



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

This week was a particularly busy one across the sector, with the expected influx of pre-recess announcements featuring reforms to Level 3 qualifications, further measures for skills provision, and proposals regarding exam arrangement for 2022.

Skills featured prominently in the Prime Minister's speech on his levelling up agenda. Key to this will be adult provisions, such as Kickstart, that are now being consulted on. We also saw the announcement of successful bids for the new Skills Accelerators. The much anticipated DfE response to the Level 3 review received a lukewarm response from many in the sector, including the AoC, as questions over the pace of change and the impact on students remain unanswered.

On the stakeholder front, the OfS published their insights briefing for the latest NSS results, EPI reported on professional development for the teaching workforce, and the NFER examined the impact of the pandemic on education settings and what they'll need to help recover.

Education discussions have also been packing the committee room of Parliament this week, with Schools Minister Nick Gibb giving evidence to the Youth Unemployment Committee, Sir Kevan Collins chatting to the Public Services Committee, and other sessions elsewhere on secure training centres and school funding.

As well as including all previous editions of Policy Watch, our [Policy Hub](#) includes our latest [policy blogs](#).

Top stories

Gavin Williamson announces new measures to boost skills training

- Alongside the [Prime Minister's speech](#) on levelling up, the Department for Education this week announced further measures for skills provision.
- Skills Bootcamp training [will be expanded](#) to every region in the country, covering a range of skills.
- A consultation [has been launched](#) on how the National Skills Fund should be adapted for the future.
- Eighteen areas [have been chosen](#) to lead on the new Skills Accelerator programme.
- New careers guidance [has been published](#) for schools and colleges.
- A further consultation [has been launched](#) on proposed reforms to FE funding and accountability.

Gillan Keegan publishes policy statement on reforms to post-16 qualifications and level 3

- The statement sets out changes to level 3 qualifications following [the review of post-16 qualifications at level 3 and below in England](#), and the routes the Government envisage for the future education system.
- The technical landscape for 16 to 19 year olds includes T Levels, Apprenticeships, specialist qualifications, and occupation-entry technical qualifications in areas not served by T Levels.

- The technical landscape for adults features T Levels, Apprenticeships, T Level Occupational Specialisms, Competence-based technical qualifications, and qualifications providing cross-sectoral skills.
- The academic landscape for 16 to 19 year olds features A/AS Levels, small qualifications alongside A Levels, and large alternative to A Levels.

Ofqual launches consultations on assessment arrangements for 2021/22

- The first of the consultations invites views on their [proposed adaptations to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels](#) for students in England taking exams in summer 2022.
- The second consultation is seeking views on their [proposed arrangements for assessing and awarding vocational and technical qualifications \(VTQs\)](#) and other general qualifications in the academic year 2021 to 2022.

Office for Students publishes National Student Survey 2021 insights

- Despite the pandemic, the NSS also showed majorities of students rating their overall experience of their courses positively. Overall, 75 per cent agreed that they were satisfied with the quality of their course, down from 83 per cent last year.
- However, the pandemic may have highlighted issues with the availability of learning resources for students.
- Students were more positive about their teaching, though there were still declines compared to last 2020.
- Across all subjects of study, agreement rates (those saying they definitely or mostly agree with the proposition in questions) are lower than in previous years, but the decline varies by subject area

NFER publish reports on what pupils, schools and colleges need now to recover

- The first paper [focuses on pupils and schools](#), and reports that teachers have seen a decline in students' mental health and social skills. School leaders serving deprived areas report they need the funding, support and autonomy to make decisions in the best interests of their pupils, and need clear guidance from Government as soon as possible.
- The second paper [focuses on the experiences of special schools and colleges](#), with teachers reporting substantial losses in both pupils' academic progress and wider development.
- They estimate their pupils are on average around 4 months behind on academic development, 5 months behind on wellbeing, 4.5 months behind with their behaviour, and over 5 months behind on physical development.

Pearson news

Cindy Rampersaud response to the latest developments in the Government's Review of Post-16 Level 3

qualifications: *"While we welcome the government's aim to raise standards in further education, we have always warned that policy makers should not lose sight of what is working well already – namely existing high-quality qualifications that are respected by employers, universities and students alike, be they BTECs or other vocational qualifications.*

"It is good to see that some of this feedback, from us and a wealth of other respondents to the consultation, has been taken into consideration. We will take the time now to review the government's response to the consultation in full and understand the implications for BTEC students and colleges."

