Sector Round-up

Sector reports review: February to August 2017

Virendra Mistry

Teaching and Learning Academy, Liverpool John Moores University, Exchange Station, Tithebarn Street, Liverpool L2 2QP, UK

Contact: v.mistry@ljmu.ac.uk

Abstract

This paper provides a summary of key reports and papers published by UK HE sector organisations between February and August 2017. The organisations featured are: Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC); Department for Education (DfE); Equality Challenge Unit (ECU); Government Office for Science (GO-Science); Higher Education Academy (HEA); Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE); Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI); Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA); Institute for Employment Studies (IES); Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS); Jisc; Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE); National Union of Students (NUS); Office for Fair Access (OFFA); Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA); Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA); Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS); UK Trade Policy Observatory (UKTPO); Unite Students; Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA); Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA); Universities UK (UUK); and Universities UK International (UUKi). The election manifestoes of the major political parties in England are also featured in this paper.

The themes covered in this paper include: the UK general election; the Higher Education and Research Act 2017; student expectations and experiences; student complaints; the Teaching Excellence Framework; learning gain; quality assurance; accelerated degrees; degree apprenticeships; credit transfer; supporting transition; equality and diversity; student wellbeing; students and public engagement; technology-enhanced learning and digital capability; The Smith Review (of post-16 mathematics education); employability and graduate outcomes; internationalisation (including outward mobility and transnational education); and the HE workforce.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 Licence. As an open access journal, articles are free to use, with proper attribution, in educational and other non-commercial settings.

UK general election

A 'snap election' took place on 8 June 2017 and returned the Conservative Party to power, albeit as a minority government, after securing an agreement with Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party. In England, the issue of student finance in HE was prominent during the election campaign. Just prior to this, in April, the release of the *Higher Education and Research Act 2017* (April 2017) confirmed that the government would allow, until 2020, tuition fees to increase by the rate of inflation for universities participating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and meeting minimum eligibility requirements. After 2020, fee rises could be linked to results in the TEF (p. 92). Neves and Hillman's (June 2017) *Student Academic Experience Survey* revealed strong views in favour of the government (taxpayers) contributing the bulk of the cost of higher education, with students making a smaller contribution. (In a report for the IFS, Belfield et al. (July 2017) reported that students in England graduated with average debts of £50,000, whilst those from the poorest backgrounds accrued debts of £57,000 from a three-year degree, meaning that they had "the highest student debts in the developed world").

In a poll of 1,000 full-time UK-domiciled undergraduate (UG) students entitled to vote, 55 per cent of respondents expected to vote Labour, 18 per cent for the Conservatives, 12 per cent Liberal Democrats, whilst the Green Party and UKIP trailed with six and two per cent respectively (HEPI, May 2017). The following is a synopsis of the major parties' thinking on HE in England, as cited in their election manifestos:

- The Conservative Party (May 2017) proposed establishing institutes of technology in "each major city in England", linked to a 'leading university', providing courses at degree level and above. The party also proposed "launch[ing] a major review of funding across tertiary education as a whole, looking at how … students [got] access to financial support that offer[ed] value for money" (p. 55). Those universities charging the maximum tuition fee would be required "to become involved in academy sponsorship or the founding of free schools" (p. 50).
- The Labour Party (May 2017) indicated it would reintroduce maintenance grants for university students and abolish tuition fees. The manifesto also called for a commission on lifelong learning "tasked with integrating further and higher education" (p. 42).
- The Liberal Democrats (May 2017) proposed: reinstating maintenance grants for the poorest students; establishing a review of HE finance (evidencing the impact of the financing system on access, participation and quality); ensuring all universities worked towards widening participation; and reinstating quality assurance for universities applying for degree-awarding powers.
- The Green Party (May 2017) pledged scrapping university tuition fees and "fund[ing] full student grants" (p. 6).
- The UK Independence Party [UKIP] (May 2017) insisted it would halt paying tuition fees for courses "which [did] not lead at least two thirds of students into a graduate level job… within five years after graduation". The Party proposed abolishing tuition fees for UG STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) students, "provided that they worked in their discipline and paid tax in the UK for five years", and for medical students, if they committed to working within the NHS "for at least ten out of the 15 years after they qualif[ied]" (p. 25). The manifesto also indicated that

© The Author(s) 2017

maintenance grants would be restored for "the poorest students" whilst EU nationals would cease to be offered student loans.

Higher Education and Research Act

An Act to make provision about higher education and research; and to make provision about alternative payments to students in higher or further education.

Be it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:-…

Following agreement by both Houses on the text of the Bill, Royal Assent was received on 27 April 2017, therefore becoming an Act of Parliament. In terms of HE teaching and learning, the *Higher Education and Research Act 2017* (April 2017) outlined the role of the Office for Students (OfS), a new regulator and funding council for universities in England which would be established in 2018. The Act advised that the OfS would hold the statutory responsibility for quality and standards, approve new entrants to the HE sector, and also the awarding of university title and degree awarding powers. Further, the OfS would be empowered to make arrangements for assessing the quality of teaching in universities, via the TEF, and would incorporate the functions of OFFA, with universities being required to publish information on the fairness of their admissions (p. 122).

Student expectations and experiences

The HEA and HEPI *Student Academic Experience Survey,* which was first undertaken in 2006, encompassed a much wider range of questions in the 2017 edition. These included questions on student wellbeing (discussed later in this paper) and opinions on policy options. In terms of student expectations of HE and reflections on teaching, from a sample of just over 14,000 UGs, Neves and Hillman (June 2017) reported:

- Evidence of a continued fall in UG students' perceptions of value for money (VFM). However, as noted by the study authors, "different subject areas involve different combinations of teaching methods, contact hours and overall experiences that can all impact on perceived VFM" (p. 14). Accordingly, those UG students on Medicine and Dentistry (58 per cent), Veterinary Sciences/Agriculture (49 per cent), Subjects Allied to Medicine (47 per cent), and Physical Sciences (47 per cent), recorded high perceptions of VFM ['good'/'very good' combined]: UG students on Social Studies (27 per cent), Business and Administrative Studies (28 per cent), and Technology (28 per cent) courses, recorded comparatively low perceptions of VFM. Perceptions of VFM were also highest at Russell Group universities (39 per cent), and lowest at Post-92 institutions (32 per cent).
- In analysis of 'experience versus expectations' 25 per cent of students felt their experience had been better than expected, but 13 per cent thought it had been worse. However, it was further observed, "More encouragingly, first year students (29 per cent) [were] significantly more likely than average to find their experience better than expected" (p. 19). Overall, one in three students indicated that they would have chosen a different course if they could choose again. This was highest in Technology (45 per cent), and Business and Administrative Studies (41 per cent); but lowest in Medicine and Dentistry (17 per cent).
- In students' assessment of how much they felt they had learned, 65 per cent

© The Author(s) 2017

stated that they had learnt 'a lot' compared with just seven per cent who felt that had learnt nothing or not much. Students living with others (rather than at home), employed one to nine hours a week (rather than in excess of ten hours), and in their final year, tended to feel they had learned more.
- Students' value of contact hours appeared to peak, at a broad level, between ten and 19 hours (compared with a peak of satisfaction between 20 and 29 hours, reported in the 2016 survey).
- Students preferred to see less spending on buildings and sports or social facilities, instead, wished to see budgets directed towards: learning facilities, student support services and more hours for teaching.

In Unite Students and HEPI's (July 2017) *Reality Check,* "the first major survey of its kind to look exclusively at applicant's expectations and state of mind" (p. 3), 2,012 applicants to UK universities took part in an online survey developed by YouthSight. *Reality Check* noted, 95 per cent of applicants expected to do more independent work, experience more group work (66 per cent) and to spend more time in lectures than in their school classroom (60 per cent). Comparing these expectations with data from Unite Students' Student Insight Survey (i.e. reported experience), in reality, 52 per cent did more group work than they did at school, and just 19 per cent indicated that they spent more time in lectures than they did in the classroom. In terms of one-to-one contact time, the expectation gap was most pronounced among applicants for Arts courses.

ComRes administered a survey to full and part-time UGs, and organised two workshops, that reviewed student attitudes to, and perspectives on, their relationship with the university (UUK, June 2017). This was undertaken "in the context of increased fees-based funding, market competition and consumer rights." The report indicated:

- Students valued an educational relationship with their university, based on high levels of trust. In particular, students valued a personalised and collaborative relationship that gave them confidence that their institution cared about their educational interests.
- Student perceptions of VFM were based on what they expected to get out of their studies, particularly employment, as well as a personal experience of studying (e.g. good study facilities, high-quality academic staff and personalised feedback).
- Students expected better communication from universities, especially in relation to course changes (up to a year in advance).
- Students' top three priorities for the OfS were: 'ensuring all universities offer a good-quality education', 'ensuring all universities offer value for money', and 'ensuring students are protected if a university closes' (p. 18).

