



# Pearson

## Policy Watch

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



### The week in a nutshell

Although Parliament is in recess, that hasn't stopped the flow of policy pronouncements and speeches. DfE published **Sir David Bell's** review of **the Education and Skills Funding Agency**, and in doing so announced the removal of its policy role. Response from the sector has been mixed with some welcoming ESFA's tighter focus, whereas others wondered whether an opportunity had been missed for a more radical shake up.

Universities Minister, **Michelle Donelan** has called for university adverts to include drop out and graduate employment rates to support student choice. This was as UCAS published its 2022 applicant figures. There was a slight dip in total applications, with a drop in mature applications and a rise in those from 18 year-olds.

**Nadhim Zahawi** launched new guidance for schools around political impartiality. It aims to support teachers on teaching subjects like climate change and the British Empire. Some unions expressed concern that the non-statutory guidance will lead to confusion.

**Policy Watch will take a half term break next week, returning on 4<sup>th</sup> March**

### Top stories

#### **Sir David Bell review of Education and Skills Funding Agency published – DfE to remove policy role**

- As part of the Cabinet Office's public bodies reform programme, Sir David Bell undertook a review of the ESFA which covered: status, governance, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- As a result of the review, from 1 April ESFA will refocus on primary funding responsibilities, and will no longer have a policy role. Reforms will also see regional teams refocus around standard English regions rather than the customised regions used by DfE since 2010.
- There will also be a significant reorganisation in the Department for Education, with the creation of a single post-16 policy team under a single Director - encompassing higher education, further education, adult learning, and employer-led learning.

#### **Universities Minister Michelle Donelan delivered a keynote speech on the quality of higher education at a UCAS event.**

- In her address, Donelan announced that all adverts in next year's admissions cycle – whether online, on a billboard or in a prospectus – should include the provider's drop-out and progression to graduate jobs rates.
- The Minister said she would be working with Universities UK, UCAS, Guild HE and the Office for Student to put guidance in place by the end of spring to enable this to happen.

## UCAS published its 2022 cycle applicant figures for the end of January deadline.

- Overall applications for full-time undergraduate applications for university and college courses that start this coming autumn fell slightly by 1% (610,720 in 2022 vs 616,360 2021).
- The overall number of UK 18 year olds applying increase by 5% (from 306,200 to 320,420), but mature applicants declined by 17% compared to 2021, when at the height of the pandemic, mature applications jumped in one year by 24%
- 28% of young people from the most disadvantaged areas (quintile 1 using the POLAR4 measure) have applied – up from 17.8% nine years ago in 2013.
- 2022 marks the graduation of the first cohort of T level students – of the 1,300 students studying this qualification, 475 currently have a live application on UCAS.

## The Department for Education has published new guidance on political impartiality in schools.

- The new guidance presents 19 scenarios to help in the application of its contents, and DfE says it will support teachers in tackling sensitive issues in the classroom in a politically impartial way.
- This guidance is for all schools, including academies and independent schools. It does not cover early years settings, 16 to 19 academies. further education colleges or universities. It does not include any new statutory requirements and is based on existing legal duties on political impartiality.
- Schools designated with a religious character are free to teach according to the tenets of their faith. The Government do not consider principles or views in line with these tenets to be covered by statutory requirements on political impartiality.
- In the guidance, it states that schools should be aware that ‘partisan political views’ are not limited to just political parties – they may also be held by campaign groups, lobbyists and charitable organisations.

## The UPP Foundation Student Futures Commission has released its final report.

- It provides a blueprint for how universities and students can work together to improve the student experience and tackle problems caused by the pandemic.
- Through its evidence gathering and six key themes, the ‘*Student Futures Manifesto*’ sheds new light on the future of teaching and learning in higher education, the importance of helping students regain their sense of ‘belonging’ to their university, and the need for clearer pathways to graduate outcomes.

## Pearson news

### Belonging and inclusion at university - survey

Pearson partnered with Wonkhe to survey more than 5000 students on belonging and inclusion at university. This week we published the findings. [Read the report](#) to see how students rate their sense of belonging at university and what elements affect it.

