



# Pearson

## Policy Watch

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



### The week in a nutshell

This week the Government proposed “tougher legal measures” to strengthen free speech and academic freedom at England’s universities. As part of the proposals, the **Education Secretary** set out his desire to appoint a new **Free Speech and Academic Freedom Champion** who would sit on the board of the **OfS**. Meanwhile, the **Education Select Committee** launched a new inquiry into children’s homes as part of its continuing work examining the issues faced by left behind groups. Elsewhere, the **Education Policy Institute** published a report, which compares the education catch-up plans of the four UK nations. The report found that all four nations’ catch-up plans are insufficient to meet the scale of learning loss following the pandemic. Last, but by no means least, **Pearson launched a new consultation** seeking the views of parents, students, educators and employers on how the assessment system can be “fit for the 21st century”. Speaking about the launch, Pearson President, **Rod Bristow** said that we “have responsibility to look further ahead and use this unique moment to consider all of the issues.”

Our **Policy Blogs this week** is by Rod Bristow on the launch of our Future of Qualifications and Assessment public consultation.

As well as including all previous editions of Policy Watch, our **Policy Hub** includes our latest **policy blogs** and recordings of **events**.

### Top stories

**Pearson launched a new public consultation to seek the views of parents, students and the sector on how the assessment system for 14-19 year olds can be “fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century”.**

- The consultation covers three areas: the shifting requirements of the digital first generation; the role education should play within the 14-19 age phase; and how to maintain public confidence in qualifications and assessments. The consultation runs **until 5 March**.
- The findings of the consultation will be published in an interim report in May 2021. This report will inform a second phase of research by an external research partner from which a final report will be published in the autumn.
- A panel of experts has been assembled to set the direction of the second phase. Members include former secretaries of state for education **Lord Blunkett, Baroness Morris, Lord Baker and Damian Hinds**.
- **President of Pearson UK, Rod Bristow** said “we also have responsibility to look further ahead and use this unique moment to consider all of the issues.”
- **[Click here to take part in the consultation](#)**

The Education Policy Institute **published** a report, funded by the Nuffield Foundation, which compares the education catch-up plans of the four UK nations.

- The report found that all four nations’ **catch-up plans are insufficient** to meet the scale of learning loss following the pandemic. Funding in Scotland is shown to be the most generous on a per pupil basis with

England coming in second place. Both these countries have offered per-pupil funding at a rate that is **over twice that of support offered by Wales and Northern Ireland.**

- In **response**, **Shadow Secretary of State for Education, Kate Green** stated that the Conservatives have “treated children as an afterthought throughout the pandemic.” She continued to note that catch-up funding “must be central to rebuilding our country after the pandemic.”

The Government has **proposed** “**tougher legal measures**” to strengthen free speech and academic freedom at England’s universities.

- The proposed measures include a new “free speech condition” placed on HE providers in order to register for access to public funding. If breached, the OfS would have the **power to sanction providers.**
- As part of the proposals, the **Education Secretary set out his desire to appoint a new Free Speech and Academic Freedom Champion** who would sit on the board of the OfS. The role of the new Champion would be to investigate any potential breaches of the new registration conditions.
- **Gavin Williamson** stated that he is “deeply worried about the chilling effect on campuses of unacceptable silencing and censoring.” **Responding, the UCU’s General Secretary, Jo Grady argued** that it was “extraordinary that in the midst of a global pandemic the government appears more interested in fighting phantom threats to free speech than taking action to contain the real and present danger which the virus poses to staff and students.”

## Pearson news

**Future of Qualifications and Assessment** This week we launched a public consultation on the future of qualifications and assessment. As so if you are a student, parent, educator or employer, we would love to hear from you. **Click here to take part in the consultation**

Our **Policy Blog this week** is by Rod Bristow and explores our Future of Qualifications and Assessment project.



## Pearson tweet of the week



## Other news

### Parliamentary

- Education Committee - Education Committee session on funding and financial management of schools
- Education Committee - Children in care homes: Education Committee to launch new inquiry

### COVID-19

- EPI - Education catch-up plans of all four UK governments fail to offer pupils the support they need, report finds
- AOC - EPI report on catch up plans across the nations

### Regulators and inspectorates

- Office of the Independent Adjudicator - OIA response to government policy paper 'Higher education: free speech and academic freedom'

### Schools

- Children's Commissioner - Building back better: Reaching England's left behind children
- Labour Party - Kate Green responds to Children's Commissioner comments on Government failing vulnerable children
- Labour Party - Labour calls for transformation in support for families as children face postcode lottery in half-term food support
- NAHT - The best catch-up plan? Supporting teachers

### FE & skills

- Sutton Trust - A look at the apprenticeship landscape

### Higher Education

- Department for Education - Landmark proposals to strengthen free speech at universities
- Department for Education - Graduate outcomes (LEO): postgraduate outcomes in 2019 to 2020
- Department of Health and Social Care - Nursing applications in England up by over a third to 48,830
- UCAS - Nursing applications soar as UCAS publishes latest undergraduate applicant analysis
- Russell Group - Russell Group response to latest UCAS figures

### Scotland

- Scottish Government - Remote learning to continue for majority
- Scottish Government - Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on schools reopening
- Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) - Concerns over school safety must be addressed following FM's announcement

## What's happening in Parliament next week

### House of Commons

- Tuesday 23rd February: Ten Minute Rule Bill - Youth Courts and Sentencing - Rob Butler
- Thursday 25th February: Backbench Business - Debate on the proposal for a national education route map for Schools and Colleges in response to the Covid-19 outbreak - Robert Halfon, Steve Brine, Munira Wilson

### House of Lords

- Monday 22nd February: Oral questions: Proportion of teaching posts in London and elsewhere in England, which are currently being provided by supply teacher agencies - Viscount Hanworth
- Tuesday 23rd February: Oral questions: Providing laptops and tablets to those pupils who require such equipment for access to online learning - Baroness Blower