Student complaints

The OIA (May 2017) closed a total of 1,668 cases in 2016. Most of the cases related to complaints regarding academic status (54 per cent), followed by service issues (23 per cent). Academic misconduct, plagiarism and cheating accounted for four per cent of all closed cases. In total, 22 per cent of cases were 'justified' or 'partly justified' or 'settled by the OIA', which was consistent with previous years' experiences. Most of the complaints were received from those studying Business and Administrative courses (n=244), followed by Creative Arts and Design (n=133), and Law (n=128). The OIA noted that PG students and international students from outside the EU continued to be over represented in complaints made and surmised (p. 15),

© The Author(s) 2017

> *The investment which [PG and international students] make in their studies is often substantial and many have made a significant commitment in taking on their course. International students pay higher fees and may also incur higher costs such as travel… PG students have often to put their careers in hold to pursue their studies.*

The OIA also found;

- A tendency for complaints from students on flexible patterns of study and engaging with more than one provider;
- A significant proportion of students who brought cases to the OIA were experiencing mental health difficulties; and
- Procedural errors, which were prevalent in cases which were 'justified' or 'partly justified'.

Teaching Excellence Framework

The TEF results, featuring 134 HE providers and three alternative providers with a university title, were released shortly after the outcome of the general election. 45 colleges and universities received the top rating ('gold'), 67 institutions were awarded 'silver', with 25 receiving the lowest rating, 'bronze' (HEFCE, July 2017a).

In a review of the first year of the TEF, including the TEF results, UUK's (August 2017) survey of its members, which elicited 83 responses, highlighted the following key feelings and issues for consideration:

- General confidence in the fairness of the overall process;
- The results did not correlate with institutional characteristics (e.g. student population or research income), but a slight correlation with entry tariff and other rankings;
- Widespread belief that the TEF would raise the profile of teaching and learning; and
- Concerns about how the assessment framework defines and measures teaching excellence and the viability of subject level assessment.

72 per cent of respondents to Unite Students and HEPI's (July 2017) *Reality Check* survey rated the TEF as important, with "applicants from outside the UK [likelier] to rate it as important compared to UK applicants" (p. 13). However, as cautioned by the report authors, "… the introduction of student fees in England in 2012 did not change applicant behaviour in the ways that had been predicted, so it remains to be seen how much influence the TEF will have over applicant decision making in practice" (p. 13).

In Neves and Hillman's (June 2017) *Student Academic Experience Survey,* when asked about prospective fee rises to £9,250 linked to the TEF, 76 per cent of respondents were against the idea of TEF-linked inflationary fee rises for any student.

Learning gain

Kandiko Howson (July 2017) reported on the first year of a £4m HEFCE pilot projects programme, which involved over 70 HE providers in 13 projects, with the aim of testing and evaluating measures of 'learning gain' in England. Learning gain is broadly considered to relate to the improvement in knowledge, skills, work-readiness and personal development made by students during their time spent in higher education and had been considered as a possible metric in the TEF. Projects were classified as either 'telescope' (involving analysis of large amounts of data) or 'microscope' (focused on collecting data from specific groups of students). The report outlined numerous challenges that were faced in the pilot year. For instance, in relation to the telescope projects, "the challenge… [was] that when interesting

© The Author(s) 2017

findings [were] found, the data often indicate[d] correlational relationships but [did] not explain why, thus requiring further qualitative analysis" (p. 4); the challenge for microscope projects was "gathering sufficient data to be generalisable across student characteristics, subjects and institution type" (p. 4).

Quality assurance

93 HE providers, HE institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges (FECs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, were subject to HE Review (HER) in 2015/16, the final year of the methodology (QAA, March 2017a). It was reported that just over 80 per cent of providers received satisfactory outcomes, with around 15 per cent receiving one or more commendations. A quarter of the HEIs received one or more commendations, which was a similar proportion to the 2014/15 cohort. This compared with FECs, where around 30 per cent received one or more unsatisfactory judgements, and around 15 per cent receiving one or more commendations. In QAA's (April 2017) summary of findings of HERs with alternate providers undertaken in 2015/16 (n=38), 80 per cent received a positive outcome, which was a higher proportion than in previous years. QAA concluded that, "[Alternate providers] perform better than FECs" (p. 3), though advised that "an enhanced annual monitoring process [would] scrutinise alternate providers in 2018 ahead of the OfS's framework in 2019" (p. 5).

Accelerated degrees

In a 'rapid evidence assessment' literature review by a team from the IES, on the evidence and current thinking about UG accelerated degrees as an alternative and flexible mode of study, Pollard et al. (March 2017a) noted:

- In the UK, accelerated degrees are offered by a modest number of 'modern universities'; with a focus on widening participation and "a more innovative approach to delivery" (p. 6), and private universities not restricted by the tuition fee cap. The degrees have been offered in a limited number of generally vocational subjects, and taken up by mature learners "who may be more able, motivated and proactive learners looking for a different kind of HE experience" (p. 6).
- Common negative perceptions, or misconceptions, about accelerated degrees are that they are of lower quality, offering lower quality teaching and learning, looser quality assurance and lower outcomes.
- Institutions have been reluctant to develop accelerated degrees because of: perceptions that they are costlier to develop and deliver, and do not fit well within the current funding system; staff concerns about increased workload, lack of time for preparation and wider activities, and worries about contracts; the estimated adaptations required to institutional processes; and a perceived lack of demand.
- Students are thought to be disinclined towards accelerated degrees because of: a lack of awareness of flexible study options; concerns about having a less satisfying and more limited student experience; perceptions that it would involve a heavy workload with less time for reflection and deep learning, and lead to lower outcomes; and higher living costs per year coupled with less time to do paid work alongside their studies.
- Concerns for employers are thought to be quality related, with employers placing less value on the qualification when recruiting.

© The Author(s) 2017

In the *Higher Education and Research Act 2017* (April 2017), it was confirmed that universities would be able to charge higher annual fees for accelerated degrees (p. 93).

Degree apprenticeships

In a survey of 66 HE providers, which included an institutional response from LJMU, UUK (March 2017) published evidence that supported the further development and growth of degree apprenticeships. Introduced in September 2015, they have been regarded as "open[ing] up opportunities for learners who might not have considered going to university… and work at the same time, offering a debt-free way to combine university education with invaluable work experience" (p. 5). Of the providers surveyed, 91 per cent were actively engaging with degree apprenticeships. UUK noted that there would be more than 7,600 degree apprentices by 2017/18, mostly in the areas of chartered management, digital and technology, and engineering.

Credit transfer

Pollard et al. (March 2017b) conducted a literature review on credit transfer in UK HE. Credit transfer is the mechanism that allows credit that is conferred by HE awarding bodies to be recognised, quantified and included towards the credit requirements for a programme delivered by another HE provider or between programmes offered by a HE provider. Pollard et al. note:

- Overall, the volume of literature on credit transfer is small, focusing on the technical, which largely reflects the current situation in the UK. By contrast, it is noted that there is a large volume of literature on credit transfer in North America, where practice is widespread and well established.
- The 2016 HE White Paper (*Success as a Knowledge Economy*) underlined that there is policy interest in credit transfer, as a means of promoting greater flexibility and quality in HE, and to support lifelong learning and social mobility.
- The literature suggests there are three models or purposes for credit transfer (which are not mutually exclusive): topping up (to enable a student to top-up from one qualification to another) and "regarded as a lower cost pathway to [UG] study and associated with widening participation" (p. 12); returning to learning (to enable students to return to HE or move from the workplace to HE and gain recognition for learning already undertaken), often involving formal processes of Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and/or Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL); and switching (to enable students who need or want to make a change to their programme and/or institution).
- Credit transfer is not widely used in the UK. There is little evidence of institutional practice and, with the exception of The Open University, the volume of students making use of credit transfer systems and agreements is small. The literature indicates that there is no common framework for credit transfer across the UK nations, and the ability to either accumulate or recognise. Transferring credit is reliant on the policies and practices of individual institutions "that the student has to largely navigate alone" (p. 13).
- The literature has clustered the benefits of credit transfer around three categories: learning effectiveness; flexibility and responsiveness; and resource effectiveness. Benefits include: supporting student mobility across geographies and institutions; reducing the risk of student drop-out; making HE

© The Author(s) 2017

more attractive and accessible; offering greater choice and flexibility; enabling learners to track their progress; helping institutions to create customised learning opportunities; and helping to promote and facilitate inter-institutional partnerships (as evident in progression pathways between FECs and HEIs).

- The challenges cited include: lack of incentives for HEIs to promote credit transfer owing to loss of fee income; inter-institutional variation in course content and structure; lack of consistency across the sector with individual institutions varying in their credit-related policies and practices (noted in differences in condonement and compensation of module failure, discounting poor performance in modules, the reuse and currency of credit, content of modules, and admissions processes); rigid and inflexible academic admissions timetables (whereby enrolment for most courses is typically allowed only once a year); and lack of demand.

Supporting transition

In a study by Thomas et al. (April 2017), supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, HEA and Action on Access, institutional strategies for supporting student retention were explored. The 'What Works? 2' evaluation, built on an earlier study (Thomas, 2012) and gleaned further insights from 13 UK universities, 43 discipline areas and changes over more than three years. Qualitative data is presented for each institution and, overall, it was noted (p. 28),

> *The 'What Works? 2' model of working – combining research evidence from 'What Works? 1', an extended change programme, a cross-institutional team taking action, and the use of data, evaluation and feedback – helped institutions to meet existing and emerging challenges to improve student retention and success, and generated many other benefits for students and institutions. It is recommended that other institutions seeking to develop evidence in learning and teaching and improve student experience and outcomes adopt a similar evidence-informed, whole-institution approach to implement change in complex contexts.*

In the outcomes of OFFA's (June 2017) monitoring of access agreements for 2015/16, it was reported that institutions (HEIs and FECs) were making progress in 75 per cent of access targets; 73 per cent of 'student success' targets; and 83 per cent of progression to further study or employment targets. However, the report highlighted differences in performance targets for specific disadvantaged and underrepresented groups at different stages of the student lifecycle. Whilst institutions reported most progress against targets related to ethnicity, it was noted that there remained challenges for certain BME groups, notably with regards to non-continuation, attainment and progress to employment and further study.

