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## Policy Eye



### Highlights of week ending Friday 20 October 2017

*(Welcome to Policy Eye, a weekly service from Policy Watch offering a regular round up of UK education headlines and stories from over the previous 7 days.)*

#### The week summed up

World Skills, postgraduate teaching apprenticeships, employer views on the Autumn Budget and a deluge of stuff on higher education head the news this week.

HE first, never far from the headlines at present and where there's been a further burst of activity this week. In the words of the BBC's inestimable Chris Cook: 'the HE policy kaleidoscope feels like it's being shaken by someone who's not been to university since about 1986, ie not - @JoJohnsonUK.'

Three features stand out. First, the release this week of a grand sweep of consultative documents intended to ensure that the new regulatory regime, first sketched out in this year's HE Act is in place over the next year. The timescale is tight. The Office for Students (OfS) is due to start in January 2018 and the new regulatory framework published in Feb 2018 so that providers can register with a fully-fledged OfS from April 2018 and the new system can be fully operative from Sept 2019.

Details are set out in an extensive consultation paper described by the OfS chief executive as 'the biggest change in HE regulation in a generation,' effectively sealing the shift from an old-style funding body to a modern market regulator. As ever, excellent summaries of this and the four other consultative papers, on provider registration fees, degree awarding powers and the agreed designated quality and data bodies, can all be found on the [Times Higher](#), [Wonkhe](#) and other HE related websites.

As for those two other HE features, both have been spurred by articles in the Times this week. One was an editorial highlighting the fissures in the Cabinet about where to go with the funding review announced by the PM at Conference the other week. There are currently three Parliamentary Select Committees looking into HE financing and Ministers might do worse than follow those closely if they're looking for direction. And the other feature was an article arguing that rather than needing fewer graduates, a changing economic market means we may well need more. An interesting flip on standard thinking.

A quick word on those three other headline stories this week.

First, the Chancellor has not been short of advice recently, some of it to do with his Autumn Budget now just over a month away. This week the [CBI](#) submitted its thoughts with a big emphasis on education and skills including protected per-pupil funding in schools, greater flexibility of the apprenticeship levy and local pooling of training funds. Second, as [Schools Week](#) highlighted a few weeks ago, the government is adding another teacher training route with the introduction from next September of a postgrad teaching apprenticeship. And finally, the World Skills competition where UK competitors have performed so heroically in the [World Skills Competition](#) over the last week. Fittingly, they claim the last word this week.



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## Top headlines this week

- 'Student loans inquiry launched by Treasury Committee.' ([Monday](#))
- 'DfE urged to re-direct 16-19 underspend.' ([Tuesday](#))
- 'School system failing pupils with additional needs says leaders.' ([Wednesday](#))
- 'Ministers plan fines for universities which fail to uphold free speech.' ([Thursday](#))
- 'World Skills 2017: Team UK strikes gold in Abu Dhabi.' ([Friday](#))

## People/organisations in the news this week

### General Policy

- [Dear Chancellor](#). The CBI submitted its thoughts to the Chancellor ahead of the Autumn Budget, calling among other things for the government to push ahead with its Industrial Strategy, protect per pupil funding in schools and flex up the apprenticeship levy
- [The Seven Pillars](#). Matt Hancock outlined what progress the government was making in building the seven pillars of its Digital Strategy released earlier this year, when he addressed the Institute of Directors' Digital Strategy Summit, arguing that recent developments in infrastructure, skills, data protection and internet safety, showed that things were on track
- [The view from here](#). The OECD published its latest economic health check of the UK noting that these were challenging times and that raising skill levels, adapting technical education to local needs and investing in teacher training were all needed to strengthen productivity post-Brexit
- [You've got a friend](#). The Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team or Nudge Unit as it's often called, highlighted two examples of successful education 'nudge' behaviour in practice involving friends or mentors helping 'nudge' post – 16 students in one case towards better English/maths results and in the other towards selective universities

