

2012/7

27 July 2012

Policy Tracker - Keeping track of what happened in the world of education in July 2012

Main talking points

This month saw the exam season draw to a close and attention start to shift towards the forthcoming results days instead. Exams, however, in some form remained important with Reports from the Select Committee in England and the Inquiry in Wales and the Response to 16-19 Funding and Provision all being published in the last few weeks. Elsewhere, post-16 maths, destination data, FE loan regulations, widening participation in HE and the economy all featured prominently this month. It's been left to the Olympics to raise both spirits and the economy

Key headlines from the month

- Free schools. 24 open, 50 ish more this Sept, 102 now approved for 2013 onwards
- Studio Schools. 2 open, 15 more now approved, a target of 30 for Sept 2013
- Academy funding. Consultation under way on replacing the LA equivalent grant
- School Dinners. New team brought in to build on Jamie's work
- Key Stage 4. Duty to provide work-related learning removed from Sept 2012
- Gifted and talented. The Sutton Trust call for a new 'highly able' strategy
- Access and Achievement Panel. Ofsted pulls in the leading lights to help with its new Panel
- Exam system. Select Committee recommend development of some national syllabuses
- Qual market in Wales. Panel Report retains current system but with improvements
- Inspiring the Future. Volunteer scheme launched to help inspire youthful ambitions
- Destination Data. First data set shows where 16 and 18 yr olds are going
- 16-19. New programme and funding arrangements announced
- Post-16 maths. The Sutton Trust and the Labour Party add to the voices of support
- FE loans. Regulations laid as the House debates the implications
- Skills provision. The SMF, Ofsted, UKCES, 157 Group offer more perspectives
- Community Learning. First 15 pilot Trusts prepare for an August start
- HE applications. Down 10% in England, notably amongst older age groups
- HE fees. Average 2013 fee rises to £8615 pa for HEIs and £6429 pa for HE in FE
- Graduate Market. Rise in applications but also small, 0.9%, rise in vacancies for 2012
- Research. Government opens up access to research papers following Finch Review
- Economy. IMF downgrades global growth predictions, to 0.2 for the UK in 2012
- Unemployment. Down 65,000 to 2.58m overall, down 10,000 to 1.02m for 16-24 yr olds

Reports/Publications of the month (in order of publication)

- [Hidden Talents](#). The Local Government Association and Centre for Social Justice look at how best to re-engage young people in the first of what's intended to be a series of Papers
- [Boys' Reading Commission](#). The All-Parliamentary Literacy Group come up with nine recommendations such as a tailored reading strategy to help improve boys' reading
- [Widening Participation Strategic Assessment Monitoring](#). HEFCE and OFFA's annual report on provider activity in widening access finds HEIs spending more especially on outreach activity
- [Study and Funding provision for 16-19 year olds](#). The Government commits to the 'Wolf' model for 16-19 study programmes and starts the process of aligning funding
- [RPA Regulations: Response to Consultation](#). The Government summarises the latest consultation on raising the participation age and confirms the lifting of employer duties
- [The administration of exams for 15-19 yr olds in England](#). The Select Committee come up with 36 recommendations following its 9 month inquiry into the exam system
- [The Missing Middle](#). The RSA examine the case for a strong regional/local tier within a reformed and de-regulated school system
- [Britain's Got Talent](#). The Social Market Foundation offer a further Paper on the skills system and propose a more sophisticated payment for results system as a way of unlocking demand
- [Educating the Highly Able](#). The Sutton Trust's commissioned Paper questions previous policy and includes shifting exams to age 14 amongst its 16 recommendations

- [Understanding HE in FE](#). BIS publish its research into the impact of HE in FE which finds FE offering a different experience for many but as yet no mass growth
- [Skills for Employment](#). Ofsted call for provision to be better matched to helping unemployed adults find jobs rather than filling up existing courses
- [Consultation on removing the duty to deliver work-related learning at KS4](#). Despite the strong support for retaining WRL at KS4, the DfE lifts the requirement on schools
- [Youth Employment Challenge](#). The UKCES follows up its last year's Youth Inquiry by highlighting how much harsher the labour market has become for young people
- [Youth Employment in Europe](#). The TUC, IPPR and CIPD come together to see what lessons can be learned from the fabled systems in Northern European economies
- [Plan B](#). The Compass Group continues its pursuit of a Plan B for the economy with some recommendations to help young people including a modern form of national service
- [Report into STEM](#). The House of Lords Science and Technology Committee publishes its Report on STEM and call for an expert group to be set up to track growth and opportunities
- [Student number controls for 2013/14](#). HEFCE publish the procedure for core and margin numbers for next year

Speeches of the month

- Glenys Stacey's 3 July Exam System [speech](#) considers the current wave of system reforms and identifies three aspects necessary for the maintenance of standards
- Michael Gove's 5 July FASNA [speech](#) lays out the culture of high expectations the Government is seeking with demanding standards for all in a new look education system
- Nick Gibb's 10 July ACME [speech](#) outlines current Government policy in maths and spells out what steps it's taking to transform standards
- Kim Thorneywork's 10 July Funding Conference [speech](#) reflects on a new relationship with FE providers as the Skills Funding Agency moves into a new era
- Glenys Stacey's 12 July Westminster Briefing [speech](#) expands on the four key questions at the heart of the current consultation on A levels
- Matthew Coffey's 12 July Ofsted's first Learning and Skills [Lecture](#) considers some of the challenges facing the FE sector as it seeks to tackle both social mobility and growth at once

Quotes of the month

- *"I simply can't say."* The HE Minister tells the Select Committee that he can't be sure if or when an HE Bill might appear
- *"Where are the diggers in the ground?"* The Director-General of the CBI wonders what's happened to the Growth Plan
- *"I would like to establish a relationship more like that in HE where Vice Chancellors and HEFCE regard each other as partners in a joint endeavour."* The Interim Chief Exec of the SFA spells out what sort of relationship she is seeking with FE providers in future
- *"It was a vale of tiers."* The Education Secretary plays clever with words as he explains why the exam system needed to change
- *"Maintaining standards in times of change is one of the most significant challenges to any assessment system."* A witness to the Select Committee explains some of the difficulties facing the exam system

Word or phrase of the month

- *"Sheep dipping."* Ofsted highlight a concern about provision focused on qualification achievement rather than job outcomes
- *"It's easier to be critical than correct."* The Skills Minister quotes Disraeli in the recent Commons debate on FE loans

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It is also possible to follow some of the team with [Steve Besley](#) and [Louis Coiffait](#) on Twitter, and to subscribe to our [YouTube](#) and [Vimeo](#) channels.

Policy Tracker on what happened in July 2012

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