



Pearson

Policy Watch

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



The week in a nutshell

This week the Chancellor delivered his first full [Budget](#), with a number of announcements around education and skills. This included the establishment of 'returnerships', a new offer promoting existing skills interventions to the over-50s; the enhancement of the existing Mid-life MOT strategy, which covers careers guidance; the delivery of 12 new investment zones which will have access to funding for skills and apprenticeships; investment in childcare; and increased devolution to Greater Manchester and the West Midlands. Following the Budget, the Government published details of the new 'trailblazer deeper devolution deals' for [Greater Manchester](#) and the [West Midlands](#).

Speaking at the Annual Apprenticeship Conference, UCAS Chief Executive Clare Marchant said they are currently working with the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) to enable apprenticeships to qualify for UCAS points. Marchant [told the conference](#) they hoped to be able to make an announcement on this at the end of the calendar year.

Also this week, Kate Osborne (Lab, Jarrow) has been replaced on the Education Select Committee by Mohammad Yasin (Lab, Bedford), and [membership of the public bill committee for the Lifelong Learning](#) (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill has been confirmed.

Top stories

Ofqual sets out details of its Vocational and Technical Qualification (VTQ) Results Action Plan

- Ofqual has published further details of its [Vocational and Technical Qualification \(VTQ\) results Action Plan](#), setting out the measures to which the relevant awarding organisations have committed to ensure correct and complete results are issued to students in summer 2023.
- The regulator has introduced three new deadlines for 2023. These bring forward the eligibility checks and quality assurance that awarding organisations, schools and colleges will need to conduct, so that these are completed during term time. The Action Plan also set out additional measures including better tracking, designated contacts and improved information.

Ofqual launches consultation on proposed regulatory approach

- Ofqual has [launched a new consultation](#) on their proposed regulatory approach for entry level, level 1 and level 2 qualifications supporting progression to higher levels of study in England.
- Ofqual proposes to regulate these qualifications primarily through the General Conditions of Recognition. They also propose to set a limited number of additional controls.
- The review of qualifications at level 2 and below will span several years, with DfE taking a phased approach to the first teaching of reformed qualifications from 2025 to 2027. In October 2022, DfE [published the government's response](#) to its consultation on the 'Review of post-16 qualifications at level 2 and below in England'. The consultation closes on 25 May.

ONS publishes labour market overview

- The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has [published the latest labour market overview](#), featuring estimates of UK employment, unemployment, economic inactivity and other labour-related statistics for the UK.
- For 18 to 24-year-olds in November 2022 to January 2023 the employment rate increased to 63.1%, from 61.8% in the previous three-month period.
- Overall, the employment rate was estimated at 75.7% in November 2022 to January 2023, 0.1 percentage points higher than the previous period. The increase in employment was driven by part-time employees and self-employed workers.
- The economic inactivity rate decreased by 0.2 percentage points on the quarter, to 21.3%. The decrease was driven by people aged 16 to 24 years.
- In December 2022 to February 2023, the estimated number of vacancies fell by 51,000 on the quarter to 1,124,000. Vacancies fell on the quarter for the eighth consecutive period.

DEFRA publishes Statistical Digest of Rural England

- DEFRA has published the key findings from each of the seven thematic reports that make up the Statistical Digest of Rural England, including a section on [Education, Qualifications and Training](#). The findings showed:
 - In the 2018/19 academic year, 70% of pupils living in rural areas left school with English and Maths GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 compared to 64% in urban areas.
 - As of March 2019, in rural areas 81% of secondary schools had received 'Outstanding' or 'Good' Ofsted inspection outcomes, compared with 74% in urban areas.
 - There have been consistently more apprenticeship starts per 1,000 working age population living in rural areas than in urban areas since 2010.

Science Industry Partnership publishes manifesto for skills in the science industries

- The Science Industry Partnership, supported by Cogent Skills, has published a [manifesto for skills in the science industries](#). The report outlines four priorities for technical education and workplace learning and associated asks. The priorities are as follows:
 - Make the apprenticeship levy work for employers
 - Keep employers at the heart of apprenticeship standard design
 - Increase equity through diverse career pathways
 - Support SMEs to build a future ready workforce.

ESFA publishes guidance for local authorities

- The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), along with the Further Education Commissioner, have published information on help and support for local authorities in delivering post-16 further education. You can find all relevant guidance [here](#).

Pearson news

Be The Future 2023 In collaboration with the Peter Jones Foundation, we are delighted to be relaunching the social enterprise competition for learners in school or college. The challenge is to create a social enterprise idea that addresses a social or environmental issue, such as poverty, climate change or inequality. We want to hear your ideas for a social enterprise that could work to resolve these issues. Entry deadline: June 9th 2023. For more, [click here](#).



Pearson tweet of the week



Other news

Parliamentary

- HM Treasury: Spring Budget 2023
- Commons: Financial Statement and Budget Report
- Commons: Science, Innovation and Technology Oral Questions
- Westminster Hall: Suicide Prevention and the National Curriculum
- Westminster Hall: Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan
- Lords: Schools: Data, Digital and Financial Literacy
- Lords: Universities: Impact of Industrial Action on Students
- Votes and Proceedings: Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill committee membership
- WMS: Machinery of Government
- WMS: Cabinet Committees
- Education Committee Chair on childcare Budget announcements
- Science and Technology Committee (Commons): Chair urges the EU and UK to accelerate Horizon Europe negotiations as no further clarity over £1.6 billion returned to the Treasury