### HE

- [Consulting on the new regulatory framework](#). The government outlined its proposals for a new regulatory framework for HE in a series of consultative papers which will remain open for comment until 22 Dec
- [Student loans](#). The Treasury Committee launched a new inquiry into the student loan system to take in recent announcements on the repayment threshold and interest rates as well as implications for the sector generally
- [A Fairer Formula](#). Michael Johnson, Research Fellow of the Centre for Policy Studies argued in a new Paper for the think tank that the government had got it wrong in its latest announcements on fees and that a fairer approach would be to lessen the debt burden on young graduates through lower fees and interest charges with government coughing up any resulting shortfall
- [Alternative Providers](#). The National Audit Office (NAO) returned to the scene of its 2014 report on alternative providers to find that the government had tightened up on a lot of things but that most of the money paid out to ineligible students had yet to be recovered



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- [Making an impact](#). Universities UK published a report by Oxford Economics showing how much the HE sector contributed to the economy in 2014/15 suggesting a total university + student figure knock-on effect of just under £100bn
- [An institutional offer](#). The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in a new report called on HE institutions to adopt a whole institution approach to tackling widening participation, offering case studies and an evaluation tool to help achieve this
- [Satisfaction not always guaranteed](#). Unite Students reported on its survey of how students viewed studying in UK universities, finding most broadly satisfied with their experience although with this varying considerably between different social and ethnic groups
- [Defending the modern](#). Matthew Taylor, chief exec of the RSA, put forward a strong defence of post 1992 'modern' universities in a comment piece on Wonkhe, arguing that they played a crucial role in local communities and businesses
- [Essays on Excellence](#). University Alliance examined what makes for excellence in professional and technical education in a series of short essays from leading experts where the emphasis was on ensuring today's students develop tomorrow's skills
- [Safeguarding Students](#). HEFCE announced a further list of projects on tackling hate crime and online abuse, many of which had been developed with students, for which it was providing funding support

## FE/Skills

- [Teaching Bursaries](#). The DfE published its guidance on FE English and maths bursaries for initial teacher training providers and trainees starting this year
- [Leading on AI](#). The independent review into Artificial Intelligence urged the government to invest in skills, funding and research to ensure the UK retained a leading global role in this field, in a new report
- [Poverty Commission](#). The National Union of Students (NUS) announced the names of the Board members of its Poverty Commission which is currently taking evidence on the sorts of barriers working class people face in post-16 education with a report due next February
- [7 year itch](#). The DfE published a detailed evaluation of its reforms for the FE sector over the last seven years, almost as extensive as some of the reforms themselves, concluding that as ever the sector has continued to adapt to new priorities and circumstances although how far this would have happened anyway remains unclear

## Schools

- [Key Stage 2 arrangements for 2018](#). The Standards and Testing Agency confirmed a change to the order of the English tests and a more flexible approach for English writing assessment as it published arrangements for next May's tests
- [Literacy/numeracy catch-up strategies](#). The DfE updated its review of what works best for low-attaining Yr 7 pupils highlighting the importance of writing interventions for literacy but finding less evidence on what works for numeracy and continuing concerns about a loss of momentum at the primary-secondary transition stage



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- **Master and apprentice.** The Education Secretary confirmed that the new postgraduate teaching apprenticeship, enabling ‘talented’ graduates to learn on the job with the potential of a job at the end, will launch next September
- **Teacher apprentice.** Schools Week editor Laura McLnerney outlined some of the issues around potential teaching apprenticeships including notably that they might be used as cheap labour in a comment piece in The Guardian
- **MAT money.** The government invited bids from eligible multi-academy trusts for additional funding to help with identified school improvement and social mobility activities
- **Thoughts on pay reform.** The DfE published the results of a commissioned report into teachers’ pay reforms looking at how schools had implemented them and what teachers thought of them, concluding that most schools had now adopted some form of performance related pay, most teachers had accepted the idea but that it all amounted to more work with seemingly little impact on recruitment and outcomes
- **Key findings.** The Key, the organization that provides leadership and management support to schools, published the findings from its recent survey into the school curriculum indicating that for many pupils, particularly those with special needs or language difficulties, the current curriculum requirements are so rigid that they restrict children from demonstrating their full potential
- **At the baseline.** The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) issued a brief Paper calling for a standardized rather than observational approach to baseline assessment ahead of an intended government announcement
- **Careers leaders.** Teach First called on government to help provide for dedicated careers leaders in schools, able to work particularly with more disadvantaged youngsters who often miss out on work experience, employer networks and other work-related opportunities
- **Digital Safety Ambassadors.** Facebook, the Diana Award and Childnet International teamed up to announce a new collaborative venture which would see every UK secondary school train up and appoint young digital safety ambassadors, following research showing that peer-to-peer support works best with young people
- **Learning about culture.** The RSA along with the Education Endowment Foundation launched an extensive programme of research and activities into how far cultural learning can support educational outcomes
- **Apply here.** The Gatsby Foundation invited applications from master’s students keen to research into aspects of technical education and who needed help with research expenses

