



# Pearson

## Policy Watch

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



### The week in a nutshell

The week began with the **monthly quizzing of ministers** by MPs – topics ranged from exams, to school meals, to remote education. The **situation in schools** continues to be a top story with **Gavin Williamson** hoping schools in England will open before Easter (No.10 refused to commit on this), the **Chief Medical Officer** believing reopening will be phased, and stats showing higher rates of infection in teachers and support staff than in the general public. **Ofqual** has published its **response to the ongoing review of Level 3 qualifications**, warning against destabilising the qualifications market and adversely narrowing student choice. The review forms part of the government's drive to improve the standing of Further Education and to develop the workforce of the future. This was laid out in the **Skills for Jobs White Paper**. Reaction has been mixed, with the recognition of the sector welcomed but some saying proposals don't go far enough. We also saw an interim response to the **Augar review of HE finance** (status quo until the next Comprehensive Spending Review), and consultation on **Post Qualification Admissions**, and the publication of the review into the **Teaching and Excellence Framework**. Although this week's slew of policy papers from government might not go as far, or as quickly, as some might have wanted or expected, they do at least reiterate a commitment to progress and reform.

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

### Top stories

**DfE published the Skills for Jobs White Paper, which sets out a series of reforms that “will transform post-16 education and training, boost skills and get more people into work”.**

- The paper sets out a blueprint for a post-16 education in order to deliver the Lifetime Skills Guarantee.
- Measures include:
  - adults without a full level 3 qualification to gain one from **April 2021** for free in a range of sectors.
  - **Skills Bootcamps** offering free, flexible courses for give adults. Also fast-track to an interview with a local employer.
  - A **Lifelong Loan Entitlement**.
  - A **£65m Strategic Development Fund** to help business groups develop tailored skills plans.
  - Employers will be given a central role in designing almost all technical courses by 2030.
  - Change the law so that from 2025, people can access **flexible student finance**.

**DfE has published an interim conclusion to the review of post-18 education and funding launched in 2018.**

- They explained that COVID-19 meant that now was not the right time to conclude the **Augar Review** in full.
- They reiterated their commitment to introduce a more financially sustainable student finance system.
- DfE plan to consult on further reforms to the higher education in spring 2021.
- The final conclusion to the Post-18 review will be set out at the next **Comprehensive Spending Review**.

## Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has **announced** plans to review the university admissions system.

- Proposals to change the current admissions could mean students in England receive university offers only once they have obtained their final grade. Proposals will “remove the [current] unfairness”.

## Gavin Williamson also issued **DfE plans for the roll out** of the asymptomatic testing programme.

- He said the “rapid asymptomatic testing programme in schools and colleges is being expanded to twice-weekly testing of primary school staff.” Testing is not mandatory for staff however it is “strongly encouraged.”

## Pearson news

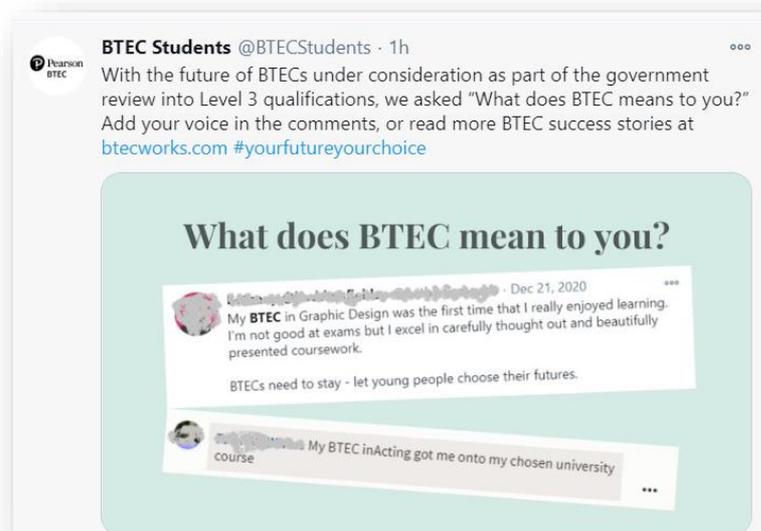
**Discussing FE post-COVID** Catch up on our webcast ‘The FE sector post-Covid - Supporting individuals to access learning and make progress in their lives’. This was chaired by Steph McGovern, included contributions by Cindy Rampersaud, Gillian Keegan, and Toby Perkins, and was in partnership with FE Week

