



Pearson

Policy Eye



Highlights of week ending Friday 31 May 2019

(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.

Two education stories dominate this week: the release of the long-awaited Augar report on post-18 education and funding and some early musings on what a change of PM might mean for education.

Elsewhere this week, the Universities Minister [confirmed](#) that current fee arrangements for EU students will roll over for another year while the Education Secretary [set up](#) an advisory body to support character education in schools and colleges. In other news, the Migration Advisory Committee [published](#) its latest listing of shortage occupations to qualify for visa exemptions with education leaders disappointed that there was no change for teachers, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) [highlighted](#) funding shortfalls and dilemmas for English councils, the University and College Union (UCU) [appointed](#) a new general secretary and the [RSA](#) and [Education and Skills think tank](#) published new reports respectively, one on skills systems and the other on post-18 funding, each propititious in their own way.

But it's with Augar where we should start given its potential importance to post-18 education.

The [report](#), which has been a long time in the making, was finally launched yesterday with the Prime Minister and Education Ministers on hand to give it their blessing. It's a big report with over 200 pages and 50+ recommendations and deserves serious consideration but how far this will happen given the changing political climate remains uncertain. There've been plenty of media headlines and on the plus side, the report is meticulously framed and argued, considers the tertiary sector as a whole, avoids some of the rumoured wildcard proposals and does a lot to tilt the balance towards what Augar called the 50% who don't go to university or who require adult skilling. On the other side, it faces counter challenges of ushering in a more regressive student financing system, leaves universities like the Russell Group expressing concern about future funding shortfalls and has many areas where responsibility for action remain up in the air.

Back finally to that other burgeoning story of the week, namely what effect a new Prime Minister might have on education.

It's early days in the selection process of course and candidates are still firming up their 'manifestos' but both [Schools Week](#) and the [HE Policy Institute](#) (HEPI) have had a look at the runners and riders to see where they stand on schools and higher ed respectively. Two of the candidates, Michael Gove and Matt Hancock have held education briefs so their views are well documented, others have only intervened intermittently but all could be challenged about where they stand on such traditional issues as funding, social mobility, future skills, tuition fees and global positioning with the occasional banana skin like grammar schools, levy use and student visas thrown in for good measure. More weeks of this to come.



Pearson

Top headlines this week

- 'Hinds asks teachers for advice on character building.' ([Monday](#))
- 'Fee support extended for EU students.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'DfE recruits teachers from Spain to ease shortage.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'University tuition fees should be cut to £7,500.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'Schools heading for pupil data scandal.' ([Friday](#))

People/organisations in the news this week

General Policy

- [The Augar review](#). The review looking into post-18 education and training and chaired by Philip Augar was finally published with a cautious welcome from many particularly in the college sector but some concerns from those in HE about any potential funding shortfall
- [Post-18 review: call for evidence](#). The Augar review into post-18 education and funding published a summary of the responses received to its call for evidence, listing six themes that emerged covering skill needs, choice and competition, flexible provision, funding, value for money, and tackling disadvantage
- [Examining the bill](#). The Augar review reported at the changing cost of the English HE system to taxpayers and students over the years suggesting that the review's proposals would reduce taxpayer costs in comparison with current figures
- [Shortage occupations](#). The Migration Advisory Committee updated its list of shortage occupations that qualify for exemptions on overseas recruitment to include health services, web designers and vets but with no change for education where teachers of STEM subjects, computer science and Mandarin are already on the list
- [Council funding](#). The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IfS) reported on funding for councils in England pointing to a drop in spending on local services of over 20% since 2009/10 and suggesting that some tough choices loom for both central and local government as a result
- [Low Pay Britain](#). The Resolution Foundation published the latest in its series of reports on low pay in Britain arguing that the introduction of the National Living Wage has helped see low pay fall for the first time since the 1980's although the number of people paid below the Real Living Wage has not fallen

HE

- [Augar](#). The review into post-18 education and funding was finally published to mixed responses from the HE sector faced with a freeze in funding to 2022, reduction in tuition fees from 2021 and better targeting of funding but with a re-introduction of maintenance grants and removal of ELQ restrictions
- [Attitudes towards student finance](#). The government published the results of its commissioned report into how people view the current student finance system with levels of knowledge appearing mixed, a majority recognising that students should contribute something but many calling for a lowering of fee levels



Pearson

- **Fees the same.** The Universities Minister confirmed that EU students looking to study at English universities from next year, 2020/21, would continue to pay the same fees as home students and remain eligible for student finance for the duration of their course