The Student Opportunity Allocation (SOA) is ring-fenced funding in HEFCE's teaching grant to universities and colleges, to support long-term strategic work on widening participation (WP) and hardship support. Focusing on SOA investment to 2015/16, HEFCE (June 2017) reported:

- The total HE sector expenditure on WP activities has been rising since 2010/11, when £690.7 million had been invested, compared with £883.4 million in 2015/16. Much of the growth in investment was directed towards supporting progression from HE, and in outreach work.
- Institutions spent £34.9 million on supporting students in hardship in 2015/16, a four per cent rise on the previous year. 1.9 per cent of students received hardship funds.

© The Author(s) 2017

In analysis of non-continuation rates for full-time, first degree, UK domiciled entrants to HEIs in England between 2008/09 and 2014/15, HEFCE (July 2017) noted:

- Non-continuation rates were lowest for students with high levels of attainment prior to entering higher education. Only two per cent of students with the highest entry qualifications (AAAA and AAA) did not continue in 2014/15, compared with 12 per cent of those entrants with the lowest number of entry tariff points. Higher non-continuation rates were evident with mature entrants (aged 21 or over), and despite a narrowing of the rate, at 12 per cent in 2014/15, this remained more than five percentage points greater than that for young entrants. Higher non-continuation was also evident among Black students (ten per cent in 2014/15), some way above that for other ethnic groups. By contrast, Chinese students had the lowest non-continuation rate at four per cent in 2014/15. Also noted was a sharp increase in the proportion of the most disadvantaged students no longer in HE compared to students from the most advantaged background.
- In terms of those students who transferred (i.e. who left their first degree course during the first year to start a different degree course), students with the lowest entry qualifications were roughly five times as likely to transfer as those with the highest. Data showed that the transfer rate for mature students declined by more than a third since 2008/09, while White students had the lowest rate of transfer of any ethnic group. Over the entire period, the highest transfer rates were evident for Black students.

In a survey involving 2,612 interviews, conducted among school children aged 11-16 in schools (drawn from a random sample) in England and Wales, it was shown that 74 per cent were 'likely' to go into HE, when old enough (Sutton Trust, August 2017a). This represented a three percentage point fall on the previous year, down from a high of 81 per cent in 2013, and the lowest proportion since 2009. The main reasons for not wanting to go into HE were 'not liking the idea of, or enjoying learning or studying' (70 per cent), and concerns about finance (64 per cent). The Sutton Trust (August 2017b) also revealed that financial worries were particularly pronounced in families "with low levels of affluence (66 per cent compared with 46 per cent in 'high affluence')." Further, it was reported that the proportion of pupils from 'low affluence' households (61 per cent) intending to progress to HE was the lowest in seven years.

In a statistical release from the DfE (August 2017), an estimated 24 per cent of pupils who were in receipt of free school meals (FSM) aged 15 entered HE by age 19 by 2014/15. This compared with 41 per cent of non-FSM pupils (the gap between FSM and non-FSM pupils has varied between 17 and 19 percentage points from 2005/06 and 2014/15).

Wiseman et al. (March 2017) presented findings from a study on the reasons for regional variations in HE participation. Adopting a mixed-methods approach the study, which was presented to the DfE, drew on: extensive literature concerned with progression to and participation in HE; analysis of national data; and primary qualitative research with young people (n=146), their parents (n=85), school staff (n=19) and other stakeholders (n=25). Eight wards in England (including Anfield, Liverpool) provided the geographical focus for the research. The study found that the challenges of WP in HE are not uniform across the country and that a one size fits all

© The Author(s) 2017

approach is unlikely to be appropriate for tackling them. For instance, the report authors noted that feelings and connections to the local area may influence aspiration and participation in HE in complex ways; while areas may face similar challenges and disadvantages, it was found that there were stark differences in the extent to which residents felt pride or stigmatisation by where they came from.

DfE (August 2017) estimated that 65 per cent of students who took A-level and equivalent qualifications in independent schools and colleges progressed to the most selective HE providers by age 19 by 2014/15, compared to 23 per cent of those from state-funded schools and colleges. Further, the gap between state and independent rates was shown to have increased from 42 to 43 percentage points between the 2013/14 and 2014/15 cohorts (in 2008/09 the gap was 37 percentage points).

In a report to OFFA, Crawford et al. (June 2017) analysed key points raised from interviews with staff responsible for WP in eight institutions, to understand current practice and challenges related to outreach evaluation. The report authors noted that a lack of time and resources, data (collection and analysis), getting people 'on board' with evaluation, and a lack of benchmarking and consistency across the sector, were areas where further guidance was needed. The authors focused on the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT), a monitoring and evaluation service for subscribing HE providers that "tracks engagement in outreach activities and builds evidence of future achievement to prove the value of outreach" (see http://heat.ac.uk); the study authors concluded that the application of HEAT, together with empowering staff, could support future outreach evaluation work.

OFFA also commissioned a study led by The Open University (July 2017) that outlined five case studies on outreach aimed at disadvantaged adults. Each case study (The Open University [n=2], Birkbeck University of London, University of Leeds, and University of Bristol) illuminated a different approach to adult outreach, but shared a number of findings. To be effective, the report authors recommended that outreach with adults:

- Needs to build confidence though supported small steps and tasters of HE;
- Has to be delivered in a flexible way, at low cost to the student, and with low-risk, and to be as personalised as possible;
- Needs to bridge the informal-formal learning divide, and offer clear pathways; and
- Would benefit from countering "the symbolism of adults feeling that 'did not belong' [or that] HE was 'out of reach'" (p. 8)

Sanders et al. (March 2017), of the Behavioural Insights Team at the DfE, published evidence from a study conceived under the coalition government, and began in 2013. In this large scale randomised controlled trial, letters written by university students from a similar background were sent to high achieving young people (students who scored more than 367 points on their best eight GCSEs and went to schools which typically sent more than 20 per cent of their high achieving students to their nearest HE institution) during their first year in sixth form, and encouraged them to aim higher in life. As part of the study, 11,104 young people, across 300 schools, took part. Students either received a letter from a male former student, sent to their school in November (and addressed to the student), or a letter from a female former student, sent to their home in April, or both letters, or neither letter. Outcomes

© The Author(s) 2017

were tracked through UCAS applications up to two years later (thus allowing for students to apply during a gap year). The study authors found that:

- There were no statistically significant effects on students' likelihood of applying to university overall;
- Receiving both letters significantly increased the chance of applying to a Russell Group university (from 19.9 per cent to 23.2 per cent); and
- Receiving both letters significantly increased the chance of receiving and accepting an offer from a Russell Group university (from 8.5 per cent to 11.4 per cent).

UCAS (June 2017) published guidance and information on pathways enabling students the opportunity to progress to a bachelor's degree in an incremental way. Foundation years, foundation degrees, Higher National qualifications, and higher end degree apprenticeships were at the heart of their review. As well as outlining the purpose of each pathway, the document highlighted its status and stage of development across all UK nations, key challenges for each pathway (with reference to availability and access, progression and recognition, and WP), and suggested actions. This guidance was preceded by results from a survey of schools and colleges in England, registered with UCAS. The study revealed that 22 per cent of respondents (n=132) reported that they did not feel universities and colleges had a good understanding of vocational qualifications (UCAS, March 2017).

Further, BTECs as a pathway to HE was critiqued in a report to HEPI by Kelly (February 2017). Among the recommendations was the need for universities to consider ways of meeting the requirements of students, with applied backgrounds, to transition more effectively to more theoretical, exam-assessed study.

Equality and diversity

In Neve and Hillman's (June 2017) survey, there were stark differences in perceptions of VFM of HE among different ethnic groups. Among UK domiciled students, 36 per cent of White students thought UK HE offered 'good value'. This compared with 33 per cent of Black (n=380), 29 per cent of Chinese (n=209), 29 per cent of Mixed (n=564), and 24 per cent of Asian students (n=1,406). The HEA/HEPI study also found that Black students were more likely to be self-critical when reflecting on whether their experiences had met expectations, whilst Chinese students were more likely to cite concerns about a lack of support for independent study, and Asian students (not including Chinese) feeling that their lecturers were inaccessible. Asian students were more likely to live at home during study and, with some disadvantages in terms of isolation, tended to report lower gains in learning.

