerns about assessment and feedback in its latest Student Survey
- **Ipsos Mori Young People Omnibus Survey 2017.** The Sutton Trust reports a further slight drop in the number of young people considering going on to uni in its latest commissioned survey
- **School teachers' pay and conditions 2017.** The DfE updates the guidance following last month's Review Body announcement
- **Fair access to HE in England.** The Office for Fair Access to HE in England (OFFA) outlines progress made and challenges that remain as it prepares to come under the new Office for Students
- **Privately failing their pupils?** Former government adviser Tom Richmond claims many top comprehensives outperform private schools when it comes to exam value added scores
- **Where next for widening participation and access?** The HE Policy Institute calls on leading experts to offer their thoughts for a challenge that remains as intense as ever
- **Beyond access: getting to university and succeeding there.** Teach First reports on the continuing challenges facing those from disadvantaged backgrounds trying to get to university
- **Diverse places of learning.** The Institute for Policy Research at the University of Bath highlights concerns that ethnic minority students are being 'shepherded' into particular types of uni
- **Business plan for financial year 2017/18.** The Education and Skills Funding Agency publishes its business plan for the financial year built around eight objectives and four key ways of working
- **A' level results 2017.** The Joint Council for Qualifications publishes the full data for A' level exam entry and performance this year showing things holding steady as the new reforms take effect
- **The secret of successful schools.** The New Schools Network attempts to unlock the secret by highlighting a hybrid model of comprehensives with grammar school style standards
- **English education: world class?** The Education Policy Institute (EPI) and Institute for Education (IoE) spell out what's needed in terms of strong GCSE passes to be considered world class
- **Access agreements for 2018/19.** The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) outlines what English universities have signed up to under its access agreements for 2018/19 notably around schools
- **Monitoring summer exams.** Ofqual reports on how it has kept an eye on issues and standards for this year's GCSE and GCE summer exams
- **Variability in GCSE results.** Ofqual publishes the data and charts for the main GCSE subjects over the last two years showing minimal variation overall
- **What's happening with international student migration?** The Office for National Statistics (ONS) updates on its work on gathering evidence on student migration suggesting most are compliant
- **GCSE results 2017.** The Joint Council publishes all the data for this summer's results

Policy Tracker on what happened in August 2017. Policy Watches are intended to help colleagues keep up to date with national developments. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of information given.



Pearson

Speeches of the month

- (Deliberately left blank this month)

Quotes of the month

- “Securing value for money has been my focus since I became universities minister in 2015 and it was at the heart of the HE Act” – the HE Minister argues that value for money not fees is his prime objective
- “Politicians are prone to make decisions based on ideology and personal experience” – former Schools Minister David Laws reflects on his time at the DfE while carefully avoiding to point the finger
- ““I think what happened when A levels changed from end-of-course examinations to modular – which led to a big gap opening in favour of girls – suggests that the reversion to end-of-course examinations will lead to a narrowing of the gap” – Professor Smithers suggests a return to linear A’ levels may be behind a rise in boys’ performance
- “Whatever the initial discomforts, these will disappear with time but what will remain is a robust qualification” – John Blake, Head of Education at Policy Exchange defends the ‘new’ GCSEs
- “We have taken this decision to stop unnecessary student concern or anxiety the day before they receive their results” – the Joint Council for Quals explains why grade boundaries aren’t being released ahead of results days this year
- “There’s no reason for anyone to say it’s confusing” – the chair of the Independent Schools Council attempts to reassure doubters about the GCSE grade changes
- “Children are in danger of seeing social media like sweets and their online time like junk food” – the Children’s Commissioner warns that children could binge out on social media in the same way as with junk food
- “Every minute spent enforcing a ban on conkers and yo-yos is a minute from tackling the multitude of real issues we know schools face” – Ofsted Chief Inspector Amanda Spielman appeals to schools to keep the issues of health and safety in perspective

Word or phrase of the month

- Gromps. A term that grates on some but refers to the hybrid model of schools with comprehensive intakes but grammar school standards, as coined by the New Schools Network

Steve Besley

Head of Policy @SteveBesley

Policy Tracker on what happened in August 2017. Policy Watches are intended to help colleagues keep up to date with national developments. Information is correct at the time of writing and is offered in good faith. No liability is accepted for decisions made on the basis of information given.