Pearson tweets of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- BEIS: Green Jobs Taskforce report
- DfE: Better mental health and wellbeing support for young people
- DfE: Skills training boosted across the country
- DfE: British and Irish young people guaranteed continued access to education institutions
- WMS: Skills Reform Update
- WMS: Education Update
- WMS: Level 3 Qualifications Reform
- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill
- Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [HL]
- Westminster Hall: Children and Families: Cross-Government Strategy
- Adjournment Debate: Alternative Student Finance
- Global Education Summit

Regulatory and funding bodies

- ESFA Chief Executive Eileen Milner to become combined authority chief executive
- Ofsted Research review series: history (factors that influence the quality of history education in England)

Schools

- Attendance in education and early years settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak
- Children could miss out on 24 million meals this summer after Conservatives refuse to guarantee free school meal provision
- NAHT: A failure to meet Covid costs risks undermining recovery efforts in schools - new poll from NAHT
- Education Policy Institute: The cost of high-quality professional development for teachers in England
- Local Government Association: Developing a cross-Government strategy for improving outcomes for children and families
- Primary Futures: Scaling Up

Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 16 July 2021

Further Education & Skills

- Reconciliation thresholds for ESFA grant funded providers 2020 to 2021
- Labour responds to Government u-turn on adult education funding clawback
- Engineering Construction Industry Training Board: Blending the future of engineering skills training
- London Assembly: What skills are needed to boost London's economy?
- CBI: Skills for an inclusive economy: CBI/Birkbeck Education and Skills Survey

Higher Education

- Universities UK: Universities vital to nation's health and wellbeing recovery says Dame Katherine Grainger
- University Alliance: Letter to the Times
- Russell Group: Russell Group and U15 collaborate to protect free speech
- University of West London: Education vital in 'levelling up' UK inequalities post-Covid, report finds

Consultation Watch

New Consultations

- **Proposed changes to the assessment of GCSEs, AS and A levels in 2022**
Closes: 1 August 2021
- **Arrangements for the assessment and awarding of vocational, technical and other general qualifications: 2021 to 2022**
Closes: 26 July 2021
- **The National Skills Fund**
Closes: 17 September 2021
- **Reforms to Further Education funding and accountability**
Closes: 7 October 2021

Ongoing Consultations

- **Ofsted inspection frequencies for children's social care providers: 2021 to 2022**
Closes: 20 August 2021
- **Fair school funding for all: completing our reforms to the National Funding Formula**
Closes: 30 September 2021
- **Initial teacher training (ITT) market review: recommendations**
Closes: 22 August 2021
- **Behaviour management strategies, in-school units and managed moves: call for evidence**
Closes: 10 August 2021

Closing Consultations

- **Introducing national standards for unregulated provision**
Closes: 19 July 2021
- **Introducing national standards for unregulated accommodation**
Closes: 19 July 2021

What's happening in Parliament next week

Monday 19 July

House of Lords

- Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [HL] – Committee Stage (Day 3)

Tuesday 20 July

Westminster Hall

- 4.05pm: Welfare system and child poverty in Wales (Liz Saville Roberts, Plaid Cymru, Dwyfor Meirionnydd)

Commons Committees

- Education Committee: Children's Homes (10:00am, Virtual)

Lords Committees

- Youth Unemployment Committee (10:15am, Virtual)

Wednesday 21 July

Westminster Hall

- 11.00am: Early years education funding (Wera Hobhouse, Lib Dem, Bath)

House of Lords

- Oral Question: Lord Soley (Lab) to ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to create a register of all home educated children
- Skills and Post-16 Education Bill [HL] – Committee Stage (Day 4)

Lords Committees

- Public Services Committee: The role of public services in addressing child vulnerability (3:00pm, Virtual)

Thursday 22 July

House of Lords

- Debate: Report from the Public Services Committee 'A critical juncture for public services: lessons from COVID-19'

Grand Committees

- Short debate: Value of cultural and education exchanges for students, and others who may benefit from such exchanges

Lords Committees

- Public Services Committee: The role of public services in addressing child vulnerability (11:00am, Virtual)