In a report to HEFCE, the ECU (April 2017) highlighted some critical success factors that resulted in 'sector leading and innovative practice in advancing equality and diversity'. Over 120 individual submissions were received from 49 English HE institutions and the following was noted:

- Embedding collaboration and consultation with different bodies within the institution (students, alumni, academic staff, professional support staff, unions and equality networks) was key in advancing equality and diversity. However, the strongest initiatives were thought to be those that looked beyond the institution and involved collaborative working and information sharing with external organisations (e.g. charities, support agencies, the police, the NHS,

© The Author(s) 2017

employers, and primary and secondary schools).
- Communication was found to be a major factor and the study highlighted those initiatives that went beyond the use of webpages, newsletters and mailing-lists to utilise videos, social media and web-based software.
- The most effective initiatives made good use of available data to identify equality challenges and monitor progress or success. Evidence was provided of innovative uses of data dashboards and data collection to assist with this.
- In many of the initiatives selected, there was often a high level of visible leadership which was balanced with an 'embedded' approach that ensured some local ownership of cultural change within a department, faculty or team.
- Effective practice was underpinned by the use of networks that served as tools for sharing good practice, advocacy, consultation and celebration.
- Most initiatives were informed by consultation and research, with examples of varied methods of stakeholder engagement. This not only included formal consultation exercises, but also in the reviewing of feedback forms, application of surveys, and focus groups as well as through the seeking of knowledge and ideas from staff or student networks.
- Resourcing (e.g. through the provision of central funds for research leave), investment in people (e.g. hiring dedicated personnel for administrative support), and 'low resource/high impact' support through existing projects (or networks) underpinned many of the initiatives audited.
- Some initiatives started at a departmental level, or were piloted within specific operational or subject areas before being implemented across an institution. This provided an important opportunity for learning and development on a small scale before the implementation of larger scale interventions.
- The best initiatives were those that were clear in their aims and objectives, and demonstrated an awareness of an institution's wider objectives or framework of equality and diversity.

In Sutton Trust's (August 2017b) poll of school children aged 11-16, girls (77 per cent) were more likely than boys (70 per cent) to expect to enter higher education; and BME young people (82 per cent) were more likely than their White peers (71 per cent).

In HESA's (August 2017) longitudinal analysis of those who graduated in 2012/13, 66.1 per cent of Black (UK domiciled only) leavers were in full-time paid work, compared with 74.5 per cent of White leavers, 72.6 per cent of Asian leavers, and 71.6 per cent of Other (including mixed) leavers. Black leavers were also more likely to be assumed to be unemployed (5.9 per cent), compared with White (1.7 per cent), Asian (4.2 per cent) and Other (4.6 per cent) leavers. In terms of destinations for those known to have a disability (UK and other EU domiciled), 66.3 per cent were in full-time paid work, compared with 74.5 per cent 'no known disability): four per cent of leavers known to have a disability were assumed to be unemployed (with a further 4.2 per cent 'not available for work), compared with 2.1 per cent of leavers with no known disability (with a further 2.9 per cent not available for employment).

Student wellbeing

Neves and Hillman (June 2017) identified lower levels of wellbeing among student respondents to their survey, when compared with the national population data, collated by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Students reported lower life satisfaction, life

© The Author(s) 2017

worth, happiness and higher anxiety, compared with young adults aged 20-24.

Unite Students and HEPI's (July 2017) *Reality Check* study of applicants' mental health and wellbeing painted a "mixed and ambiguous" picture (p. 14). 71 per cent of applicants felt satisfied with their lives, felt supported, and optimistic about the future. However, applicants who identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual (LGB) or 'Other' sexuality, those with an existing mental health condition, and applicants from lower socio-economic groups reported feeling less satisfied with their lives than their peers. Higher levels of anxiety were also evident in responses from care leavers. Peer support was regarded as the most important first line of support anticipated by applicants and, among university staff, lecturers and tutors were most likely to be approached (as opposed to university counselling services or a GP).

In relation to social integration, 47 per cent admitted having a degree of anxiety about living with people they have never met. Respondents from lower socio-economic groups and those who identified as LGB or 'Other' sexuality, reported feeling less confident about making friends and felt more anxious about living with strangers. In Neves and Hillman's (June 2017) data on wellbeing, students who identified themselves as LGB, Asexual or 'Other' (n=2,118), when compared with Straight students (n=11,480) were found to have lower life satisfaction, life worth, happiness, and higher levels of anxiety.

Reality Check respondents recognised the role of accommodation in social integration, and the importance of living with like-minded students. Most wanted to see social events during the first week, or throughout the year organised by students, and student-led clubs and societies in student accommodation.

To demonstrate how universities have been responding to their duty to develop an effective response to harassment, hate crime and sexual violence, UUK (July 2017) published 32 case studies submitted by HE providers and students' unions. The themes addressed included: ensuring an institution-wide approach; preventing incidents; reporting and support processes; recording incidents; staff and student training; sustaining external relationships; drawing on good practice; and dealing with online harassment and hate crime. The report noted that, "universities and students' unions [were] continuing to evolve their thinking and practice following the publication of [the NUS's (2016a) *Hidden Marks* and 'Stand by Me' (NUS, 2016b) campaign] in October 2016" (p. 3).

Students and public engagement

In a HEFCE-commissioned study, York Consulting (Wilson et al., January 2017) sought to explore the relationship between public engagement (PE) and the student experience across a sample of ten English HE providers. The study focussed on a small number of specific projects to highlight the range of activity taking place. The authors found that public engagement with research (PER) was relatively well-developed, but public engagement with teaching and learning (PETL) was less clear. PETL was viewed as still evolving and patchy, depending on the nature of the faculty. Whilst PER engaged PG students, PETL activity was more likely to involve UG students. The HE providers analysed in this study reported on a range of areas in the PE space that merited further development. These included: the recruitment of senior staff to lead on PE; increased PE activity for UG students; increased activity in targeted areas (such as community projects); scheduling of PE activities to improve both planning and awareness; establishing PE as an explicit element of staff reward and

© The Author(s) 2017

recognition processes; and implementing systems for monitoring and evidencing PE activities.

Technology-enhanced learning and digital capability

In a report for HEPI, Davies et al. (March 2017) of Jisc, put forward the following recommendations:

- HE providers should ensure that the effective use of technology for learning and teaching is built into curriculum design processes and, to support this, the sector should develop an evidence and knowledge base on what works in technology-enhanced learning to help inform decisions, and disseminate these insights to the rest of the sector;
- HE providers should give consideration to learning analytics, whilst researchers should consider how the "learning analytics big dataset" can be harnessed to provide new insights into teaching and learning;
- Digital technology should be recognised as a key tool for HE providers responding to the TEF: providers should be expected to include information on how they are improving teaching through the use of digital technology in their submissions to the TEF; and
- HE providers should ensure the digital agenda is being led at senior levels: digital capability should be reflected in recruitment, staff development, appraisal, reward and recognition.

UCISA (May 2017) published results of their Digital Capabilities Survey, a tool that benchmarked strategy and practice, and examined how UK universities were developing staff and students "to perform efficiently and effectively in a digital environment." There were a total of 159 institutional responses with findings arranged by: defining digital capabilities; the strategic context of digital capability development; how institutions developed digital capabilities of staff and students; and how, in the context of the withdrawal of Disabled Student Allowance, institutions were addressing accessibility and financial differences.

Jisc's *Student Digital Experience Tracker* explored how students use and feel about the digital tools, environment and the support institutions provide: there were over 22,000 student participants from 74 organisations (comprising largely HEIs and FECs in the UK) (Newman and Beetham, June 2017). The findings indicated that students were generally positive about the use of digital technologies in their learning. However, the use of digital activities within courses was not as prevalent as was expected, with technology more commonly used for convenience rather than to support more effective pedagogy. The study also found that these results raised questions about the level of digital skills awareness within both HEIs and FECs: 80 per cent of HE learners felt that digital skills would be important for their chosen career but only half of all respondents agreed that their course prepared them well for the digital workplace. This, as articulated in the report, raised questions about the provision and/or signposting of services to students that supported the development of digital skills and capabilities. To further support the conclusions of the *Tracker* findings, reflecting on a survey of 1,001 post-16 learners in Scotland, Jisc (May 2017) reported that nearly two-thirds of respondents thought that staff needed to improve their digital skills. A similar proportion also felt that students needed to be taught more digital skills in order to prepare them for the workplace. 54 per cent of respondents thought that technology was

© The Author(s) 2017

developing faster than schools, colleges or universities could cope with.

GO-Science, working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and industry representatives reported on a summit on the future of digital skills (Foresight, GO-Science, July 2017). In recognising that digital skills were required for basic citizenship and engagement with society, and could impact the individual (e.g. time, employment and earnings benefits), the summit concluded that there was still uncertainty regarding the nature of future technologies and the digital skills needed to use them. Among suggestions for further research was how learning technologies were improving the digital skills of students in HE.