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- Science and Technology Committee (Commons): Comment – Spring Budget, National quantum strategy and Sir Patrick Vallance’s review
- Science and Technology Committee (Commons): MPs seek evidence on turning quantum technologies into products

Regulatory and funding bodies

- Ofsted: Amanda Spielman at the Annual Apprenticeship Conference 2023
- ESFA: Getting help and support for local authorities delivering post-16 further education
- Ofqual: VTQ results Action Plan: measures for 2023
- Ofqual: Vocational and other qualifications quarterly: October to December 2022
- Ofqual: Regulating level 2 and below qualifications supporting progression to higher levels of study
- IfATE: Tackling inequalities and lack of diversity across apprenticeships and skills training
- QAA publishes latest Quality Compass on educational gain
- QAA: Supporting postgraduate researchers – check out our latest Collaborative Enhancement Project
- UKRI: First programmes announced for new international partnerships fund

Schools

- Pupil absence in schools in England: 2021 to 2022
- Multi-academy trust performance measures (key stages 2, 4 and 5)
- Childcare: regulatory changes (Consultation outcome)
- ECF and NPQ starts, 2022/23

Further Education & Skills

- National Careers Service satisfaction and progression surveys: 2021 to 2022
- Ofqual: VTQ results Action Plan: measures for 2023
- Ofqual: Vocational and other qualifications quarterly: October to December 2022
- DLUHC: Levelling up at heart of Budget
- West Midlands Combined Authority: “Trailblazer” deeper devolution deal
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority: “Trailblazer” deeper devolution deal
- English Devolution Accountability Framework
- UK labour market: March 2023
- Association of Colleges: Senior Tories call for £400 million emergency funding for colleges
- Science Industry Partnership: A skills manifesto for the science industries

Higher Education

- DSIT: Government commits up to £3.5 billion to future of tech and science
- International Science Partnerships Fund (ISPF)
- HEPI: Turning Around a University: Lessons from personal experience
- UCU: Employers make offers in university disputes
- UCEA and TUs consulting following agreement on the ToR
- UUK: Professor Dame Sally Mapstone FRSE, Principal and Vice-Chancellor of University of St Andrews to be next President of Universities UK
- A joint statement on UUK and UCU collaboration toward USS benefit restoration

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- Universities UK statement on behalf of USS employers

Scotland

- New Chair to lead transition from SQA
- Increased support for students
- National Outcomes review 2023: consultation information pack

Wales

- Public appointments: Education Workforce Council
- Launch of incentive to attract a more diverse teaching workforce
- £60 million to make schools and colleges across Wales more sustainable
- Written Statement: Update on the Enterprise Zone Programme in Wales

Consultation Watch

New consultations

- Ofqual: Regulating level 2 and below qualifications supporting progression to higher levels of study
Closes: 25 May 2023
- Scottish Government: Review of the National Outcomes Closes: 5 June 2023

Closing consultations

- Consultation on regulating level 1 and 2 qualifications designed to lead to employment Closes: 20 March
- Adoption support agencies: proposed regulation changes Closes: 20 March 2023
- Quality Assurance Agency: Revised Subject Benchmark Statement for English Closes: 20 March 2023

Ongoing consultations

- Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill: call for evidence Closes: 28 March 2023
- Office for Students: Consultation on payment of fees for investigations Closes: 14 April 2023
- Office for Students: Consultation on a new approach to regulating harassment and sexual misconduct in English higher education Closes: 4 May 2023
- Scottish Government: Rural and Islands College Merger proposal: Consultation Closes: 5 May 2023
- Use of reasonable force and restrictive practices in schools - Call for evidence Closes: 11 May 2023

What's happening in Parliament next week

Monday 20 March

House of Commons

- Continuation of the Budget Day

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Delegated Legislation Committee

- Second Delegated Legislation Committee: The draft Health Education England (Transfer of Functions, Abolition and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2023

Public Bill Committee

- Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill: Programming Sub-Committee

Grand Committees

- Draft Health Education England (Transfer of Functions, Abolition and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2023

Tuesday 21 March

House of Commons

- Conclusion of the Budget Debate

Westminster Hall

- Social mobility (David Evennett, Con, Bexleyheath and Crayford)

Public Bill Committees

- Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill: To consider the Bill

Commons Committees

- Treasury Committee: Budget 2023
- Education Committee: Support for childcare and the early years

House of Lords

- Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab) to ask His Majesty's Government what steps they have taken to arrest the decline in the United Kingdom's global market share in international higher education students, which fell from 11 per cent in 2008 to eight per cent in 2019.
- Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill - Consideration of Commons Amendments
- Draft Health Education England (Transfer of Functions, Abolition and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2023 - Motion to Approve
- Draft Health Education England (Transfer of Functions, Abolition and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2023 - Motion to Regret

Lords Committees

- Industry and Regulators Committee: The work of the Office for Students

All-Party Parliamentary Group

- APPG on International Students

Wednesday 22 March

Westminster Hall

- Specialist workforce for children with special educational needs and disabilities (Geraint Davies, Lab, Swansea West)
- Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service and family court reform (Taiwo Owatemi, Lab, Coventry North West)

Commons Committees

- Treasury Committee: Budget 2023

Lords Committees

- Public Services Committee: Review of the Children's social care implementation strategy and family hubs rollout

All-Party Parliamentary Groups

- APPG for Schools, Learning and Assessment

Thursday 16 March

Public Bill Committees

- Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill: Further to consider the Bill

House of Lords

- Baroness Blower (Lab) to ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the potential merits of bringing the delivery of prison education into the public sector.

Lords Committees

- Education for 11–16 Year Olds Committee: Education for 11-16 year olds