FE/Skills

- **Augar.** The review into post-18 education and funding was finally published and welcomed by many in FE for its proposals to tilt the balance towards FE through increased investment, a lifelong learning allowance, L2 and 3 funding entitlements and focus on college positioning and its workforce
- **Free to choose.** The Education and Skills think tank (EDSK) outlined in a new report a simpler and more responsive model of funding that could support the whole tertiary sector using a system of personalised budgets supported by a single loan system
- **Lessons from abroad.** The RSA along with WorldSkills UK and the Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) reported on skills innovation from four other global systems (Switzerland, Shanghai, Singapore and Russia,) and proposing as a result a more decentralised system driven through a Future Skills Council
- **What do we want?** The University and College Union (UCU) submitted its latest pay claim to college association leaders calling for an extra £1 an hour for all staff and an additional five days leave a year

Schools

- **Character building.** The government's newly appointed advisory body issued a call for evidence on how best to help schools and colleges provide activities that can help build character and resilience
- **Exams Update.** Ofqual sent round an update to schools and colleges on how the exam season was going two weeks on reminding them of the processes being used to ensure standards, including the use of the National Reference Test, along with the need to maintain security for exam papers
- **Attainment differences.** Researchers from Oxford University argued in a Paper for the Nuffield Foundation that only half the difference in educational attainment between children from different backgrounds is due to innate ability suggesting that the rest is due to other socio-cultural factors
- **Age-appropriate.** The Children's Commissioner for England argued that social media companies should take their responsibilities to children seriously and work with the forthcoming age-appropriate design code encompassing 16 principles from 'the best interest of the child' to 'governance and accountability'

Tweets(s) of the week.

- "Big caveat on tuition fees story is that any change in fees needs to be voted through by both Houses of Parliament. Is that going to happen this side of an election? Unlikely" - @seanjcoughlan
- "Universities are no safer from liquidation than department stores" -@Phil_Baty
- "'We're concerned that some colleges are still not on the OfS register less than 11 weeks from the start of the academic year' says @AoC_info" - @tesfenews
- "Going to university pays off faster for women than it does for men, a new analysis has found" - @Telegraph
- "To a degree, all maths puns are awful" -@1919ras



Pearson

Other stories of the week

- We're all going on a summer holiday. With summer holidays not far off, the Times Higher asked six academics for their favourite summer holiday spots. The responses which range from Toronto to the Yorkshire Dales can be found [here](#)
- Knowing when to leave. One of the most read articles on the FT site this week has been an article about knowing when your time is up at work and how to exit gracefully. The Japanese apparently give unwanted employees a window desk with nothing to do, which some may perhaps crave. Apparently it doesn't always have to end badly though as the article linked [here](#) shows.

Quote(s) of the week

- "We are firmly of the view that post-18 education should be a lifelong experience available to all, irrespective of age, situation or income. Our proposals are intended to create such a system" – Philip Augar introduces his long-awaited report into post-18 funding and education
- "We should all put our phones down, look up and get involved in activities that stretch and challenge us" – the Education Secretary continues his quest for more character education in schools and colleges
- "It is important that we remember that we have chosen to leave the EU, we are not leaving Europe, and our universities thrive on the diversity of being global institutions" – the Universities Minister confirms fees for EU students will remain as before for another year
- "I couldn't have gone to university with the fees that we have now" – the new general secretary of the University and College Union (UCU) reflects on her journey
- "Can it really be the case that they can create driverless cars, see inside black holes and programme computers to beat the best human players of complex games like Go, but not find ways of making digital platforms fit for purpose for children?" – the Children's Commissioner questions the willingness of social media companies to oversee age-appropriate platforms

Number(s) of the week

- £7,500. How much the annual maximum tuition fee should be reduced to from 2021/22, according to the recently released Augar report
- 40. The number of years graduates should have to pay back their loans, up from 30 currently, according to the Augar report
- 21%. How much overall spending on local services by English councils fell over the last decade, according to a report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS)
- 4.7m. How many employees in the UK were on low pay, down considerably over recent decades according to a new report from the Resolution Foundation
- 44%. How many civil servants working in the DfE reckon that the Board has a clear vision for the future, according to the latest staff survey
- 93rd out of 105. Where teachers rank against shortage occupation indicators, according to the latest assessment by the Migration Advisory Committee
- 10.9%. The percentage of persistent absentees from state schools in England during the autumn term of this year, down from 11.7% from the previous year, according to the latest government figures



Pearson

What to look out for next week

- Westminster Hall debate on education funding (Tuesday)
- Education Committee session on Education in the North (Wednesday)