The Smith Review

In March 2016, Professor Sir Adrian Smith was asked to undertake, on behalf of Her Majesty's Treasury and DfE, a review of 16-18 mathematics education. These had been prompted by two related issues: first, the increasing importance of mathematical and quantitative skills to the future workforce; and secondly, by comparison with competitor economies, the low percentage of students in England continuing mathematics post-16. In particular, the Smith Review considered the case for, and feasibility of, all students continuing some form of mathematics until 18 (with mathematics being interpreted in its broadest sense, to include quantitative skills, statistics and data analysis). Whilst the review concluded that England did not have the range of pathways available, or the capacity, to deliver the required volume and range of teaching to support most or all students continuing mathematics until 18, it did shed light on students transitioning to HE, and made two recommendations that included HE:

- With the exception of mathematics degrees, more than 40 per cent of English 19 year olds studying STEM subjects in UK universities do not have a mathematics qualification beyond GCSE. The review noted that this increases to over 80 per cent for students on non-STEM degree courses (e.g. Business and Management, Economics, Geography, and Sociology), many of which have a significant quantitative element (from applied statistics to advanced mathematical modelling). Referencing other studies, it was posited that, "A lack of confidence and anxiety about mathematics/statistics are problems for many university students; and many have done little or no mathematics pre-university for at least two years" (p. 36). Thus, by continuing to study mathematics students would be better prepared for a wide range of courses in HE, giving them confidence in tackling the mathematical and statistical content of their university course.
- The review's two recommendations, referencing HE and the roles of universities, included: issuing guidance to OFFA to continue to encourage universities to support 16-18 mathematics education in the context of access for, and success of, students from disadvantages backgrounds; and for the DfE "to encourage universities to consider specialism in 16-18 mathematics if establishing new schools, sponsoring existing schools or providing other support to schools, particularly in local areas where Level 3 mathematics participation and achievement is poor" (p. 11).

© The Author(s) 2017

Employability and graduate outcomes

The Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) in the UK, for 2015/16, revealed (HESA, June 2017):

- The percentage of leavers in further study was 15 per cent, the highest point recorded in the five years from 2011/12 to 2015/16. Those who studied Law, Physical Sciences, and Historical and Philosophical Studies had the highest percentage of leavers in further study.
- The percentage of leavers in unemployment was five per cent, a gradual decrease since 2011/12 (where it stood at seven per cent). The highest percentages of those who were unemployed were among those who studied Computer Science, Mass Communications and Documentation, Mathematical Sciences, Physical Sciences, and Engineering and Technology;
- The percentage of leavers in UK work was 67 per cent, down from a peak of 68 per cent in 2013/14 and 2014/15, (although the decline was assumed to be absorbed in 'further study'). Veterinary Science, Medicine and Dentistry, and Subjects Allied to Medicine had the highest percentage in work.

In HESA's (August 2017) longitudinal survey of information about the activities and perspectives of UK and EU domiciled graduates who completed their studies in 2012/13 (n=107,340), 73.6 per cent were in full-time paid work (up 0.5 per cent compared with 2010/11, and the highest proportion since 2004/05 when 76.1 per cent were in full-time paid work). Wide variations in employment rate by subject area were evident, suggesting differential rates of movement into further study. For example, a higher percentage of those who studied Biological Sciences and Physical Sciences continued in education, whereas graduates from Education, and Engineering and Technology tended to move into work. Those graduating with a lower second and third class/pass were more likely to be unemployed (3.8 per cent and 4.9 per cent respectively) or 'not available for employment' (2.8 per cent and 3.5 per cent respectively); 1.2 per cent of those with a first class degree were assumed to be unemployed, while the rate for those with an upper second was 2.1 per cent.

HESA (July 2017a) also published DLHE results from alternative providers for 2015/16 and recorded: 65 per cent of leavers as being in UK work; 57 per cent of foundation degree leavers entering further study; and, variation in levels of unemployment, depending on the level of qualification obtained (at 11 per cent, HND/HND leavers recorded the highest rate of unemployment).

Applicants, who responded to Unite Students and HEPI's (July 2017) *Reality Check* study, expressed high expectations of their university helping them to plan and achieve their career ambitions. 78 per cent of respondents expected greater career-planning support at university than their school however, when contrasted with Unite Students' Student Insight Survey 2017, just 61 per cent of students taking part reported that this was the case. Overall, 77 per cent of those surveyed had a specific career planned and those applying to STEM courses were more optimistic about their job prospects than those applying to other courses (71 per cent compared to 63 per cent of Arts applicants, and 62 per cent of Humanities applicants).

Based on 2016 data, from the ONS Labour Force Survey, covering labour market conditions for English domiciled graduates and postgraduates (PG), the DfE (April 2017) provided analysis on the employment and earnings outcomes of graduates by their specific characteristics (including: age group, gender, ethnicity, disability status, degree class, subject group, occupation and sector

© The Author(s) 2017

of employment). Highlights in the 2016 data included:

- 88 and 87.3 per cent of PGs and graduates respectively, were employed. This compared with 70.4 per cent of non-graduates who were in employment. The unemployment rate for non-graduates was 5.9 per cent, double that of graduates at 2.9 per cent;
- Working age (aged 16-64) graduates earned on average £9,500 more than non-graduates, while PGs earned on average £6,000 more than graduates;
- Male and female graduates had similar unemployment rates within the working age population, but male graduates had a higher employment rate and lower inactivity rate than their female counterparts;
- Black graduates had lower high-skilled employment rates, higher unemployment rates, lower inactivity rates and lower median salaries than White graduates and Asian graduates.
- Young graduates that achieved a first in their degree earned £2,000 and £3,000 more, on average, than those who achieved an upper and lower second, respectively.
- Graduates that studied STEM subjects, on average, had higher employment rates, greater high-skilled employment rates, lower unemployment rates and higher median salaries than the graduate population as a whole.
- Within the working age population, Law, Economics and Management (LEM) graduates earned, on average, £1,000 more than STEM graduates.

In an examination of trend data from 2011/12 to 2015/16 of young first degree graduates (aged 20 to 22 in their graduation year) in full-time employment six months after graduating, the DfE (August 2017) estimated that 79 per cent of those from the most advantaged backgrounds before entering HE were in the most advantaged occupational groups after graduating in 2015/16. The gap between the less advantaged and most advantaged in the most advantaged occupational groups rose from four percentage points in 2011/12 to six percentage points in 2015/16.

The Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) dataset is a new index that focuses on the employment and earnings outcomes in the tax year for those who graduated with a UG degree in 2008/09, 2010/11 and 2012/13. The DfE (June 2017) presented findings for 23 subject areas and split by HEI:

- Some subjects had a wider range of median earnings among institutions than others. For example, all institutions offering Medicine and Dentistry had median earnings, five years after graduation, of between £40,300 and £49,200. By contrast, the median earnings for institutions offering Business and Administration showed wider variation, ranging from £19,400 to £71,700. Half of the providers had median earnings between £23,100 and £31,300 (p. 10).
- With the exception of English Studies, male median earnings exceeded female median earnings at more than 50 per cent of institutions offering that subject. In 12 subjects, male earnings were greater than female earnings at more than 75 per cent of institutions (p. 12).

Shury et al. (March 2017) presented analysis of the behaviours, factors and characteristics that determine graduate outcomes. Examining a cohort of UK domiciled students who completed their full-time UG study in 2011/12 and were aged 18-21 at the outset of their study, the study combined data from the DLHE survey with data from a follow-up survey conducted two years later. The cohort consisted of 7,500 students drawn from 27 institutions. The

© The Author(s) 2017

study authors highlighted three factors that were most important in guiding graduates to a positive outcome (i.e. employment or further study):

- Undertaking paid work while at university or in the six months immediately after;
- Focusing job searches exclusively on graduate level jobs and making many applications while still studying; and
- Having a career plan upon leaving university.

Internationalisation

Using International Student Barometer (ISB) data, incorporating feedback of over 137,000 international students in the UK and key competitor nations (e.g. USA, Canada, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands), UUKi (June 2017) summarised many positive experiences, including:

- 91 per cent of international students across all levels of study (UG, PG taught [PGT] and PG research [PGR]) reported high levels of satisfaction of studying in the UK, ranking the UK first among competitor nations; and
- The reputation of the institution was considered the most important factor in international students' decision to choose the UK at UG and PGT levels (93 per cent and 95 per cent respectively). For PGR students, the most important factor was the quality of research at their chosen institution (97 per cent).

However, as noted in the *Student Academic Experience Survey,* perceptions of VFM from UG students from outside the EU on UK HE, were "particularly low… among the subset of student from East and South East Asia" (n=287) (Neves and Hillman, June 2017).

The NUS (April 2017) examined the views of UK students of their international peers. Over 4,600 students responded to the survey, three-quarters of which were UG students; 43 per cent of all respondents were first year UGs. A majority of the respondents were based in England, with Wales (four per cent) and Scotland (two per cent) also represented in the findings (the response rate from students in Northern Ireland was considered too low to derive generalisable conclusions). The study revealed:

- Those studying STEM subjects were significantly more likely than those studying other subjects to have the opportunity to study and socialise with international students. UG students were significantly more likely than PG students to study and socialise with international students at sports clubs and societies, in halls of residences and on campus, whilst PG students were significantly more likely than UG students to study and socialise with international students off campus.
- 78 per cent of UK students either agreed or strongly agreed that entry requirements to a course should be the same for both UK and international students. Comments from students revealed strong support for the idea that English language should be an important aspect of entry requirements.
- Three-quarters of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that international students should have the right to work in the UK after graduation.
- When asked to consider the impact if there was a 50 per cent reduction in international student numbers on their course, PG students (especially on STEM courses) were significantly more likely to be concerned, indicating that the quality and value of the course would be decreased, with over half fearing that there would be less money available for

© The Author(s) 2017

course resources. Both UG and PG students felt strongly that they would have a less diverse cultural experience.
- Students from Scotland and Wales shared similar views to their peers in the rest of the UK, but felt more strongly than most other parts of the UK that removing international students from their courses would lower the quality and value of the course.
- Students broadly agreed that international students made a telling financial contribution to their institution, local areas and national economy, in the same way as local students did.