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## Pearson tweet of the week



## Other news

### COVID-19

- [Statement from Gavin Williamson on COVID testing in schools](#)
- [Joint letter from four Children's Commissioners on teachers and support workers vaccination priority](#)
- [UNISON - DfE stats reveal high level of COVID infections among school staff](#)
- [Consultation of awarding grades in England summer 2021](#)
- [Written Ministerial Statement - Nick Gibb on awarding qualifications in 2021](#)

### Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 22 January 2021

- Social Mobility Commission - 2021 exams - a bigger disaster than last year?
- NASUWT - Managability and fairness on qualifications vital
- NEU - DfE consultation on awarding grades
- AoC - Ofqual publishes consultations for awarding grades in 2021
- University Alliance responds to Ofqual/DfE A-level and GCSE consultation proposals
- Sutton Trust - Poorer pupils struggling most in second period of school closures
- DfE - Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak – 23 March 2020 to 14 January 2021

### **Parliamentary**

- Education questions to ministers (18 January)
- Statement – Gavin Williamson on Skills for Jobs White Paper
- Kate Green response to Skills for Jobs White Paper
- Education Committee - Oral evidence: The impact of COVID-19 on education and children’s services (Medical professionals)
- Letter from Secretary of State to Education Committee – Exams 2021
- Debate - Remote Education and Free School Meals, Kate Green MP
- Debate - Covid-19: Schools, Derek Thomas MP

### **Regulators & inspectorates**

- Ofqual - Response to review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 in England

### **FE & skills**

- DfE - Skills for Jobs White Paper published
- FAB - Response to Skills for Jobs White Paper
- UNISON - concern at post-18 education proposals
- Learning and Work Institute - Response to FE White Paper on 21 January
- Community - Skills and further education White Paper doesn't go far enough
- DfE - Launch of the next phase of the FE Capital Transformation Fund

### **Higher Education**

- DfE - Post-18 education and funding review: interim conclusion
- HEPI - Fast response to some slow thinking: Initial comment on slew of documents from DfE
- Universities Alliance - response to Skills for jobs White Paper and Interim Conclusion of the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding
- Russell Group - response to Government's interim response to review of post-18 education and funding

### **Policy Watch**

Week ending Friday 22 January 2021

- The Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework
- DfE - Response to the TEF Review
- DfE - Government plans for post-qualification university admissions
- UCAS - response to DfE consultation on PQA
- HESA - Higher Education Staff Statistics: UK, 2019/20

### Scotland

- Scottish Government - Funding to help more vulnerable young people across Scotland into work

### Northern Ireland

- CCEA - Ofqual consultations on GCSE, AS, A level and vocational qualifications for summer 2021
- CCEA - Deloitte review of CCEA's alternative awarding arrangements in 2020

## Consultation watch

### New consultations

- Ofqual - How GCSE, AS and A level grades should be awarded in summer 2021 – closes 29 January
- Ofqual - Alternative arrangements for the award of VTQs and other general qualifications in 2021 – closes 29 January
- DfE – Post-Qualification Admissions Reform Consultation – closes 13 May

### Closing consultations

- DfE - Review of Post-16 Qualifications at level 3: Second stage – closes 31 January

## What's happening in Parliament next week

### House of Commons

- Tuesday 26 January: Education Committee evidence session - Left behind white pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Tuesday 26 January: Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee - Post-pandemic economic growth: Industrial Strategy
- Wednesday 27 January: Improving education in schools about the Holocaust to promote tolerance and combat racism - Lord Holmes of Richmond