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## Pocket Watch – Any education pointers in the Coalition’s mid-year review?

### Introduction

In plain audit terms, 15 of the 34 education measures originally listed in the May 2010 Coalition Agreement have now been implemented according to the Coalition’s half term [report](#) published last week. But then as the subsequent checklist indicated, a lot depends on interpretation. For example in 2010, schools were promised *‘greater freedom over the curriculum,’* there’s certainly been a lot of change but *‘greater freedom?’* Equally FE was promised a funding system that would *‘be fair and follow the choices of students,’* not necessarily a streamlined system with 24+ loans as it now faces. What is indisputable though is just how much the education landscape has changed over the intervening 2½ years as a glance down the *‘what we have done columns’* indicates. Nor will it end there, for as the Prime Minister stressed, or rather warned, at the launch of the report: *“on the big structural reforms, our resolve and shared sense of purpose have, if anything, grown over time”*

### Schools: what about the next 2½ years?

The Paper lists 17 commitments. Many build on initial commitments made in 2010 but now recast into something more focused. An obvious example is teachers’ pay where an initial pledge of reform and greater flexibility made in 2010 now moves to implementation of specific recommendations *“dependent on performance.”* Other scaled up pledges include those on developing the Academies programme, supporting an expansion of Teach First graduates and improving data on school performance. There are however some pledges that weren’t evident in 2010 but which have now been prioritised and in that sense can be regarded as new. They include: raising floor targets; legislating for changes in the SEN system; extending the potential of the pupil premium, strengthening A levels and more contentiously, replacing GCSEs

### FE: what about the next 2½ years?

The FE sector received little attention in the 2010 Coalition Agreement with only a generic promise to *‘set colleges free’* by reforming the funding system and supporting the growth of apprenticeship provision and skills training. But the sector now continues its critical positioning with five commitments listed for the next 2½ years including two already under development, namely introducing 24+ loans and traineeships, two responding to current developments, namely creating more responsive skills and apprenticeship systems and one beginning to become prominent, that of rationalising and ‘strengthening’ the qualification system

### HE: what about the next 2½ years?

Higher Education in May 2010 was anxiously awaiting the outcomes of the Browne ‘fee’ Review and this inevitably set the context for commitments at that time. With that now in the past and the Government claiming that universities are thereby *“on a secure and sustainable financial footing,”* two commitments are identified for the future: giving universities more freedom over numbers control in return for greater customer information, and continuing investment in science and research



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[Coalition mid term review](#)