Neves and Hillman (June 2017) asked UK domiciled students on how much they felt they had benefited from studying alongside learners from outside the UK. The findings indicated that only 36 per cent saw clear advantages of interaction with international students, whilst a third were neutral and the rest (32 per cent) did not see benefits.

Internationalisation: outward mobility

As set out in the Bologna Process, European Higher Education Area (EHEA) governments and HE institutions earmarked a collective ambition that would see 20 per cent of graduates to have undertaken a study or training period abroad by 2020. To meet this goal, many countries shifted their focus from the number of students participating in mobility to the accessibility of these opportunities, exploring who participates and how students from underrepresented groups could be supported. Allinson (August 2017), in a report published by UUKi, provided a picture of mobility participation rates and underrepresented students (UK domiciled, first degree students regardless of their year of study), across a three year period from 2013 to 2016). The project focused on five groups underrepresented in outward mobility: students from a low socio-economic background; students from low participation neighbourhoods; BME (Black or Minority Ethnic) students; students with a disability; and students who are care leavers:

- All of the target demographic groups were underrepresented in mobility numbers, but even lower rates of participation were noted with students having overlapping disadvantages. Short-term mobility (one to four weeks) was considered to be most attractive to all five groups.
- In 2015/16, students from higher socio-economic backgrounds were 65 per cent more likely to participate in outward mobility than their peers from lower socio-economic backgrounds (2.5 per cent participation rate compared to 1.5 per cent).
- In 2015/16, the participation rate was 1.8 per cent for students from areas with high participation in HE and one per cent for students from low participation areas.
- In 2015/16, BME students represented 22.2 per cent of the student cohort but only 17.6 per cent of the outwardly mobile group. However, it was noted that there were different rates of participation within the BME demographic. In 2015/16, Asian or Asian British (Indian), Chinese and Other (including mixed) ethnic groups had participation rates equal to or above the HE sector average of 1.7 per cent. Asian or Asian British (Bangladeshi) students and Asian or Asian British (Pakistani) students had the lowest participation rates for the demographic: 0.6 per cent and 0.8 per cent respectively.
- In 2015/16, 1.5 per cent of students with a disability participated in outward mobility. This represented an increase from 1.1 per cent in 2013/14, though still below the HE sector average for the year (1.7 per cent).

© The Author(s) 2017

- In 2015/16, the participation rate amongst care leavers was one per cent.

The significance of outward mobility, as part of a UG programme, on individuals was underlined in a report by Richard et al. (March 2017) for UUKi. In an analysis of the Student Record and DLHE results of the graduates of 2014/15, 16,165 were identified as being mobile at some point during their course. The report authors noted a correlation between outward mobility and improved academic and employment outcomes:

- Graduates who were mobile during their degree were less likely to be unemployed (3.7 per cent compared to 4.9 per cent), and more likely to have earned a first class or upper second class degree (80.1 per cent compared to 73.6 per cent) and be in further study (15 per cent compared to 14 per cent). Further, those in work were more likely to be in a graduate level job (76.4 per cent compared to 69.9 per cent) and earn five per cent more than their non-mobile peers.
- On average, graduates from more disadvantaged backgrounds who were mobile during their degree earned 6.1 per cent more, and those in work were more likely to be in a graduate level job (80.2 per cent compared to 74.7 per cent) than their non-mobile peers. Black graduates who were mobile were 70 per cent less likely to be unemployed (4.6 per cent compared to 7.8 per cent) than their non-mobile peers. Asian graduates who were mobile earned on average eight per cent more and were 71 per cent less likely to be unemployed (7.7 per cent compared to 4.5 per cent) than their non-mobile peers.

Richard et al. also examined who went abroad. 32.5 per cent of students who were mobile studied languages; mobility rates were also especially high among those engaged in Medicine and Dentistry. Erasmus was the principal source of mobility take-up, followed by provider-led schemes. It was also reported that mobile students were four times more likely than non-mobile students to work outside the UK, six months after graduation.

The UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility 2017-20 was outlined by UUKi (April 2017). It emphasised the aim of doubling the percentage of UK domiciled, full-time, first degree students, who undertake international placements as part of their HE programmes, from 6.6 per cent in 2014 to 13.2 per cent in 2020.

The Erasmus+ (E+) has been *in situ* since 2014, with the aim of encouraging European outward student mobility. UUKi (March 2017a) carried out an interim evaluation of the programme, and published headline data from a semi-structured survey, that elicited 37 responses from England, ten from Scotland, and three from Wales (50 in total). The results indicated:

- A continuing commitment to E+, and recognition for opportunities to support staff and student mobility and the partnerships developed with institutions in other countries for other work (such as collaborative research). Just 4.3 per cent of respondents claimed their institutional commitment to E+ had decreased compared with almost 60 per cent indicating theirs had increased.
- Concerns were raised in relation to the high levels of administration associated with the programme, as well as Brexit and uncertainty surrounding the UK's future participation in E+. Respondents felt that without E+, institutions would experience a drop in mobility, risk losing the international dimensions of UK campuses, hinder the establishment of international partnerships, particularly with regard to staff mobility. (A more nuanced study, prepared for UUK, was

© The Author(s) 2017

carried out by the UKTPO (April 2017) that projected how free trade agreements could impact on the position of UK HE post-Brexit).
- Recommendations for innovations for any future programmes included introducing short-term mobility and more non-credit bearing opportunities which would support, in particular, those students from underrepresented social groups.

PhD outward mobility was investigated in a focus group comprising students (n=10) enrolled at UK universities, at different stages in their studies and with different mobility experiences during their PhD programme, or were considering mobility (UUKi, March 2017b). Participants perceived outward mobility to result in better networking opportunities (contributing to collaborative research), impacting on personal growth (encouraging students to 'get out of their comfort zone') and other soft skills. However, numerous perceived challenges and barriers were identified, including: funding, safety (in some parts of the world), lack of institutional support or encouragement, time constraints and pressures to complete PhD research, personal circumstances, language barriers and cultural attitudes, and the ease of conducting research abroad (e.g. using labs which were not to the same standard as those used in the UK).

Internationalisation: transnational education

In a report prepared by the Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) on transnational education (TNE), Mellors-Bourne (July 2017) reflected on in-depth interview data, with a stratified sample of alumni who had studied on a UK TNE programme, to highlight its wider benefits to the UK. TNE is a provision of education for students based in a country other than that within which the awarding institution is located and can include: international branch campuses, where there is physical presence of the UK recognised body; distance/online learning, either unsupported or supported by an overseas partner; or collaborative provision, offered in partnership with an overseas partner institution (where students are registered with the UK or the overseas partner) (see also Smith, June 2017: 6-7). Amongst Mellors-Bourne's findings, it was noted:

- The overwhelming majority of alumni had chosen a TNE programme based on general, rather than specific, career-related motivations, and very pragmatically. Studying in the UK, whilst considered a prestigious option, was unachievable for many, owing to financial and personal constraints. TNE programmes thus offered an achievable means to participate in UK HE and obtain a UK degree qualification, which was perceived to be of higher value to them, and their future employers, than other local alternatives.
- The perceptions from those who studied through distance learning and at international branch campuses were consistently very positive and satisfaction levels high. By contrast, there was greater variation in the perceptions of those who studied on collaborative programmes, amongst whom "a small but significant minority" (p. 6), particularly at UG level, reported a negative experience.
- The content of distance learning courses was particularly highly regarded, as were both the content and facilities utilised in international campus provision.
- Perceptions of the quality of teaching within collaborative programmes were mixed, from highly professional to very poor (although the median position was broadly positive). Students reported

© The Author(s) 2017

dissatisfaction with the lack of direct involvement of UK in many collaborative arrangements.
- Many alumni had successfully obtained their first job or experienced career progression, which they believed was at least partly contingent on achievement of their UK degree qualification. An improvement in English skills was reported as a key outcome and benefit for participants.

In experimental statistics revealed by the DfE (July 2017), it was estimated that UK HE TNE income increased by 56 per cent (£0.2 billion) between 2010 and 2014. Focusing specifically on: quality assurance and enhancement; the logistics of TNE; learning, teaching, and assessment; and relationship building, the HEA released a toolkit aimed at providing guidance and checklists to inform reflection about TNE (Smith, June 2017).

HE workforce

UCEA (July 2017) published results from its survey of recruitment and retention, The Higher Education Workforce Survey 2017. A total of 71 UK institutional responses were received (46 per cent of the HE workforce) and interviews were carried out with ten senior HR managers. Three key challenges were highlighted in the report (p. 44):

- "Securing a consistent pipeline for academic appointments in STEM subjects". Outside of STEM, Economics and Business Studies presented the most difficulties. International recruitment was cited as the most common method of addressing these issues; the report advised of the need for "an appropriate mix of international and domestic talent";
- "Ensuring adequate investment in and development of the existing workforce, particularly to increase the number of early career staff [able to] transition to lecturer roles"; and
- "Understanding the impact of the end of the default retirement age and how best to manage a multi-generational workforce." It was noted that there had been a slight increase in the proportion of staff aged over 50, but considerable growth in the 'over 65' population compared to a decade ago.