## Tweets(s) of the week

- “In a world that is asking for creativity out of people, why is the measurement for schools focused on everyone doing the same thing?” – [@gcouros](#)
- “Switching from barrister to teacher was ‘harder than anything else I’ve ever done in my life’ says [@joannecrossley](#)” - [@Schools Week](#)
- “University interview tips: confidence won’t make up for flannel” - [@clareucas](#)
- “The world’s most successful people start their day at 4.00 am” - [@Inc ...](#) “Just as the world’s happiest are going to bed” - [@PCollinsTimes](#)



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## Other stories of the week

- Simply the best. McKinsey, the OECD, numerous think tanks and countless researchers have all reported in recent years on what makes the world's top performing education systems so successful. A recent name to add to the list is that of Lucy Crehan whose book 'Cleverlands' highlighted what she found from examining best educational practice around the world. Lucy is a prominent speaker on the education circuit and last week spoke at a packed seminar hosted by Cambridge Assessment where she listed her top three features for high performing systems. They include: timetabled teacher collaboration, dedicated support, and development of a mastery curriculum. A link to the seminar can be found [here](#)
- My first half term as a maths teacher. This year, another Lucy, in this case Lucy Kellaway a long-term columnist of the FT, decided at the age of 58 to give up a career in journalism and retrain as a teacher. With half term approaching, she returned this week to her column in the FT to describe how her first half term as a trainee maths teacher in a secondary school in East London had gone. Perhaps this excerpt describes it best: "It is a bit like being at the beginning of a tumultuous love affair. I feel euphoria one moment...and despair the next." It's a feeling many will recognize. A link to the story is [here](#)

## Quote(s) of the week

- "There has been a clear shift in the generational pattern of wealth and income, and that translates into a greater indebtedness at a younger age" – the chief exec of the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) worries about growing debt among young people
- "It is not just brilliant minds we need, we also need intelligent hands" – Lord Baker on his continuing crusade for high-quality technical education
- "It was a fetishisation of austerity when they removed them three years ago. It was a step too far" – the V.C. of De Montford University on the government's scrapping of maintenance grants for students
- "We'd like to see Parliament alive with debate about school funding between now and the Budget" – the National Association of head teachers (NAHT) take the battle for school funding to MPs
- "We will be actively gathering feedback from our customers to assess how best we can expand these initiatives to other restaurants" – McDonalds offers lockers to parents at their restaurants in Singapore so that they can lock away their mobile phones and Mctalk to their kids for a while

## Number(s) of the week

- 3%. The UK inflation rate for September, the highest in over five years, according to latest official stats
- £630bn. How much developments in artificial intelligence could add to the UK economy by 2035 according to a new independent report by the industry sector
- £95bn. How much the university sector, that's universities and their students, contributed to the UK economy in 2014/15 according to research commissioned by Universities UK
- 74%. How satisfied students are with their time at university although levels vary considerably between different groups of students, according to a survey from Unite Students
- 86%. How many employers were 'likely' or 'extremely likely' to recommend their training provider to another employer seeking similar training according to the latest FE Choices Employer Satisfaction Survey

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- 79%. How many school leaders in a recent survey by the Key organization, believe that the current curriculum and assessment requirements are too rigid and prescriptive for many pupils
- 1.1%. The number of unauthorized absences in primary and secondary schools over the last academic year, up from 0.9% on the previous year, largely due to unauthorized family holidays according to the latest government figures
- £12.76 per pupil. How much it would cost to train up and provide a dedicated careers leader in every school (meaning £31m in total,) according to figures calculated by Teach First and PwC
- 18 minutes. How long the average worker gets for a lunch break according to a survey in the Daily Telegraph, suggesting that the concept of a 'lunch hour' is rapidly diminishing

## What to look out for next week

- Pearson Teaching Awards (Sunday)
- Parliamentary lobby on school funding (Tuesday)
- Teach First Impact Conference (Tuesday)