



# Pearson

## Policy Watch

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



### The week in a nutshell

The week ended with **Michelle Donelan's** Written Ministerial Statement announcing that the repayment thresholds and interest rate thresholds will remain at current levels for the financial year 2022-23. Of interest was the suggestion that the government will “shortly” set out further plans addressing the student finance recommendations made in the Augar Review. This is a change in tone from “in due course” and so we might yet see the response to Augar.

**UCAS' End of Cycle release** for 2021 showed a growth in acceptances on the previous year, as well as an increase in those getting their first choice institution. Demand for UK HE remained strong in 2021 and there was rise in interest in apprenticeship opportunities. Figures also showed the almost elimination of unconditional offers. **HESA** also published data this week – showing enrolments for the year 20/21.

The **Office for National Statistics** has released its analysis of education, social mobility and outcomes for students receiving free school meals (FSM) in England. The data shows that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are only half as likely to end up earning the Living Wage at 25 as their better off peers.

Looking forward to next week, Education Ministers face the monthly education questions session, and the much anticipated Levelling Up White Paper is expected to be published.

### Top stories

**UCAS has published its final 2021 End of Cycle release, with new data breaking down individual university and college application and acceptance figures for the 2021 cycle**

- 606,645 people of all ages across the UK applied to higher education in 2021 (+5% on 2020), with 492,005 accepted (+1%)
- As the 18 year old population increases, 7% more UK 18 year olds were placed (27,235 up from 257,895 in 2020). 81% of students gained a place in their first choice university or college (up from 76%). Overall, 38.3% of UK 18 year olds gained a placed in 2021 (up from 37% in 2020 and 34.1% in 2019).
- Unconditional offer-making fell from a high of 15.7% of all offers made in 2020 to 3.3% in 2021.

**Higher Education Statistics Agency has published the latest details of student enrolments and qualifications obtained by higher education (HE) students UK providers (academic year 2020/21).**

- First degree courses remained the most popular type of higher education, with an increase of 8% between 2019/20 and 2020/21. Enrolments in other types of undergraduate courses saw a year-on-year increase for the first time in over a decade.

- First year postgraduate taught numbers continued to rise, showing a 16% increase compared to the previous academic year. This increase comprises a 24% increase in enrolments from UK students and 8% increase from non-European Union (non-EU) students.
- Despite a 13% increase in the number of other undergraduate qualifications awarded in 2020/21, the overall number remains below that of 2018/19, indicating the continued year on year decline observed over previous years.

**Office for National Statistics has [published its initial findings](#) following an analysis of education, social mobility and outcomes for students receiving free school meals (FSM) in England.**

- The newly acquired LEO database links education data with earnings and benefits data at the population level, allowing outcomes to be explored with greater granularity than before. This publication is the first in a series looking at the links between education, the labour market, and earnings mobility.
- At age 25 years, 23.0% of FSM recipients who attended school in England had recorded earnings above the annualised full-time equivalent of the Living Wage in comparison with 43.5% of those that did not.
- 18.2% of females who received FSM had recorded earnings above the Living Wage compared with 27.8% of males who received FSM; for non-recipients, the proportion was 39.3% and 47.5% respectively.

**British Academy and the Royal Society have [published a joint statement](#) on the importance of promoting Core Maths as practical and valuable**

- They argue all students should have the opportunity to take maths qualifications beyond the age of 16.
- The statement outlines a plan to realise the potential of Core Maths qualifications to meet the demand for maths skills, setting out four conditions:
  - Government should provide funding to ensure all schools and colleges can offer Core Maths
  - Universities should incentivise prospective undergraduates to take Core Maths
  - Sector Skills Councils and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), should promote the value of Core Maths to employers.
  - Employers should consider offering their employees Core Maths.

**Education Committee has [launched an inquiry](#) into the effectiveness of careers education, information, advice and guidance (CEIAG).**

- The inquiry will be a root and branch review of how well the current system for careers education, information, advice and guidance is working (CEIAG).
- The call for written evidence closes on Thursday 17 March.