At the time of the survey, which was administered in May 2017, it was further noted that the UK's intention of leaving the EU had not had a dramatic effect on the academic workforce in terms of data.

In the *Student Academic Experience Survey*, UG students were asked to rank the importance of different characteristics of teaching staff, and compare this to whether they felt staff had demonstrated these qualities. Continuous professional development in teaching was ranked by students as being particularly important, but not consistently demonstrated. At the other end of the scale, being a leading or active researcher was less critical to the student, despite being amply demonstrated by teaching staff (Neves and Hillman, June 2017).

The Royal Society, Royal Academy of Engineering, Royal Society of Biology and The Academy of Medical Sciences commissioned ECU to design and implement the 2016 version of the Athena Survey of Science, Engineering and Technology (ASSET). This assessed the state of the association between gender and experiences, expectations and perceptions of the workplace among STEMM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics Medicine) academics (Aldercotte at al., May 2017). The final weighted sample size was 4,869 respondents (2,495 males: 2,374 female) of which 639 identified as BME, 305 self-identified as LGB, and 862 reported having disclosed as disabled. A majority of the respondents were aged between 31 and

© The Author(s) 2017

60 (n=3,496), 401 were 30 and under, and 925 were 61 and over.

On average, female STEMM academics reported having significantly: more teaching and administrative duties, with less recognition for these efforts; less time to devote to research; additional caring responsibilities; and fewer training opportunities and more barriers to training. In contrast, male STEMM academics were significantly more likely to enjoy: a formally assigned mentor; opportunities to sit on important departmental committees; and access to senior staff. 75.5 per cent of female respondents thought it was easier for a man to get a senior post in their department, while 47.3 per cent of male respondents did not think there was an advantage for either gender. Female respondents felt that male respondents had an advantage in the allocation of tasks and resources related to professional development (e.g. receipt of mentoring, positive feedback from managers, involvement in promotion decisions) and markers of esteem (e.g. invitations to conferences, recognition of intellectual contributions). Significantly more men were formally promoted to their current post (13.5 per cent) or explicitly encouraged to apply for promotion (59.7 per cent) than women (9.1 per cent and 48.8 per cent respectively).

The report authors found that the disadvantages were compounded when gender intersected with other protected characteristics. For example, three per cent of LGB women were professors, compared with 8.8 per cent of LGB men, 9.1 per cent of heterosexual women, and 18.3 per cent of heterosexual men. Four per cent of BME women reported that an obstructive line manager had blocked their access to training required for career development, compared with 6.6 per cent of White women, six per cent of BME men, and 3.7 per cent of White men.

Manfredi et al. (March 2017) undertook a study for the LFHE on the role of search firms in relation to the appointment process for senior roles. In particular, it identified actions to support HEIs to achieve greater gender and BME diversity in these roles.

© The Author(s) 2017

References

Aldercotte, A., Guyan, K., Lawson, J., Neave, S. and Altorjai, S. (May 2017) *ASSET 2016: Experiences of Gender Equality in STEMM Academia and their Intersections with Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Disability and Age,* London: Equality Challenge Unit, retrieved from: http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ECU_ASSET-2016-report_April-2017.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Allinson, K. (August 2017) *Widening Participation in UK Outward Student Mobility: A Picture of Participation,* London: Universities UK International, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/widening-participation-in-uk-outward-student-mobility.pdf?utm_source=UUK+Bulletin&utm_campaign=ae48122ddb-UUK_Bulletin_11_August_2017&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_99e42a5336-ae48122ddb-100138001 (accessed August 2017)

Belfield, C., Britton, J., Dearden, L. and van der Erve, L. (July 2017) 'Higher education funding in England: past, present and options for the future' (IFS Briefing Note BN211), retrieved from: https://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/bns/BN211.pdf (accessed July 2017)

The Conservative Party (May 2017) *Forward Together – Our Plan for a Stronger Britain and Prosperous Future: The Conservative and Unionist Manifesto 2017,* London: The Conservative Party, retrieved from: https://www.conservatives.com/manifesto (accessed June 2017)

Crawford, C., Dytham, S. and Naylor, R. (June 2017) *Improving the Evaluation of Outreach: Interview Report,* OFFA, retrieved from: https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/OFFA-Interview-report.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Davies, S., Mullan, J. and Feldman, P. (March 2017) *Rebooting Learning for the Digital Age: What Next for Technology-enhanced Higher Education* (HEPI Report 93), Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute, retrieved from: http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Hepi_Rebooting-learning-for-the-digital-age-Report-93-20_01_17Web.pdf (accessed July 2017)

DfE (April 2017) *Graduate Labour Market Statistics 2016,* London: Department for Education, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/610805/GLMS_2016_v2.pdf (accessed August 2017)

DfE (June 2017) 'Employment and earnings outcomes of higher education graduates by subject and institution: experimental statistics using the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data' (SFR 18/2017), retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/619512/SFR_18_2017_LEO_mainText.pdf (accessed July 2017)

DfE (July 2017) *UK Revenue from Education Related Exports and Transnational Education Activity 2010-2014: Research Report,* London: Department for Education, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630741/UK_Revenue_from_Educational_Exports_2010-14.pdf (accessed July 2017)

DfE (August 2017) 'Widening participation in higher education, England, 2014/15 age cohort' (SFR 39/2017), retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/635103/SFR39-2017-MainText.pdf (accessed August 2017)

© The Author(s) 2017

ECU (April 2017) 'Findings: sector-leading and innovative practice in advancing equality and diversity', retrieved from: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2017/Sector-leading,and,innovative,practice,in,advancing,equality,and,diversity/2017_edpractice.PDF (accessed July 2017)

Foresight, GO-Science (July 2017) *Evidence from the Lifetime Learning in the Digital Age Summit: Future of Skills and Lifelong Learning Workshop Report,* London: Government Office for Science, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627690/Skills_and_lifelong_learning_-_learning_in_the_digital_age_-_CLEAN.pdf (accessed July 2017)

The Green Party (May 2017) *The Green Party for a Confident and Caring Britain,* London: The Green Party, retrieved from: https://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/gp2017/greenguaranteepdf.pdf (accessed July 2017)

HEFCE (June 2017) 'Monitoring outcomes of the Student Opportunity Allocation 2015/16', retrieved from: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/2017/201707/HEFCE2017_07.pdf (accessed July 2017)

HEFCE (July 2017a) 'TEF outcomes', retrieved from: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/TEFOutcomes/ (accessed July 2017)

HEFCE (July 2017b) 'Non-continuation rates: trends and profiles', retrieved from: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/analysis/ncr/ (accessed July 2017)

HEPI (May 2017) 'Students support Labour but don't trust them on fees, according to HEPI/YouthSight poll', retrieved from: http://www.hepi.ac.uk/2017/05/04/4081/ (accessed September 2017)

HESA (June 2017) 'Destinations of leavers from higher education in the United Kingdom for the academic year 2015/16' (SFR245), retrieved from: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/29-06-2017/sfr245-destinations-of-leavers (accessed July 2017)

HESA (July 2017a) 'Destinations of undergraduate leavers from higher education at alternative providers in England 2015/16' (SFR246), retrieved from: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/news/13-07-2017/sfr246-ap-destinations-of-leavers (accessed July 2017)

HESA (July 2017b) 'Employment of leavers summary: UK performance indicators 2015/16', retrieved from: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/performance-indicators/employment (accessed July 2017)

HESA (August 2017) 'Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (2012 to 2013) longitudinal survey', retrieved from: https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/publications/long-destinations-2012-13 (accessed August 2017)

Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (April 2017), Chapter 29, Norwich: The Stationery Office, retrieved from: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2017/29/pdfs/ukpga_20170029_en.pdf (accessed June 2017)

Jisc (May 2017) 'Two thirds of Scottish students think staff need to improve their digital skills to keep up', retrieved from: https://www.jisc.ac.uk/news/two-thirds-of-scottish-students-think-staff-need-to-improve-their-digital-skills-to-keep-up-17 (accessed July 2017)

Kandiko Howson, C.B. (July 2017) *Evaluation of HEFCE's Learning Gain Pilot Projects Year 1 Report,* London: King's College London, retrieved from: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,20

© The Author(s) 2017

14/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2017/Evaluation,of,HEFCEs,Learning,Gain,Pilot,Projects,Year,1,Report/2017_lgeval.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Kelly, S. (February 2017) *Reforming BTECs: Applied General Qualifications as a Route to Higher Education,* Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute, retrieved from: http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Hepi_Reforming-BTECs-Report-94-09_02_17-Web.pdf (accessed July 2017)

The Labour Party (May 2017) *For the Many Not the Few: The Labour Party Manifesto 2017,* London: The Labour Party, retrieved from: http://www.labour.org.uk/page/-/Images/manifesto-2017/Labour%20Manifesto%202017.pdf (accessed June 2017)

Liberal Democrats (May 2017) *Open, Tolerant and United: Liberal Democrats Manifesto 2017,* London: Liberal Democrats, retrieved from: https://www.libdems.org.uk/manifesto (accessed June 2017)