## Pearson tweet of the week



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## Other news

### Parliamentary

- Skills and Post 16 Education Bill – amendments ahead of Report Stage (21 Feb session)
- Commons Science and Technology Committee: Committee to hold first evidence session of its inquiry into diversity in STEM
- Education Committee: MPs to examine educational challenges faced by children from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities

### Regulatory and funding bodies

- ESFA: Review of the Education and Skills Funding Agency
- ESFA Update: 16 February 2022
- OfS: A geography of English higher education
- OfS: Release of 2020-21 student numbers

### Schools

- Extra support to safeguard political impartiality in schools
- Guidance: Political impartiality in schools
- Coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce fund for schools (updated)

### Further Education & Skills

- Coronavirus (COVID-19) workforce fund for colleges (updated)
- Association of Colleges: 5Rs project launched to help improve maths skills

### Higher Education

- Universities Minister puts quality at the heart of higher education
- Apply to join the physics ITT for engineers pilot
- HEPI: What's next for national security and research?
- UCAS: Disadvantaged students show confidence in applications as they approach exams
- HESA: Higher education staff data UK, 2020/21
- UPP Foundation: Student Futures Manifesto

### Scotland

- Vaccinating children aged 5 to 11 years

### Wales

- Written Statement: Consultation on changes to current schools assessment arrangements and local authority prospectus
- Written Statement: COVID-19 vaccination for all five to 11-year-olds

### Northern Ireland

- Statement from Education Minister on teachers' pay negotiations

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## Consultation Watch

### New consultations

- [Education, Young People and Children Committee \(Scottish Parliament\): Impact of COVID on Education](#)  
Closes: 25 March 2022
- [Wales: Changes to current school assessment arrangements and local authority prospectus](#)  
Closes: 1 April 2022
- [Wales: Statutory induction of newly qualified teachers in Wales](#) Closes: 8 April 2022
- [Wales: Draft framework for Welsh in English medium education](#) Closes: 13 May 2022

### Ongoing consultations

- [QAA: New Subject Benchmark Statement for Policing](#) Closes: 28 February 2022
- [Keeping children safe in education: proposed revisions 2022](#) Closes: 8 March 2022
- [NI Department of Education: Consultation on Children and Young People's Strategy initial 3-year Delivery Plan 2021 – 2024](#) Closes: 9 March 2022
- [Public Accounts Committee: Financial sustainability of the higher education sector in England](#)  
Closes: 14 March 2022
- [DfE: Teacher misconduct: regulating the teaching profession](#) Closes: 14 March 2022
- [OfS: A new approach to regulating student outcomes](#) Closes: 17 March 2022
- [The Teaching Excellence Framework](#) Closes: 17 March 2022
- [Constructing student outcome and experience indicators for use in OfS regulation](#) Closes: 17 March 2022
- [Education Committee: Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance \(CEIAG\)](#) Closes: 17 March
- [Department for Education: School attendance: improving consistency of support](#) Closes: 28 March 2022
- [DfE: Revised behaviour in schools guidance and suspension and permanent exclusions guidance](#)  
Closes: 31 March 2022
- [DfE: Changes to the School Admission Appeals Code](#) Closes: 3 April 2022

## What's happening in Parliament next week

### Monday 21 February

#### *House of Commons*

- [Skills and Post-16 Education Bill – report stage](#)

### Tuesday 22 February

#### *Commons Committees*

- [Education Committee: Education challenges facing children and young people from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller backgrounds](#)

#### *All-Party Parliamentary Groups*

- [APPG on Religious Education. AGM.](#)
- [APPG on Social Mobility. AGM.](#)

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- APPG on Youth Employment. Final meeting of the inquiry ‘The impact of vocational qualifications on young people’s employability and labour market outcomes’
- APPG on Oracy/Speech and Language Difficulties. (with Schools Minister Robin Walker)
- APPG for Theatre. Evidence session on skills.
- APPG on Independent Education. AGM.
- APPG on a Fit and Healthy Childhood. AGM.
- APPG on Outdoor Learning. AGM.
- APPG on Universities. Social mobility and higher education.

### Wednesday 23 February

#### *Public Bill Committees*

- British Sign Language Bill – to consider the Bill

#### *Commons Committees*

- Science and Technology Committee: Diversity in STEM

#### *House of Lords*

- Lord Storey (Lib Dem) to ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of school children in the most deprived communities

#### *All-Party Parliamentary Groups*

- APPG on Adult Education. AGM.
- APPG for Skills, Careers and Employment. The Levelling Up white paper: what next for skills, careers and employment?

### Thursday 24 February

#### *House of Lords*

- The Lord Bishop of Coventry (Bishops) to ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the acceptance of T Levels by Higher Education institutions for candidates for admission to universities via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) in the current application cycle.

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