



Pearson

Policy Watch

Your guide to what's happening in the world of education



The week in a nutshell

As many parts of society entered lockdown once again, schools, colleges and universities remained open, and will be following **new government guidance** including mandatory face masks in secondary schools. With the longer term impact of the pandemic on learning in mind, **Dame Glenys Stacey** has written to the Secretary of State outlining the regulators current work around exams in 2021, including considerations around grade boundaries. This week has also seen a slew of reports published on the challenges posed by COVID-19, providing policy makers plenty to think about, including the **IfS'** analysis of education spending and **UUP's** analysis of the skills guarantee. On the report front, Pearson has published **research** showing the value of BTEC Higher Nationals to developing next generation of healthcare workers.

In the latest of our **Policy Blog Series**, Gary Gates discusses an **exciting partnership with Coventry University**.

Top stories

New guidance has been issued by the Government on **schools, colleges and early years settings** in response to the **new coronavirus regulations**.

- The guidance includes the mandatory wearing of face coverings by students and staff in secondary schools and FE colleges in communal spaces and outside of classrooms.
- Primary schools continue to have discretion to recommend staff and visitors wear face coverings in communal spaces where social distancing cannot be maintained.
- Schools should implement all the changes by 9th November.

Dame Glenys Stacey has written to **Gavin Williamson** on considerations for exams in 2021

- In the letter, she sets out two areas that Ofqual are currently investigating: what further steps are needed to make 2021 exams "*less daunting a prospect for students, while of course making sure they remain a fair test of knowledge and understanding in each subject*"; and performance standards for 2021.

The IfS has released their **Annual Report on Education Spending in England** which looked at the **challenges posed by Covid-19** for the education sector.

- Universities face financial risk as although student numbers have held up for now, there will be a loss of income if large numbers of students drop out before completing their degrees. Pension costs are also a huge financial issue.
- Colleges and sixth forms will benefit from an extra £400 million in funding this year, but due to the funding system, exceptional rises in student numbers could still generate a real-terms fall in funding per student.

New analysis by the **OfS and UCAS** shows that there was a **22% increase in the number of students** from the most “underrepresented communities placed at high tariff universities this year”.

- This amounts to 1000 extra students, the biggest increase in a single year for at least a decade.
- The OfS has urged universities that the progress made on fair access. However, the analysis also shows ongoing regional disparity in access to higher education. For example, the data from DfE shows that 55% of young people go into HE in London, compared to 40% in the North East of England.

Two **reports** by the **University Partnerships Programme** has concluded that up to 80% of workers who lose their jobs as a consequence of covid-19 will not be covered by the “**lifetime skills guarantee**” announced by the Prime Minister last month.

Pearson news & blogs

BTEC Higher Nationals & Coventry University Pearson is proud to announce a new collaboration with Coventry University to offer a new integrated pathway from Higher National to degree.

In the **latest in our series of blogs**, **Gary Gates** discusses this new partnership. To read more **Pearson Policy Blogs** [click here](#).



Pearson tweet of the week



Health and Social Care Efficacy Report Pearson has published a review of the impact of BTEC Nationals in Health and Social Care, which shows BTEC is preparing the next generation of healthcare workers. [Click here](#)

Other news

Parliamentary

- Letter from Glenys Stacey to Gavin Williamson – considerations for exams 2021
- Westminster Hall Debate: Further Education Funding, Gill Furniss MP
- Westminster Hall Debate: School Attendance: Covid-19, Jonathan Gullis MP
- Petitions Committee: Black history and cultural diversity in the curriculum (video)

Whitehall & Regulators

- DfE Annual Report and Accounts – 2019/2020
- Ofqual guidance: Subject-level conditions for 2021 GCSE, AS and A levels

Schools

- Ofqual - GCSE MFL spoken language assessment criteria and approach
- Children's Commissioner - What are children happy and concerned about since returning to school?
- NEU hands in petition calling for Government action to ensure fairness in 2021 exams
- UNISON: Education staff need an urgent new safety plan for schools

Further Education & Skills

- CBI: Invest in skills, innovation and infrastructure now to rebuild our economy
- Learning and Work Institute: Lifelong Learning Week
- Learning and Work Institute: The Adult Participation in Learning Survey
- Learning and Work Institute: How to create part-time apprenticeships – and why you should
- National Apprenticeship Awards 2020 regional winners announced
- QAA: Consultation on review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England
- UNISON: Young workers' month & a post-pandemic future

Higher Education

- OfS: Universities must keep students informed about teaching plans during the lockdown
- OfS & UCAS: Support for disadvantaged students crucial as selective university numbers rise
- Higher education grants and loans 2021 to 2022: equality analysis. How changes made to student support will affect specific protected groups

Wales

- Independent review of the summer 2020 arrangements to award grades & considerations for summer 2021

Research, reports & blogs

- UUP Foundation: two reports on the role of universities in the “levelling-up agenda”
- IPPR: Going further: The case for investing in Further Education and adult skills
- Policy Exchange: Technical Breakthrough – Delivering Britain’s higher level skills
- City & Guilds Group: Act now – or risk levelling down the life chances of millions

Consultation watch

Ongoing consultations

- DfE: Regulating independent educational institutions. [Closes: 27th November](#)

Closing consultations

- QAA: Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK transnational education. [Closes: 12th November](#)

What’s happening in Parliament next week

House of Commons

- **Tuesday 10 November:** Education Select Committee accountability hearing – Amanda Spielman, Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector at Ofsted

House of Lords

- **Monday 10 November:** Oral question - Aligning skills strategy with the target for net zero carbon emissions by 2050, Baroness Blackstone
- **Thursday 12 November:** Oral question - Consequences of government policies in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic on their levelling up agenda in England - Lord Greaves