Manfredi, S., Vickers, L. and Cousens, E. (March 2017) *Increasing the Diversity of Senior Managers in Higher Education: the Role of Executive Search Firms,* London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, retrieved from: https://www.lfhe.ac.uk/en/research-resources/research-hub/2017-research/increasing-the-diversity-of-senior-leaders-in-higher-education-the-role-of-executive-search-firms.cfm (accessed September 2017)

Mellors-Bourne, R. (July 2017) *The Wider Benefits of Transnational Education to the UK: Research Report,* London: Department for Education, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/624364/CRAC_TNE_report_final.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Neves, J. and Hillman, N. (June 2017) *2017 Student Academic Experience Survey,* York/Oxford: Higher Education Academy/Higher Education Policy Institute, retrieved from: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/downloads/2017_student_academic_experience_survey_final_report.pdf

Newman, T. and Beetham, H. (June 2017) *Student Digital Experience Tracker 2017: the Voice of 22,000 UK Learners,* Bristol: Jisc, retrieved from: http://repository.jisc.ac.uk/6662/1/Jiscdigitalstudenttracker2017.pdf (accessed July 2017)

NUS (2016a) *Hidden Marks: A Study of Women Students' Experiences of Harassment, Stalking, Violence and Sexual Assault,* London: National Union of Students, retrieved from: https://www.nus.org.uk/Global/NUS_hidden_marks_report_2nd_edition_web.pdf (accessed August 2017)

NUS (2016b) '#StandByMe', retrieved from: https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/liberation/women-students/welfare-and-human-rights/standbyme (accessed August 2017)

NUS (April 2017) *Student Perspectives on International Students: NUS research into UK Students' Views on their International Peers,* London: National Union of Students, retrieved from: https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/Student-perspectives-on-international-students (accessed July 2017)

The Open University (July 2017) *Understanding the Impact of Outreach on Access to Higher Education for Adult Learners from Disadvantaged Backgrounds: an Institutional Response,* OFFA, retrieved from: https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Final-Report-Understanding-the-impact-of-outreach-on-access-to-higher-education-for-disadvantaged-adult-learners-docx.pdf (accessed July 2017)

© The Author(s) 2017

OFFA (June 2017) *Outcomes of Agreement Monitoring for 2015/16*, Bristol: Office for Fair Access, retrieved from: https://www.offa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/OFFA-Monitoring-Outcomes-Report-2015-16-Final.pdf (accessed July 2017)

OIA (May 2017) *2016 Annual Report*, Reading: Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, retrieved from: http://www.oiahe.org.uk/media/115360/oia-annual-report-2016.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Pollard, E., Hadjivassiliou, K., Swift, S. and Green, M. (March 2017a) *Accelerated Degrees in Higher Education: Literature Review,* London: Department for Education, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595637/Accelerated_Degrees_Literature_Review.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Pollard, E., Hadjivassiliou, K., Swift, S. and Green, M. (March 2017b) *Credit Transfer in Higher Education: a Review of the Literature,* London: Department for Education, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595633/Credit_transfer_in_Higher_Education.pdf (accessed July 2017)

QAA (March 2017a) *Higher Education Review: Third Year Findings 2015/16,* Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, retrieved from: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Findings-from-HER-2015-16.pdf (accessed July 2017)

QAA (April 2017) *Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): Key Findings 2015/16,* Gloucester: Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, retrieved from: http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Findings-from-HER-AP-2015-16.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Richard, N., Lowe, R. and Hanks, C. (March 2017) *Gone International: Mobility Works – Report on the 2014/15 Graduating Cohort,* London: Universities UK International, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/GoneInternational2017_A4.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Sanders, M., Chande, R. and Selley, E. (March 2017) *Encouraging People into University: Research Report,* London: Department for Education, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603737/Encouraging_people_into_university.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Shury, J., Vivian, D., Turner, C. and Downing, C. (March 2017) *Planning for Success: Graduates' Career Planning and its Effect on Graduate Outcomes: Research Report,* London: Department for Education, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604170/Graduates__career_planning_and_its_effect_on_their_outcomes.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Smith, A. (July 2017) *Report of Professor Sir Adrian Smith's Review of Post-16 Mathematics,* London: Department for Education, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/630488/AS_review_report.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Smith, K. (June 2017) *Transnational Education Toolkit,* York: Higher Education Academy, retrieved from: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/hub/download/transnational_education_toolkit_june_2017_final.v2.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Sutton Trust (August 2017a) 'Sutton Trust Ipsos MORI people omnibus survey 2017',

© The Author(s) 2017

retrieved from: https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Ipsos-MORI-young-people-omnibus-survey-2017.pdf (accessed August 2017)

Sutton Trust (August 2017b) 'Aspirations polling 2017', retrieved from: https://www.suttontrust.com/research-paper/aspirations-polling-2017/ (accessed August 2017)

Thomas, L. (2012) *Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change: a Summary of Findings and Recommendations from the What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme,* London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation, retrieved from: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/what_works_summary_report_1.pdf (accessed September 2017)

Thomas, L., Hill, M., O'Mahoney, J. and Yorke, M. (April 2017) *Supporting Student Success: Strategies for Institutional Change,* London: Paul Hamlyn Foundation, retrieved from: https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/hub/download/what_works_2_-_full_report.pdf (accessed July 2017)

UCAS (March 2017) *UCAS Qualification Provision Survey 2017,* Cheltenham: UCAS, retrieved from: https://www.ucas.com/file/97306/download?token=WgNl7ig8 (accessed July 2017)

UCAS (June 2017) *Progression Pathways 2017: Pathways through Higher Education,* Cheltenham: UCAS, retrieved from: https://www.ucas.com/file/110596/download?token=aVG758ND (accessed July 2017)

UCEA (July 2017) *Higher Education Workforce Survey 2017,* London: Universities and Colleges Employers Association, retrieved from: http://www.ucea.ac.uk/en/publications/index.cfm/hews2017 (accessed August 2017)

UCISA (May 2017) '2017 digital capabilities survey report', retrieved from: https://www.ucisa.ac.uk/bestpractice/surveys/digcaps/2017digcaps_report (accessed July 2017)

The UK Independence Party (May 2017) *Britain Together: UKIP 2017 Manifesto,* Newton Abbot: UKIP, retrieved from: https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/ukipdev/pages/3944/attachments/original/1495695469/UKIP_Manifesto_June2017opt.pdf?1495695469 (accessed June 2017)

UKTPO (April 2017) *Can Free Trade Agreements Enhance Opportunities for UK Higher Education after Brexit?* London: Universities UK, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/free-trade-agreements-uk-higher-education-brexit.pdf (accessed August 2017)

Unite Students and HEPI (July 2017) *Reality Check: a Report on University Applicants' Attitudes and Perceptions,* retrieved from: http://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Reality-Check-Report-Online1.pdf (accessed July 2017)

UUK (March 2017) *Degree Apprenticeships: Realising Opportunities,* London: Universities UK, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/degree-apprenticeships-realising-opportunities.pdf (accessed July 2017)

UUK (June 2017) *Education, Consumer Rights and Maintaining Trust: What Students want from their University,* London: Universities UK, http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/education-consumer-rights-maintaining-trust-web.pdf (accessed July 2017)

© The Author(s) 2017

UUK (July 2017) *Changing the Culture: Responding to Cases of Violence Against Women, Harassment and Hate Crime Affecting University Students,* London: Universities UK, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/changing-the-culture-harassment-case-studies.pdf (accessed July 2017)

UUK (August 2017) *Review of the Teaching Excellence Framework Year 2: Process, Results and Next Steps,* London: Universities UK, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2017/review-of-the-teaching-excellence-framework-year-2.pdf (accessed August 2017)

UUKi (March 2017a) *Erasmus+: Interim Evaluation – UUKi's Submission,* London: Universities UK International, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/Erasmus-Evaluation-March2017.pdf (accessed July 2017)

UUKi (March 2017b) *PhD Student Outward Mobility: Perceived Barriers and Benefits,* London: Universities UK International, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/Phd-student-outward-mobility-December-2016.pdf (accessed July 2017)

UUKi (April 2017) *UK Strategy for Outward Student Mobility, 2017-20,* London: Universities UK International, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/UK-Strategy-for-outward-student-mobility-2017-2020.pdf (accessed July 2017)

UUKi (June 2017) *The UK's Competitive Advantage: 2017 Update,* London: Universities UK International, retrieved from: http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/International/UUKi-Competitive-advantage-2017.pdf (accessed July 2017)

Wilson, P., Woolger, A. and Dodd, M. (January 2017) *Students: Experience, Engagement and Communities,* Leeds: York Consulting, retrieved from: http://www.hefce.ac.uk/media/HEFCE,2014/Content/Pubs/Independentresearch/2017/Students,Experience,engagement,and,communities/studentseec.pdf (released February 2017, accessed July 2017)

Wiseman, J., Davies, E., Duggal, S., Bowes, L., Moreton, R., Robinson, S., Nathwani, T., Birking, G., Thomas, L. and Roberts, J. (March 2017) *Understanding the Changing Gaps in Higher Education Participation in Different Regions of England: Research Report,* London: Department for Education, retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604393/Higher_education_understanding_participation_gaps.pdf (accessed July 2017)

© The Author(s) 2017