## Pearson news

**[#BeInBusiness launched](#)** This is an online initiative created to support schools and educators by inspiring greater student inclusion in Business at GCSE and A level. We believe that students from every race, ethnicity, gender, background and ability should feel welcome to claim their space in business at school age and beyond. [Find out more and access free resources here](#)



## Pearson tweet of the week



## Other news

### Parliamentary

- Oral Questions to the Secretary of State for Education (for Monday 31 January)
- Michelle Donelan Written Ministerial Statement on loan repayment thresholds and interest rate thresholds
- Ministerial Correction: Education (Education (Careers Guidance in Schools) Bill)
- Westminster Hall: Early Years Educators
- Lords: NHS: Nurse Recruitment
- Education Committee launches new inquiry on careers education in schools

### Regulatory and funding bodies

- ESFA Update: 26 January 2022
- ESFA: Join the Skills Revolution campaign toolkit
- ESFA: Get the Jump: 'Skills for Life' campaign toolkit
- ESFA: Share Your Skills: Teach in Further Education stakeholder toolkit and resources
- Ofqual: Dr Jo Saxton speech at Sixth Form Colleges Association conference
- Ofqual: Appeals for GCSE, AS and A level: summer 2021
- QAA: Consultation on new Subject Benchmark Statement for Policing
- QAA shares headline findings from online and hybrid learning research
- IfATE: Further education sector set for refreshed teacher apprenticeship
- UKRI: Open access policy update and information event registration

## Schools

### Policy Watch

Week ending Friday 28 January 2022

- School funding statistics: 2021 to 2022 financial year
- Education Committee launches new inquiry on careers education in schools
- New measures to increase school attendance
- 94% of secondary schools provide free period products to students
- NEU: Joint letter to DfE on climate strategy in the curriculum
- EPI responds to new DfE figures on pupil absence

## Further Education & Skills

- Further education and skills: January 2022
- Apprenticeships and traineeships: January 2022
- IfATE: Further education sector set for refreshed teacher apprenticeship
- Core Maths qualifications are 'practical and valuable' to students of all disciplines, say British Academy and Royal Society
- ONS: Education, social mobility and outcomes for students receiving free school meals in England

## Higher Education

- Education Secretary leads call to tackle antisemitic abuse on campuses
- UCAS End of Cycle 2021: Strong demand for UK HE amidst a global pandemic
- QAA shares headline findings from online and hybrid learning research
- OIA publishes Operating Report 2021 and Operating Plan 2022
- Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2020/21
- ONS: Coronavirus and third year or higher students in HE, England: 29 November to 20 December 2021

## Scotland

- Record number of students from deprived areas at university
- Pupil Equity Funding: school level spend 2019 to 2020
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## Wales

- QAA Cymru reports on Welsh Language commitment for 2020-21
- Curriculum for Wales: Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Code
- Support for students to complete 'vital' Health and Social Care courses

## Consultation Watch

### New consultations

- QAA: New Subject Benchmark Statement for Policing Closes: 28 February 2022
- Education Committee: Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Closes: 17 March 2022
- Department for Education: School attendance: improving consistency of support Closes: 28 March 2022

### Ongoing consultations

- Scotland: Assessment of wellbeing - draft statutory guidance: consultation Closes: 04 February 2022

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- [NI Department of Education: Northern Ireland Teachers' Pension Scheme](#) Closes: 13 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 HE sector in England](#) 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

## What's happening in Parliament next week

### Monday 31 January

#### *House of Commons*

- Education Oral Questions
- Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill – consideration of Lords amendments

#### *All-Party Parliamentary Groups*

- APPG ON PANDEMIC RESPONSE & RECOVERY. Meeting on the impact of Covid-19 policy on children

### Tuesday 1 February

#### *All-Party Parliamentary Groups*

- APPG FOR PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION. AGM.
- APPG ON LEARNING DISABILITY. Access All Areas: Launch of Mencap's new report on Apprenticeships
- APPG FOR PEDAGOGY, CURRICULUM AND ACCOUNTABILITY. Inaugural meeting.

### Wednesday 2 February

#### *Commons Committees*

- Science and Technology Committee: Reproducibility and research integrity

### Thursday 3 February

#### *House of Commons*

- General Debate on the effectiveness of the Government's Education Catch-Up and Mental Health Recovery Programmes

#### *House of Lords*

- Lord Blunkett (Lab) to ask Her Majesty's Government how many children in (1) primary, and (2) secondary, schools in England were absent the weeks commencing (a) 10 January, (b) 17 January, and (c) 24 January.

#### *All-Party Parliamentary Groups*

- APPG ON SCHOOL EXCLUSIONS AND ALTERNATIVE PROVISION. AGM.
- APPG FOR SCHOOL FOOD. EGM.

### Friday 4 February

#### *House of Commons*

- Schools and Educational Settings (Essential Infrastructure and Opening During Emergencies) Bill - Second Reading (Robert Halfon, Con, Harlow) (Subject to timing)

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